

tatives of the early Church: that continued guardianship towards the descendants of Abraham in their bondage; the deliverance, then that series of strange, of unprecedented marvels performed towards them in their wanderings throughout the wilderness, until we reach their settlement in the land of promise, and their organization as an independent and thoroughly equipped kingdom. Here the history widens, if anything. Here are introduced the repeated messages, the receiving "line upon line, and precept upon precept;" those frequent and surprising interferences on their behalf, interferences that are sometimes open and palpable, sometimes screened from immediate public gaze, but which, whether palpable or concealed, do most certainly and on all occasions, show themselves to be for the people's highest interest and welfare. Time rolls on. Many changes occur. The monarchy becomes rent and shattered. The religious and moral aspect of the country is fearfully degenerated almost everywhere; a strong, an irresistible movement set in for the worse. If the downward progress could be stemmed at all, it could only be by some divine and miraculous interposition. No interposition, however, was given. Things were allowed to take their course until they closed, for the time, with the captivity. And now what have we? What is the speech, if any, that this past does utter, with all its variety of events? We have seen it has a variety. Mercy on mercy, goodness piled on goodness, benevolence on benevolence, until there seems scarcely room enough, either in camp or nation to receive them. Side by side, sometimes wreathe of chastisement—God's people chastened for their many sins—a warning voice sent forth among them, and such accents, and furnished with credentials of such as tartling and telling nature as would lead them long to remember and seriously profit by the lesson. But even the chastisement! Why, often they were obliged to say—"It was good for us that we had been afflicted." Well, read the past. Take in all its facts—mercies and chastisements combined. Read it fairly in all its parts. Carry it down to the very close of the dispensation, and with its provocations on man's part, and its unrelinquishing care on God's. What can we say of it? Almost too bare, lacking much of a proper enthusiasm, is the language of the text: "Even as Christ loved the Church." Yes, He was laboring even then that He might present it a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; aye, loved it with an intensity of sympathy which it is all but impossible for us to calculate or conceive.

Loved the Church! Why, then, take that marvellous sacrifice that Christ has made, and, with all its attendant circumstances, examine narrowly that lowly entrance into this world of care and sorrow; that, for Jesus, almost humiliating life! Ah, those constant self-denying labors, those heavy griefs and

anxieties and cares, those bitter trials, not only from an opposing and hostile priesthood, but even from his friends, from his own followers, his disciples, his relatives themselves! "How long will I bear with you!" sometimes was the bitter, piercing wail that rose to his lips. And, oh! were it possible for Jesus to suffer the pang of bitter disappointment, as, doubtless, in his human nature it was, with a thousandfold rigor it must have stung him. Add the labors he endured! In toils and unremitting endurance we look, and look in vain, for an equal. No! under every circumstance, by day and by night, in good report and in bad, when opposition met him in every quarter, and when a favoring breeze bade fair to waft him pleasantly to his mission's end,—in every circumstance Jesus proved fairly and well that it was His meat and His drink, nay, a consideration preceding even the supply of His ordinary bodily wants, that He should accomplish the will of His Father. Nobly did our Saviour toil. Nobly, divinely, He braved every difficulty and trial; and nobly at last He won. Toilsome, and beset with many dangers, was the path He had laid out for Himself to tread, yet despite of every danger He entered upon it with ease and fortitude, and finished it with a glorious success. Undaunted by difficulty, and unawed by scenes of the wildest terror, Jesus showed how little either frowns or caresses could move from his purpose the man whose enterprise was high and whose aims were pure. Even that bitter death, attended as it was by that unjust trial, those impious raileries and jeers, that scourging and laceration, and by that desertion of His friends; all that could add another pang of shame or agony to His overwhelming sufferings; yet Jesus bore them all. Bore them, and why? What cause of all that suffering? Because there was none but the inextinguishable love of the suffering Redeemer—none, but that Christ yearned over his Church with an intensity of sympathy that nothing could oppose. Yes, Christ loved his Church; and there is one, and the strongest proof of it—"He gave himself for it." Why, "Scarcely for a righteous man," says God's own word, "will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die: but God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Died for us! Yes; bore all that reproach, that shame, that agony, that bitter anguish of soul! Why? but that we might live; because He cared for us, and loved us well.

Loved the Church! Look around where we will, on the life of Christ, and it appears as if in every department this kindness and sympathy were plain. Look, among other things,—and simply by way of a passing illustration,—at the light which Jesus shed upon the Church—the very system of truth He revealed—the word, by whose instrumentality, and