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## **The History Of The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire**

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## CHAP. LIV.

*Origin and Doctrine of the Paulicians. — Their Persecution by the Greek Emperors. — Revolt in Armenia, &c. — Transplantation into Thrace. — Propagation in the West. — The Seeds, Character, and Consequences of the reformation.*

**I**N the profession of Christianity, the variety of national characters may be clearly distinguished. The natives of Syria and Egypt abandoned their lives to lazy and contemplative devotion: Rome again aspired to the dominion of the world; and the wit of the lively and loquacious Greeks was consumed in the disputes of metaphysical theology. The incomprehensible mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation, instead of commanding their silent submission, were agitated in vehement and subtle controversies, which enlarged their faith at the expence perhaps of their charity and reason. From the council of Nice to the end of the seventh century, the peace and unity of the church was invaded by these spiritual wars; and so deeply did they effect the decline and fall of the empire, that the historian has too often been compelled to attend the synods, to explore the creeds, and to enumerate the sects, of this busy period of ecclesiastical annals. From the beginning of the eighth century

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Supine superstition of the Greek church,

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LIV. to the last ages of the Byzantine empire the sound of controversy was seldom heard: curiosity was exhausted, zeal was fatigued; and, in the decrees of six councils, the articles of the Catholic faith had been irrevocably defined. The spirit of dispute, however vain and pernicious, requires some energy and exercise of the mental faculties; and the prostrate Greeks were content to fast, to pray, and to believe, in blind obedience to the patriarch and his clergy. During a long dream of superstition, the Virgin and the Saints, their visions and miracles, their relics and images, were preached by the monks and worshipped by the people; and the appellation of people might be extended without injustice to the first ranks of civil society. At an unseasonable moment, the Isaurian emperors attempted somewhat rudely to awaken their subjects: under their influence, reason might obtain some profelytes, a far greater number was swayed by interest or fear; but the Eastern world embraced or deplored their visible deities, and the restoration of images was celebrated as the feast of orthodoxy. In this passive and unanimous state the ecclesiastical rulers were relieved from the toil, or deprived of the pleasure, of persecution. The Pagans had disappeared; the Jews were silent and obscure; the disputes with the Latins were rare and remote hostilities against a national enemy; and the sects of Egypt and Syria enjoyed a free toleration, under the shadow of the Arabian caliphs. About the middle of the seventh

century, a branch of Manichæans was selected as the victims of spiritual tyranny: their patience was at length exasperated to despair and rebellion; and their exile has scattered over the West the seeds of reformation. These important events will justify some enquiry into the doctrine and story of the PAULICIANS<sup>1</sup>; and, as they cannot plead for themselves, our candid criticism will magnify the *good*, and abate or suspect the *evil*, that is reported by their adversaries.

The Gnostics, who had distracted the infancy, were oppressed by the greatness and authority, of the church. Instead of emulating or surpassing the wealth, learning, and numbers, of the Catholics, their obscure remnant was driven from the capitals of the East and West, and confined to the villages and mountains along the borders of the Euphrates. Some vestige of the Marcionites may be detected in the fifth century<sup>2</sup>; but the numerous sects were finally lost in the odious name of the Manichæans; and these heretics, who presumed to reconcile the doctrines of Zoroaster and Christ, were pursued by the two religions with equal and unrelenting hatred. Under the grandson of Heraclius, in the neighbourhood of Samosata, more famous for the birth of Lucian than for the title of a Syrian kingdom, a reformer arose, esteemed by the *Paulicians* as the chosen messenger of truth. In his humble dwelling of Mananalis, Constantine entertained a deacon, who returned from Syrian captivity, and received the

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Origin of the  
Paulicians,  
or disciples of  
St. Paul.  
A. D. 660,  
&c.

