

THE  
LIGHT OF PROPHECY

LET IN ON THE DARK PLACES OF

THE PAPACY:

BEING

AN EXPOSITION OF 2<sup>d</sup> THESSAL. II. 2--12.

SHOWING ITS EXACT FULFILMENT IN THE CHURCH OF ROME,  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
THE ASPECT OF THAT CHURCH IN THE PRESENT DAY.

BY THE

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TO  
DAVID DAVIDSON, Esq.,  
OF STRATH,  
*This little Work,*  
DESIGNED TO  
AID IN EXPOSING A SYSTEM,  
OF WHICH HE HAS LONG BEEN THE FIRM AND  
ENLIGHTENED OPPONENT,  
IS,  
WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF RESPECT AND REGARD,  
INSCRIBED BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,  
THE AUTHOR.

## PREFACE.

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THE one grand question of the day is now manifestly Popery. The Prime Minister of Great Britain has declared his intention to endow the Romish priesthood of Ireland as soon as he finds it convenient; and it is but too plain that the heads of the different political parties are quite ready to give him their support in carrying his design into effect. The friends of Protestant truth may therefore be looking forward to a conflict on this subject at no distant day.

To prepare the country for the coming struggle, it is essential that the public mind be thoroughly enlightened as to the nature of the system which it is now proposed to endow. Much has been already written on the subject of Po-

perly, and ably and well. But a succinct and yet comprehensive view of the leading features of Romanism, as delineated by the unerring pencil of inspiration, and reflected not only in the history of the past, but above all in the events of the *present day*, is, at this moment, a desideratum. The following pages are intended as a contribution, in some measure, to supply the desideratum.

Most of the work now presented to the reader was written before the recent elevation of Pius IX. to the chair of St Peter. But notwithstanding the praises that have been heaped on the new Pontiff from all quarters, as if he were destined to cleanse the Augean stable, the author has seen nothing in all the much-lauded sayings or doings of his Holiness that required him to change or to modify a single statement as to the Antichristian principles or practices of Rome. Pius has indeed departed, in some respects, from the beaten track of his predecessors; but the changes which he has either made or announced, are changes merely of administration, not

of principle--changes that may make some little difference in the secular management of the Roman States, but do not at all affect either the doctrine or discipline of the Romish Church. His Holiness has relaxed on the subject of railroads; but he has relaxed nothing on the far more vital subject of liberty of conscience. One of the latest acts of his that have transpired, is his "condemning and proscribing into the Index Expurgatorius," four new works, two of which are translations of the Gospels, one into French, the other into Italian. Those, therefore, who expect any real reformation from Rome, are looking for grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles. Popery may change its phase, but never changes its nature. It is always the Mystery of iniquity; and not less so, because his Holiness has the art to dazzle the eyes of the world by seeming concessions, and splendid acts of clemency, which are both fitted and intended to bind his subjects the more firmly in the bonds of spiritual despotism.

Individual cardinals may feel, or affect to feel,

antipathy to some of his measures; but be no doubt that his policy has the sympathy of the "Sacred College," in which, known, the rankest principles of Jesuitism long been predominant. The very fact that so young (his Holiness being only 55 years of age) was UNANIMOUSLY elected by the Holy Father, that in the brief space of two days, he demonstrated the entire agreement of all essential points with their own views, at the same time a strong indication that for the information he must be possessed of extraordinary abilities for gaining for their approbation and acceptance of the measures.

Oct. 5, 1846.

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## CHAPTER I.

### The Apostasy.

2 THESSALONIANS ii. 3.

“ Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first. ”

IF there were no other prophecy in the New Testament than that which is contained in this Epistle, it would be sufficient of itself to prove the Divine origin of Christianity. The description which it gives of the principles and practices of the Church of Rome, as developed in its whole history, is so clear, so graphic, and minute, that it is impossible to account for the coincidence on any other supposition than that the writer was inspired. A comparison of the prediction with its fulfilment is eminently fitted,

hesitate about the infallibility, are of all men the most inconsistent; for, as has been well remarked, "if the Pope be head of the church, then if he is *not* infallible, without all question he ought to be so."<sup>\*</sup>

