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ART. I.—ORGANIC REDEMPTION.

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I. THE HISTORICAL ADAM—ORGANIC RUIN.

THE principle of infinite multiplication of individuals is resident in every germ. A mighty forest is immanent in the yet undeveloped potentiality of the tiny acorn. The grand trunk and massive branches of the giant oak are latent there; nay, immensely more, the countless trees, onward and onward, springing from it and their products. There is thus no defining the power of reproduction shut up in the narrow limits of a single acorn.

This plastic force produces individual existences of the same kind with itself. It is ever a *self*-reproduction. "The herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit *after his kind*," (Gen. i. 11), each *species* holding permanently to its own order, (*whose seed is in itself*), was the law of the germinant principle stamped on young nature. The sprouting acorn becomes the majestic oak: then the oak-grove. The relation here is that of generic causation. Springing from one and the same seminal root, the mighty forest is an organic unit. The subsequent

ART. VI. THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY.

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THE term *mystery*, as used in Scripture, has a peculiar meaning. It does not so much convey the idea that the thing spoken of is unintelligible, as that it is slowly developed, or gradually communicated. It is applied to three things. 1. "The mystery of God," Rev. x. 7; where it means that plan or purpose of God, formed in the beginning, slowly evolved in the successive cycles of our world's history, and to be consummated, in the days of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound. During this slow evolution, "the faith and patience of the saints" are exercised, and they cry out, "How long! Oh Lord?" 2. "The mystery of Godliness." The manifestations of God in the flesh, purposed in the Eternal Counsels, predicted from the entrance of sin, symbolized with gradually increasing clearness, and after ages of faith, spoke, actualized in the person of Jesus Christ. 3. The term is used once more, in application to something which has the same characteristic features, of slow growth, gradual evolution, and final culmination; "*The Mystery of Iniquity.*"

Of this, it may be said, in general, and at the outset, that like its counterpart, "the mystery of godliness," it has this world of ours for the theatre, and "NOW," our age, this parenthesis in God's Eternity, as the period of its evolution and culmination. As "the mystery of godliness," exhibits "the manifold wisdom of God, ordained before the world," so this exhibits, during its progress, and will especially manifest on its consummation, the cunning of the great antagonist power, the author of sin, "the ruler of the darkness of this world." Dark, at every period, it will be, probably, darkest and mightiest at the end. Gradual in evolution, it will be perfect only in the finale. Throughout, it may be characterized as an aping counterfeit or

caricature of "the wisdom of God in a mystery." Its consummation, we believe, is yet future, as nothing yet seen in past ages or at present, fully comes up to the ideal. How long in the future it will be, no one can dogmatically assert, but it would seem to be the intention of Revelation to assure us that it will symbolize in point of time exact, with "the brightness of the Epiphany" of "the great God, even our Saviour;" and the end of "the mystery of God" "in the dispensation of the fulness of time."

In one sense "the mystery of iniquity," may be said to have begun, when through the agency of Satan, "by one man sin entered into the world" and death by sin, involving not only the race, but also "the whole creation," thereby "made subject to vanity." Back of this; why, when, and how, Satan fell, is an utterly impenetrable and incomprehensible mystery, which no sane man attempts to elucidate. Its first working was fearful; it wrought the ruin of the race, in the apostacy of the Head, in whom "all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned and fell." Here is the might and cunning as well as mystery and iniquity. By one stroke, inflicting a wound which extended through "all the successive cycles of time and generations of men." Although we have reason to hope that many, by faith in the protevangel, were rescued and saved, as we know, assuredly, that Abel and Enoch and Noah were, and that these may have been representatives of unnamed and unnumbered more; yet how mighty was that "mystery" of power, that formed such giants in the earth in depravity, and in the days of Noah made so universal as well as "great, the wickedness of man" that it was purged only by the waters of the flood. If the author of evil gloated over the moral wreck in Eden, this must have seemed to him a still grander triumph. Though, again, we may hope that Job and Melchizedec were representatives of piety among the nations till the time of Abraham, yet how mighty and pervading was "the mystery of iniquity" in the forms of idolatry and superstition at that period, when a single person and a single family were selected from the all-surrounding perversions to be the deposi-

tory of the truth, and the line of the coming "mystery of godliness." The worship and doctrine of the true God were guarded by the most explicit prescriptions and the most terrific threatenings, in the Mosaic institute; and when its spiritual significance, underneath its shadows, was ignored, a line of prophets was raised up to counteract this tendency. Yet such was the power of the spirit of evil, that at the advent of Christ, Judaism was but a rotten carcass and the nominal Church, as represented by the Pharisees, but a whited sepulchre. "The mystery of iniquity" seemed again to culminate when it accomplished, through the treason of Judas and the malice of the Hierarchy, the crucifixion of the Son of God, and the national rejection of the Messiah. In the dark interval between the death and resurrection of Christ, the triumph of the powers of darkness seemed complete. But "the end was not yet." A broad field for these antagonistic forces was yet spread out, and centuries were to elapse before the finale.