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inestimable gift of the New Testament, which was already concealed from the vulgar by the prudence of the Greek, and perhaps of the Gnostic, clergy<sup>3</sup>. These books became the measure of his studies and the rule of his faith; and the Catholics, who dispute his interpretation, acknowledge that his text was genuine and sincere. But he attached himself with peculiar devotion to the writings and character of St. Paul: the name of the Paulicians is derived by their enemies from some unknown and domestic teacher; but I am confident that they gloried in their affinity to the apostle of the Gentiles. His disciples, Titus, Timothy, Sylvanus, Tychichus, were represented by Constantine and his fellow-labourers: the names of the apostolic churches were applied to the congregations which they assembled in Armenia and Cappadocia; and this innocent allegory revived the example and memory of the first ages. In the gospel, and the epistles of St. Paul, his faithful follower investigated the creed of primitive Christianity: and, whatever might be the success, a protestant reader will applaud the spirit, of the enquiry. But if the scriptures of the Paulicians were pure, they were not perfect. Their founders rejected the two epistles of St. Peter<sup>4</sup>, the apostle of the circumcision, whose dispute with their favourite for the observance of the law could not easily be forgiven<sup>5</sup>. They agreed with their Gnostic brethren in the universal contempt for the Old Testament, the books of Moses and the prophets, which have been consecrated by the decrees of the Catholic church.

Their bible.

church. With equal boldness, and doubtless with more reason, Constantine, the new Sylvanus, disclaimed the visions, which, in so many bulky and splendid volumes, had been published by the Oriental sects<sup>6</sup>; the fabulous productions of the Hebrew patriarchs and the sages of the East; the spurious gospels, epistles, and acts, which in the first age had overwhelmed the orthodox code; the theology of Manes, and the authors of the kindred heresies; and the thirty generations, or æons, which had been created by the fruitful fancy of Valentine. The Paulicians sincerely condemned the memory and opinions of the Manichæan sect, and complained of the injustice which impressed that invidious name on the simple votaries of St. Paul and of Christ.

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Of the ecclesiastical chain, many links had been broken by the Paulician reformers; and their liberty was enlarged, as they reduced the number of masters, at whose voice profane reason must bow to mystery and miracle. The early separation of the Gnostics had preceded the establishment of the Catholic worship; and against the gradual innovations of discipline and doctrine, they were as strongly guarded by habit and aversion, as by the silence of St. Paul and the evangelists. The objects which had been transformed by the magic of superstition, appeared to the eyes of the Paulicians in their genuine and naked colours. An image made without hands, was the common workmanship of a mortal artist, to whose skill alone the wood and canvass must be indebted for

The simplicity of their belief and worship.

C H A P. their merit or value. The miraculous relics were  
 LIV. an heap of bones and ashes, destitute of life or  
 virtue, or of any relation, perhaps, with the  
 person to whom they were ascribed. The true  
 and vivifying cross was a piece of sound or rotten  
 timber; the body and blood of Christ, a loaf of  
 bread and a cup of wine, the gifts of nature and  
 the symbols of grace. The mother of God was  
 degraded from her celestial honours and immacu-  
 late virginity; and the saints and angels were no  
 longer solicited to exercise the laborious office,  
 of mediation in heaven, and ministry upon earth.  
 In the practice, or at least in the theory of the  
 sacraments, the Paulicians were inclined to abolish  
 all visible objects of worship, and the words of  
 the gospel were, in their judgment, the baptism  
 and communion of the faithful. They indulged  
 a convenient latitude for the interpretation of  
 scripture; and as often as they were pressed by  
 the literal sense, they could escape to the intricate  
 mazes of figure and allegory. Their utmost dili-  
 gence must have been employed to dissolve the  
 connection between the old and the new testament;  
 since they adored the latter as the oracles of God,  
 and abhorred the former, as the fabulous and  
 absurd invention of men or dæmons. We cannot  
 be surpris'd, that they should have found in the  
 gospel, the orthodox mystery of the trinity: but  
 instead of confessing the human nature and sub-  
 stantial sufferings of Christ, they amus'd their  
 fancy with a celestial body that pass'd through  
 the virgin like water through a pipe; with a

