

ral power, the oracles through which it has already passed, the influences with which it is always found associated, and the vantage ground it has already gained for itself in the world, can have no difficulty in concluding that Christianity is the system which is destined to universal diffusion. The prophets may or may not have foretold the final triumph of Christianity; it may or may not be divine—for we are supposing that the person is forming his conclusions altogether irrespective of these grounds, and is looking simply at the past career and present position of Christianity; but whatever the prophets may have said, or however it may stand as regards the divinity of this system, such is its power over the mind of man, and so naturally and necessarily does it ally itself with those influences which have gained, or are rapidly gaining the mastery in the world, that it is now plainly manifest that this is the system which is destined to flourish and to triumph. We pass in review the other systems and beliefs which compete with Christianity for the dominion of the world, as Jesse made his ten sons pass before Samuel,—but we reject them all. There comes one after them mightier than they, whose majestic form and noble bearing, and whose past triumphs, earned on many a hard-fought field, certify it as the system born to rule the world. We exclaim, as did the Seer, when the last of Jesse's sons stood before him, "ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to," "This is he, arise and anoint him." The vista of the future as surveyed by the reflective eye of reason, exhibits the religions of the nations in their grave, and the dominion of the world in the hands of Christianity.

Let us first turn to the *past* to hear what it has to say as to the future destinies of the gospel. The first and great victory of Christianity was gained in a most disadvantageous position—a position more disadvantageous perhaps than it will ever again occupy. Its first preachers came from an obscure province of the Roman world; as Jews, they had to encounter a vast force of prejudice; as uneducated and illiterate men, they could scarce expect that the Greek, versed in the learning and philosophy of the times, would lend his ear or submit his understanding to teachers whose language and opinions would appear to him equally strange and barbarous. Their Master had expired amid circumstances of the utmost ignominy. Christianity was new, and had

then no triumphs to shew as a claim on the attention of mankind; the idolatry which it sought to displace was fenced around by the reverence which belongs to an ancient belief, and was upheld by the literature, the vices, and the political authority of the times: yet, singly, by its own intrinsic force, did the gospel scatter this array of opposing obstacles, and became the religion of the Roman state. It triumphed in those very centres where the philosophy, the idolatry, and the atheism of the ancient world were most firmly established. This was not the act of a weak system. Surrounded by disadvantages such as never weighed down system before, we behold it, in the exercise of an irresistible power, compelling the homage of the Roman mind, when that mind was in the prime of its strength.—Such was the first victory of Christianity. Is there no presumption here that this system is destined to universal ascendancy?

The *past* tells us further, that it is precisely the most enlightened ages of the world in which Christianity has flourished. Is this an evidence of weakness or of strength? Is this a presage of premature dissolution, or of a universal reign and an eternity of terrestrial existence. Well, then, it is light that is the congenial element of Christianity, and it is in the sunshine that it spreads its boughs wider around, and lifts its branches higher towards heaven. This position has been conclusively and undeniably established by the history of the past. Three times has this great experiment been made, and each time with the same result. The world has had three bright intellectual days, alternating with dark and drearily long nights, and each time intellectual light and Christianity have revived and flourished together. It was the noon of Greek and Roman intellect when Christianity first showed herself to the world. Did she, scared by the light, immediately withdraw? No, she stood her ground, and not only so, she prevailed. Had Christianity been a weak system, even though a true system, she would undoubtedly have gone to the wall. She would have been unable to make room for herself, and after a feeble struggle with existing systems, she would have disappeared. Not so Christianity; though young and a stranger, and unfriended, sneered at by philosophy, scowled upon by idolatry, struck at by the iron hand of despotic power, she bated not a jot of hope and heart; but, feeling that