The early triumphs of "the mystery of godliness," as "preached unto the Gentiles, and believed in the world," were truly wonderful. At the same rate of progress it seemed that "the mystery of God" would soon be finished. The power of the adversary, in the form of persecution and the baptism of blood, failed to arrest its progress, but in another form, that of adulterous connection with the state and the possession of worldly power and office, it wrought more fatally.

We are distinctly told by the Apostle, that even in his day "the mystery of iniquity, doth already work," but that certain agencies then existing, prevented its speedy development and would continue to do so, till taken out of the way. Moreover, that a state of things, which he denominates "a falling away," or apostacy, then future but indefinitely so, would precede the full revelation of final development of the mystery in the form of "the man of sin, the son of perdition," elsewhere called "that wicked, or the lawless one." This advent, or full revelation, is characterized by inspiration, by these remarkable signs: "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is God's and worshipped," all power, Divine and human, "so

that as God he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." He challenges the exclusive prerogatives and honors of Divinity. Again, "whose coming or advent," is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish. And once more, that those who yield themselves to this form of iniquity, shall be penally visited "with strong delusions," so as to "believe the Lie" and the Liar. All will agree, that from the apostolic age, till the present, "the mystery of iniquity" has been operative. There is and can be no satisfactory explanation of this world's affairs, "the mystery of God," on this theatre, without taking into account the Satanic, as well as, human and Divine factors. All along the ages, from the entrance of sin, till now, there has been a "Prince of the power of the air," who has shaped "the course of this world," a "ruler of the darkness of this world," "a spirit," a personal Being, "working in the children of disobedience," whose kingdom is parallel with and antagonistic to the kingdom of God, whose aim is the destruction or perversion of all that is good. The same dark power that attempted to strangle Christianity in the cradle, through the jealousy of Herod, and brought its Author to the cross, through the treachery of Judas and the malice of the Hierarchy, has been "going about as a roaring lion" ever since, endeavoring to overthrow or corrupt "the kingdom of God." We must recognize the working of Satan in all the period of perverted Christianity, as really as in the Dragon of Paganism, and the false prophet.

But the question recurs, have any of these manifestations, heretofore, actualized the portrait drawn by the pen of inspiration? Can we say, that "the man of sin," has been revealed? Does any thing, on the tableaux of history, fully correspond with the revealed characteristics of "that wicked?" In all the assumptions, and presumptions, the "lying wonders and deceivableness of unrighteousness," and "strong delusions" which our fallen humanity has witnessed, has anything yet fully equalled the representations given by the apostle, writing as moved by the Holy Ghost, to whom "a thousand years are

as one day?" Every successive age is prone to exaggerate its own importance in the grand drama, and how many interpretations of prophecy, confidently put forth, have been proved by the event, to be unfounded! The wheels of Providence, in permitting the working of evil and in baffling the designs of the kingdom of darkness, move slowly. He is "patient, because eternal." He allowed four thousand years to roll away, before the manifestation of "the mystery of godliness," and surely we may conclude that the Revelation of the corresponding mystery may be yet future. Though the great agent has put forth already fearful forms of perversion and delusion, there may be yet undeveloped forces brought out in the final conflict, "when his time is short," and he is to be destroyed. Though "the faith and patience of saints" have been exercised all along in consequence of this malign agency, there may be yet severer trials, before the end and "the mystery of God" is finished. While the hosts on either side, have been hitherto under the guidance of their respective leaders, it may be, among the things of the future, that they themselves, in some more palpable form, will appear, when the crushing defeat of one side and the crowning victory of the other, shall come to pass! So, we have read the mystic page, which God has written to cheer His own, amidst the darkening gloom of baffled hopes and long delay.

It is well known that by very many, and in former times almost all, Protestant expositors, these characteristics were supposed to be actualized in the Pope of Rome, as a perpetuated person; that he was and is "the man of sin;" that his assumption of universal, temporal and spiritual power, verified the prophetic delineation; that his supremacy was obtained and is perpetuated by Satanic assistance in the form of miraculous wonders; that all his followers are under the penal influence of "strong delusions," and that we are to look for his overthrow by some Divine interposition, probably, now not far distant. On this scheme of interpretation, imperial Rome was the remora to the full revelation of "the mystery of iniquity" and Papal Rome, the seat of the apostacy. The titles assumed by

the Popes, at different periods, and especially the combination of supreme, secular and sacred prerogatives in one person, are cited in confirmation of this view. If the Pope's claim to official infallibility should be confirmed by the assembled Œcumenical Council, it would be considered as additional evidence of the correctness of this interpretation. Allowing, for the moment, this to be "the mind of the Spirit" in the predicted apostacy; how fearful is the exhibition of power in the system, when three hundred years after the Reformation, such an assemblage comes together at the invitation of the so-called Head of the Church, representatives from the civilized world, and not least significant, from our own country. To those who believe this theory of interpretation, how gigantic must "the mystery of iniquity" appear, and how consolatory the thought, that the era of its full revelation, will be that of its destruction! But even on this interpretation, the end is not yet, possibly "*not by and by.*" Luke xxi. 9.