4. The Pope claims power to pardon sin. This, too, is peculiar to God; for "who can forgive sins but God alone?" Yet not content with *declaring* pardon to the penitent, he asserts the power to *bestow* forgiveness on whomsoever he pleases.<sup>†</sup> He pretends to have the key of David, which openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth, that he can send to heaven or to hell, according as seemeth good in his sight. It was the belief of this power that made the princes of Palermo prostrate themselves at the feet of Martin IV. and address him in the same words as are addressed to Christ himself at the altar: "Thou that takest away the sins of the world have mercy upon us! Thou

<sup>\*</sup> Roger's Antipapery. See Note F

<sup>†</sup> Canones Concil. Triden. sess. xiv. cap. 6, p. 77.

that takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace!" Thus by assuming the essential prerogatives of God, does "he sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

5. But this is not all. He actually assumes the *titles* of God. He has allowed himself again and again to be addressed, without rebuke, by the names of the Most High. "We rejoice," says Angelo Politian to Pope Alexander VI. on his election, "to see you raised above all human things, and exalted even to Divinity itself."\* On the triumphal arch erected to greet his entry into Rome, the following was inscribed: "Rome was great under Cæsar, now its greatness has risen to the highest pitch under Alexander; and no wonder: the former was a man, the latter a God."† In the dedication of a work to Leo X., published in 1514, Aurelius Serenus speaks of it as a notable event, that an Indian elephant, meeting that pontiff in the street, had "*felt and*

\* Bruce's *Free Thoughts*, p. 32.

† Roscoe's *Leo X.*, vol. II.

*suppliantly adored his divinity!*"\* "Take care," said Marcellus in the Great Lateran Council to Julius II., speaking in name of the assembled fathers, "take care that we lose not that salvation, that life and health which thou hast given us, for thou art shepherd, thou art physician, thou art governor, thou art husbandman, thou finally art another God upon earth."† Now if there were nothing to condemn the Pope but this, that he has *allowed* such blasphemous names to be bestowed upon him, this of itself would stamp him with guilt of the deepest dye. It was for permitting the multitude to bestow similar appellations upon him, for allowing them to say, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man," that Herod was smitten of the angel and eaten up of worms. But in point of fact, the Popes themselves have *challenged* such titles as their due. At an early period, Gregory II., writing to the Greek emperor, maintained that "all the churches of the west held Peter as God

\* Roscoe's Leo X., vol. ii.

† Labb. tom. xiv. p. 109.

upon earth.\* "It is evident," said Pope Nicholas I., "that the pontiff, whom it is certain that pious prince Constantine called God, cannot be at all bound or loosed by the secular power; and it is manifest that God cannot be judged by men."† Pope Martin V. in his instructions to his nuncio at Constantinople, commanded himself to be announced under the following lofty title: "The Most Holy and Most Blessed, possessor of the Heavenly empire, who is Lord on earth, and successor of St Peter, the Christ or Anointed of the Lord, the Lord of the Universe, the Father of kings, the Light of the World, the Sovereign Pontiff, Pope Martin."‡ "Christ," says Boniface VIII. "took Peter into the PARTNERSHIP OF THE UNDIVIDED TRINITY."§ In the gloss on the canon law, approved and passed by Gregory XIII., the Pope is expressly styled "the Lord our God;"|| and in the de-

\* Labb., tom. vii., p. 22.

† Decret. Par. Distinct. 96, cap. 7.

‡ Acta Concil. Senen., Paris, 1612.

§ Sext. Decret. lib. i. tit. 8.

|| Bull. Gregor. XIII., Rom. 1, Jul. 1530.

credal issued by *authority* of John XXII., the following occurs: "To believe that our Lord God the Pope might not decree, as he hath decreed, it were a matter of heresy."\* Surely he that thus speaks must be the Antichrist, must be the little horn that was "to speak marvelous things against the God of gods." Our ears are shocked by such words; but so familiar are the Pope's immediate subjects with them, that, according to Dr Keith, his common style in Italy, at this hour, is—"Our Lord God the Pope"!!!

