

but righteousness and faithfulness is found in the youth who was formerly a shepherd, afterwards the conqueror of Goliath, and subsequently one of the king's courtiers; but he is doomed to the charge of heresy, and, like all other heretics, he must escape for his life. So great too is the heresy of which he is accused, that the whole nation must be convinced of it on three grand occasions; for at three several times did Saul gather together all Israel in the embodied form of an army, for the benevolent purpose of ridding himself and the nation of a character so vile. Yea, also, the king, in the strength of his wrath, ordered no less than eighty-five anointed priests to be slain, because one of their number was accused of favoring the heretic, and giving both himself and his adherents a morsel to eat.

In some five hundred years more, when Israel was a stranger in a strange land, we have a multiplicity of examples of the same momentous import, speaking volumes to us explanatory of the awful meaning of heretical character. As we can fix the mind more forcibly upon one great incident at a time, and as one example is frequently better than many, we select but one out of the whole number.

The Monarch of Babylon, while the Jews are in captivity, issues a proclamation and afterwards a decree, for the purpose of making and then worshipping a great statue or image, a hundred and twenty feet high, of pure gold. This image, originating in the king's devotion, is to be worshipped by people of all ranks, degrees, orders, and language. The decree is expressed in language and style sufficiently explicit and kinglly. There is no exemption. So little room is there made for apology, or any scrupulosity of conscience, that the mandate denounces the most appalling judgment upon the person refusing submission, to be executed the same hour of his conviction. No telling how many of the cowardly and half-paganized Jews complied with this idolatrous command; sufficient for our purpose to say that three had the courage to refuse. No time is delayed. They are immediately brought before the king, who, convinced of their obstinate heresy, in the fury of his displeasure, seals their condemnation, and commands the severest retribution. A furnace is heated. But heresy calls for the most perfect cruelty, and its intense glow is increased seven fold. Forthwith these three heretics are bound and then thrown into this fiery lake, as a just recompense of reward for their disloyalty, impiety, and obstinacy.

But lest any one should say that we are writing less in the style of truth than of novelty, and lest he who reads should become weary and desire a stopping place before following us to the end of the chapter in hearing all that we have to say upon a subject so extensive, we shall here bring our historical notes to a close, with a promise to recur to the same work by the opening of another month.