There are, however, grave difficulties attending this interpretation. Allowing that Antichrist as described by St. John, and "the man of sin" by St. Paul, are but different aspects of the same object, it is hard to find any ground of attributing the inspired characteristics of antichrist to the Papacy. "He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," or Jesus Christ come in the flesh, "is not of God, and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." Whatever else may be rightly attributed to the Papal scheme, it cannot be said that it has these marks of antichrist. If there is one thing that distinguishes the Romish Church, it is the uniform and constant upholding of the great doctrine of the Incarnation, "confessing Jesus Christ come in the flesh."

While, therefore, we may allow that the perversions of Christianity, in this scheme, have resulted, as the corruptions of the Jewish Church and the sad interruption of the progress of the Reformation, from the workings of this mysterious and mighty power, we are constrained to look for its full develop-

ment and last revelation, as yet future. It has worked, and doth work, and will work. While God intended, that during the cycles of time, "His manifold wisdom should be gradually known to principalities and powers in heavenly places," He seems to have intended, also, that ample scope and verge, should be given to "spiritual wickednesses in high places, the rulers of the darkness of this æon," to manifest themselves and put forth all their resources, before their final overthrow.

It is plain from the tenor of Paul's 2d Epistle to the Thesalonians, that the believers of that day expected the speedy advent of the Lord Jesus and the end of the world. It was to correct this misapprehension and to prepare them and us for the long delay, that the Apostle was inspired to write the Epistle. The same misapprehension, it is well known, has existed at different periods since. The same may be said of the "mystery of iniquity." Good men have seen and identified all the inspired features of the portrait, in their day, and confidently expected its destruction. Staunch old Martin Luther no more doubted that the Pope was "the man of sin" and "antichrist," than he doubted the personality of the Evil one, and he seems to have expected that the Reformation would be the instrument of his destruction, as really as he expected the final triumph of the Son of God. So, the enthusiastic apostles of liberty and equality, at the era of the French Revolution, expected the end of all despotisms, and the speedy recognition and universal enjoyment of "the rights of man," as the result of that mighty earthquake. But the Reformation has existed for centuries, and there is yet no destruction, and the earthquakes of revolution have shaken the civilized world, and its political and social millennium is yet to come.

The last book of the sacred Canon seems to have been constructed with a view of guarding God's people against such hasty conclusions, in regard to "the mystery of God." It is not so much designed to enable us to prophesy of "the times and seasons," as to assure us of the certain final triumph of the Lord and His Christ, "which in His times He will show" and make manifest, and to encourage "the faith and patience of

the saints," in the whole intervening period. While it has served this purpose with humble believers, who have stood in their lot and toiled or suffered under the influence of "that blessed hope," it is worthy of notice how often and completely it has baffled the expectations of those who have studied it, with another purpose. Possibly the Church now, needs the exhortation which the Apostle gave to the Thessalonians, "in reference to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," in its application to "the mystery" and the speedy destruction, that we be "not soon shaken in mind or be troubled, as though its full revelation had either actually come or *is at hand*." We may fail in our interpretation of the seals and the trumpets and the vials; we may mistake as to Babylon and the dragon and the beast; we may disarrange the magnificent chart of the Divine purposes and unduly magnify the earthquakes of our own period; we may misapprehend as to how soon the last development of this mystery, may take place; but of one thing we are assured, that is, its final overthrow, "in the times before appointed;" of this we are not allowed to doubt. It is settled by the testimony of Revelation. When "the mystery of God is finished," "the mystery of iniquity," also will cease. Thus much is certain: but what new combinations may be formed hereafter, and what elements may enter into the final Revelation, no one can know or ought positively to assert. It would seem, that one feature that will characterize this period, will be great plausibility in the forms of opposition assumed. In this view there is something fearful in the Saviour's expression, "So as to deceive (if it were possible) the very elect." The plain inference is, that none but those who are genuine believers having principled piety, can escape from the delusive power exerted by the final advocates of error. This plausibility or "deceiveableness," may be derived from still more wonderful penetration into the laws and mysteries of nature and control of its hidden agencies, used in support of opposition to the Kingdom of God, indicated by "signs and by wonders."