6. Such are some of the blasphemies of the Papacy. But this does not exhaust what is contained in the passage of the prophecy under consideration. To complete the picture it is necessary that we contemplate the ADORATION of his holiness. Let any man, nay even an infidel, enter the church of St Peter's at Rome, on the enthronement of a new Pope, and compare what he sees there with this prophecy, and then try if it be possible to resist the conviction, both

\* Extrav. Johan. xxii.

that the Pope is the Man of Sin, and that the book which contains such a prediction must be indeed divine. The cardinals have met in secret conclave; for days bribery and corruption have been rife; every artifice has been put in practice by the partizans of the different candidates; but at last the suffrages have been taken, the scrutiny has been made, the election is declared, and *Te Deum* has been sung. His holiness now appears in pomp in St Peter's. Let the reader imagine himself present on such an occasion. Behold the newly elected Pope, seated in state on the high altar, glittering with jewels, and resplendent with scarlet and gold. On that altar lies the wafer god—on that altar stands the crucifix, which all Roman Catholics "worship." Above both, is this king of pride "exalted." It is not enough that he *actually* resists the truth and cause of God; but here is he openly exhibited to the world as "exalted above all," that on *earth*, even by Papists themselves, "is *called* God and is worshipped." Clouds of incense ascend before him, and adorations are

paid him by the assembled multitude. The cardinals take the lead in the idolatrous rites. "*Venite adoremus*," ("Come, let us worship him,") they blasphemously exclaim in the words of the 95th Psalm; and all knees are bent in humble adoration. "How often," says Professor Gaussen of Geneva, describing such a scene which he himself had witnessed, "how often, as I viewed him in the midst of his pomp, have I heard this oracle of the Holy Ghost resound within my inmost soul, 'He shall sit as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.'"<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> Gaussen's Geneva and Rome, p. 14.



## CHAPTER IV.

### *The Apostacy of Iniquity.*

2 THESSALONIANS ii. 5-7.

"Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the MYSTERY OF INIQUITY doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way."

THE apostacy, and the Man of Sin, who was to organise and preside over that apostacy, were not now for the first time brought before the minds of the Christians at Thessalonica. Paul had, ere now, in his preaching, distinctly informed them of the blight that was to come over the Christian church. "Remember ye not," says he, "that when I was yet with you, I told you of these things?" He counted it not enough, as the

phrase goes, "to preach the Gospel" to them. He declared to them the whole counsel of God. He put them on their guard against the heresies that were to spring up in the church; and, for this purpose, gave them an outline of its future history. In every healthy period of the church, prophecy has always occupied an important place in the attention of God's faithful ministers. If Paul told the Thessalonians of these things, so many hundred years before the Man of sin was to be revealed, how much more necessary, now that he *is revealed*, that the attention of Christians should be called to them. Yet for a long period, till recently, the prophetic Scriptures, and especially those referring to the apostacy, had fallen into neglect. It had even passed into a maxim, that "the study of unfulfilled prophecy either finds a man mad or makes him so." How derogatory to the Word of God, in which these prophecies are recorded! How utterly opposed to the express declarations of the Scriptures themselves! "Blessed," saith the Spirit of God, at the beginning of the book of Revela-

tion, "blessed is he that readeth, and they that bear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein: for the time is at hand." In every prophecy, however much it may stretch into futurity, there is always something that has a bearing upon the present spiritual welfare of the church. Had the believers at Thessalonica only remembered what Paul had told them in his preaching, about the revelation of the Man of sin, they would have been more fortified against the seductions of false teachers, they would not have been needlessly excited and disturbed about the immediate coming of the Lord to judgment. And had professing Christians of the present day been better acquainted with the prophetic descriptions of the character and doom of apostate Rome, there would not have been half the danger that there now is, of seeing it regain its ascendancy over the nations that threw off its yoke at the Reformation. "The sure word of prophecy" is especially intended to shine amid the darkness which God foresaw would come

in the latter days upon the world. In it, as in a chart, are accurately laid down all the rocks and quicksands, through the midst of which God's people have to steer their course. By taking heed to its predictions, by comparing them with the aspect of the times, they are not only preserved from the spiritual dangers which prove fatal to others, but their faith is even strengthened by witnessing the spread of *predicted* antichristian error. Thus, while the ungodly around them are walking in darkness, prophecy is not only a light unto their feet and a lamp unto their path; but a growing light—a light, as Goldsmith says of Hope,

“ Which, still as darker grows the night,  
Emits the brighter ray.”

