

born in Bethlehem of Judea, of the Davidic line, and after the expiration of sixty-nine of the seventy heptades of years from the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.\* Devout men like Simeon and godly women like Anna were not taken by surprise when they beheld the Lord Christ, for, like Daniel, they had studied prophecy, and knew that the time must be near. Then there was the convergence of events : a world-wide expectation of the coming of some great deliverer, a sort of prophecy of the human heart ; there was a world-wide preparation in the universal empire of Rome and the prevalence of universal peace ; and a world-wide destitution in the acknowledged failure of even Greek philosophy to supply a knowledge of God. That wide famine of soul, that altar at Athens "to God, the Unknown," those Roman roads made ready for the messenger of peace—what a gathering of rays into one burning focal point ! And so because prophetically and providentially the fitness and fulness of times had come—Christ came, and as the very hour struck in the belfry of the ages.

Who can deny what Dr. Croly said years ago in St. Paul's, London, that the Reformation of the sixteenth century was another birth hour of history ? How plainly had prophetic Scriptures pointed to a period of dark ages, succeeded by another new dawn ! The long-buried treasure was once more to be unearthed, and the pearl of great price recovered from its depths, and the greatest age of world-wide evangelism to follow. There had been a general decay of evangelical faith, and there must be a revival in that direction before there could be a revival of missions ; for there can never be an evangelistic era until there is an evangelical spirit.

And what a strange convergence again of providential events ! What can be more signally wonderful ! As God's fit and full time came, preparations on a colossal scale were made for the Reformation. In 1453 Constantinople fell, and the revival of learning followed, especially significant because it scattered over the Continent Greek scholars and the Greek New Testament. In 1497 the new passage to India round the Cape of Good Hope prepared the way for closer contact and communication between the centres of Protestantism and the centres of Oriental heathenism, as in 1492 the discovery of America had opened the way to the planting of a grand Protestant republic, a new missionary nation beyond the Atlantic. Then let it be remembered that about this very time the fall of feudalism, after its thousand years of petty despotisms, prepared the way of the development of individual liberty.

Equally marvellous were the marks that God's fit time was come in the theology of inventions. About the beginning of the fourteenth century the mariner's compass, coming into general use, became a guide to the mariner over unknown seas ; the printing press issued its first book—a Latin Bible—in 1450 ; and the steam engine was an assured success in 1543. Just at this very time Luther awoke the Church by his hammer,

\* Daniel 9 : 25.