It would seem, too, that at the full revelation of this mystery, "that wicked," there will be a more direct and personal

agency of the great author of evil, "Evil one," "whose coming" or advent, which the Apostle makes synonymous with his revelation or full manifestation, "is after the working or energy of Satan." There seems to be here, the conception of more direct personal agency; the presence of the leader of the hosts of darkness himself in the final scene. Just as in the delineation in the apocalypse of the final conflict, "the battle of that great day of God Almighty," we have one on a White Horse, followed by the armies of Heaven, appearing as the Personal Leader, so when "the spirit of devils, working miracles," has gone forth unto "the kings of the earth," the powers of evil, to gather them to this battle, which is to be decisive, his marshalled hosts may be headed by himself. This would only be an illustration on a mightier scale, of what often occurs in the campaigns of mortals and the "decisive battles of the world." What are the mightiest battles of earth where the fate of Empires was decided, with "confused noise of the warrior and garments rolled in blood," in comparison with this, where "spiritual wickednesses in high places and the rulers of the darkness of this world," after repeated assaults and partial overthrows, shall make their last combined assault under the direction of the prince of darkness against "the King of kings, and Lord of lords." "The mystery of iniquity," fully revealed; meeting "the mystery of godliness," to be "destroyed by the breath of His mouth" and His glorious epiphany.

"This glorious epiphany" of the Lord, whenever it occurs, is always in holy Scripture, marked with the features of visibility and personality, and though we must not unduly press the words of the Apostle yet "the man of sin" and "that wicked," naturally convey something analogous in the parallel revelation of "the mystery of iniquity." If the grand object of the spirit of evil has ever been to counterfeit and caricature "the mystery of godliness," for the purposes of delusion and perversion, who can tell how successfully, after all his practice, he may assume this appearance in his final strategy? If his servants or agents or "ministers," "false apostles, deceitful workers, transform themselves into apostles of Christ"—under his tuition, to

do his work, as they have ever done heretofore, we cannot doubt that Satan himself, may be "transformed into an angel of light," when the crisis comes with a plausibility unparalleled in the past.

It is an interesting feature in our times, that the affections and energies of the Church are coming more and more to be concentrated in the vital question of the Person of Christ, "The pillar and ground of the truth," the Citadel of Christianity. There is already and probably will be hereafter still more fearfully a parallel concentration of opposition. "The kings of the earth and the rulers" who all along have set themselves against the Lord and His anointed, a personal Jehovah and an incarnate manifestation, seem to be preparing for another combined assault with the watchword, there is no God, but law; no Revelation but the inspiration of genius; no Gospel but culture; no worship but art. Then, too, while the heart of Christendom is more and more tending towards "that blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ," the cry of the scoffers waxes louder and louder, as the expression of their lusts or wishes, "Where is the promise of His coming?" The machinery will go on forever, as it has in the past. As it had no author, it needs and will have no interposition. When this arrogance has reached its acme, there is reason to expect, that on both sides the Conqueror and the crushed one, will be more fully revealed. When that which hinders is taken out of the way, and God allows the enemy and his allies to rally and concentrate their last forces; when the cunning and malice, ever increased and developed by ages, is perfected and one spirit animates all the ranks of opposition and the lines are closed up, "Then shall that wicked be revealed," we know not how, "whom the Lord will consume with the Spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."

It would seem, moreover, that the full and final revelation of the mystery of iniquity in the form of "the man of sin—that wicked, the Son of Perdition," will be characterized by an assumption of all sovereignty, human and Divine—"exalting

himself above all that is called God and worshiped"—"sitting in the temple of God and showing himself to be God." We have already suggested the ground of doubt or difficulty, in regard to the usual application of this to the Papacy. But, what in miniature or shadow, has been verified already in that system, may have a gigantic reality in the future. While we cannot say, that to complete the parallel and caricature of the other great mystery, there will be a personal Incarnation of the Evil one, yet there may be *something*, which in opposition to "the true God and His Son Jesus Christ," a combination of previous atheistic and anti-christian elements, will challenge all their prerogatives! When the world has tired of having no God, but Law, and no worship, but of nature, and cried out for something more tangible, the last form of delusion may be, we do not speak dogmatically, something actualizing this part of the inspired portrait. If not a Person, an actual Incarnation, a Satanic humanity; yet an assumption of the prerogatives of Divinity demanding the reverence and adoration of men, under penalty of Death, in an advent caricaturing that of Christ.

As the previous doctrine of the second coming assumes more and more definiteness to the faith and hope of believers, when "the time of the end" approaches; when men are eagerly looking for the signs of His advent, and all else is proving vanity, then, especially this form of delusion may be expected. Then, all but the truly spiritual, who control the spirits and judge all things, and yet cannot be deceived by plausibilities, or lying wonders, will be carried away to be destroyed with these Deceivers, and

"Who shall live, when God doth this?"