At the time that Paul wrote, the seeds were already sown, and germinating, that were afterwards to produce such an abundant harvest of corruption. “ *The mystery of iniquity doth already work.*” To the same effect is the testimony of John, “ Ye have heard that antichrist shall come; and *even now there are many anti-*

*christa.*" So early did the devil sow his tares; so early did self-righteousness, worldliness, and ambition begin to show themselves; so early did men, like Diotrefes, love to have the pre-eminence in the Christian church. But there was an obstacle to the full development of the mystery of iniquity, and the revelation of antichrist, as the church and the world then stood. What that obstacle was, the apostle had informed the Thessalonians when he had spoken to them on the subject, by word of mouth. At present he thinks not fit to enter on it more particularly than by referring them to his former instructions about it. "*And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time.*" Now that we know *who* is the Man of Sin, where he is to be found, and what was to be the grand object of his ambition, we need be at no loss, as to the obstacle that hindered his full development, and withheld him from rising to the summit of his power. It was to be in Rome, on the throne of the Cæsars, that the Man of sin was to sit, and as Head of the Church, to lord it over the

prostrate nations of Europe. But when the apostle wrote, Cæsar occupied the throne himself; and so long as the imperial power continued to flourish, the selfish designs of ambitious and worldly churchmen were kept within bounds. For centuries, even amid persecution, the assumptions of the Roman bishops were steadily rising; but it was not till after the irruption of the Goths, the dismemberment of the Roman empire, and the evacuation of Rome itself by the representatives of the imperial power, that the Man of sin began to stand forth before the world, in his decidedly antichristian character. It was to the imperial power, then, beyond doubt, that Paul here referred, as withholding the revelation of the Man of Sin, and as destined to do so, "until it should be taken out of the way." There were obvious reasons why the Spirit of God did not speak more explicitly on this subject, lest the pagan emperors, sufficiently disposed to persecute Christianity at any rate, should be provoked by a prediction of the downfall of their empire, to ravage the Christian church

without mercy. But there was enough revealed, though under mystical symbols, in other parts of the word of God, in Daniel especially, and the book of Revelation, to lead the people of God to form right conclusions on this subject. And it is interesting to know, that the most distinguished writers among the early Christians, whom the Papists themselves pretend to regard as authorities, took the very same view on this point, *before* the Man of Sin was revealed, that Protestant commentators have almost universally done *since* his revelation. "As long as the empire shall be able to make itself feared," saith Chrysostom, "no man shall readily submit himself to antichrist; but after the empire shall be dissolved, antichrist shall invade the vacant throne of the empire, and shall labour to concentrate in himself the power both of God and of man."\* Precisely similar are the statements of Tertullian, Ambrose, and Augustine, all of whom used to pray for the continuance of the Roman empire in its strength, that the reign of

\* Chrysost. Opera, Tom. xi. p. 530. Paris, 1734.

antichrist might be retarded. When, therefore, the Popish translators of the Rhemish Testament, in a strain of affected humility, boast that "Jesus hath now made all the Roman emperors, and princes of the world, to know him, and hath given the seat of the Cæsars to his poor servants, Peter and his successors,"\* they thereby bear their testimony, according to the view of these fathers, to the fact, that "he that letted, no longer lets, but has now been taken out of the way;" that the "mystery of iniquity" has had ample room to perfect itself; and that the "Man of sin" must long ago have been "revealed."

In the Church of Rome, beyond question, the "mystery of iniquity" is to be found; and how wonderfully descriptive of Popery, and its mode of working, is the name by which the Spirit of God hath here characterised it. Popery is one grand system of consecrated wickedness. Under a semblance of holiness, and humility, and charity, and self-denial, a structure of priestcraft, and crime, and superstition has been reared,

\* Rhemish Testament. Note on Acts xiv. 19.