phantastic crucifixion, that eluded the vain and impotent malice of the Jews. A creed thus simple and spiritual was not adapted to the genius of the times<sup>7</sup>: and the rational Christian who might have been contented with the light yoke and easy burthen of Jesus and his apostles, was justly offended, that the Paulicians should dare to violate the unity of God, the first article of natural and revealed religion. Their belief and their trust was in the Father, of Christ, of the human soul, and of the invisible world. But they likewise held the eternity of matter; a stubborn and rebellious substance, the origin of a second principle, of an active being, who has created this visible world, and exercises his temporal reign till the final consummation of death and sin<sup>8</sup>. The appearances of moral and physical evil had established the two principles in the ancient philosophy and religion of the East; from whence this doctrine was transfused to the various swarms of the Gnostics. A thousand shades may be devised in the nature and character of *Ahriman*, from a rival god to a subordinate dæmon, from passion and frailty to pure and perfect malevolence: but, in spite of our efforts, the goodness, and the power, of Ormusd are placed at the opposite extremities of the line; and every step that approaches the one must recede in equal proportion from the other<sup>9</sup>.

The apostolic labours of Constantine-Sylvanus, soon multiplied the number of his disciples, the secret recompence of spiritual ambition. The

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They hold  
the two prin-  
ciples of the  
Magians and  
Manichæans.

The esta-  
blishment of  
the Paulici-  
ans in Arme-

CHAP. remnant of the Gnostic sects, and especially the  
 LIV. Manichæans of Armenia, were united under his  
 standard; many Catholics were converted or  
 seduced by his arguments; and he preached with  
 success in the regions of Pontus<sup>10</sup> and Cappadocia,  
 which had long since imbibed the religion of  
 Zoroaster. The Paulician teachers were distin-  
 guished only by their scriptural names, by the  
 modest title of fellow-pilgrims, by the austerity  
 of their lives, their zeal or knowledge, and the  
 credit of some extraordinary gifts of the holy  
 spirit. But they were incapable of desiring, or  
 at least of obtaining, the wealth and honours of  
 the Catholic prelacy: such anti-christian pride they  
 bitterly censured; and even the rank of elders or  
 presbyters was condemned as an institution of the  
 Jewish synagogue. The new sect was loosely  
 spread over the provinces of Asia Minor to the  
 westward of the Euphrates; six of their principal  
 congregations represented the churches to which  
 St. Paul had addressed his epistles; and their foun-  
 der chose his residence in the neighbourhood of  
 Colonia<sup>11</sup>, in the same district of Pontus which  
 had been celebrated by the altars of Bellona<sup>12</sup> and  
 the miracles of Gregory<sup>13</sup>. After a mission of  
 twenty-seven years, Sylvanus, who had retired  
 from the tolerating government of the Arabs, fell a sacrifice to Roman persecution. The laws  
 of the pious emperors, which seldom touched the  
 lives of less odious heretics, proscribed without  
 mercy or disguise the tenets, the books, and the  
 persons of the Montanists and Manichæans: the

Persecution  
 of the Greek  
 emperors.

books were delivered to the flames; and all who should presume to secrete such writings, or to profess such opinions, were devoted to an ignominious death<sup>14</sup>. A Greek minister, armed with legal and military powers, appeared at Colonia to strike the shepherd, and to reclaim, if possible, the lost sheep. By a refinement of cruelty, Simeon placed the unfortunate Sylvanus before a line of his disciples, who were commanded, as the price of their pardon and the proof of their repentance, to massacre their spiritual father. They turned aside from the impious office; the stones dropt from their filial hands, and of the whole number, only one executioner could be found, a new David, as he is styled by the Catholics, who boldly overthrew the giant of heresy. This apostate, Justus was his name, again deceived and betrayed his unsuspecting brethren, and a new conformity to the acts of St. Paul may be found in the conversion of Simeon: like the apostle, he embraced the doctrine which he had been sent to persecute, renounced his honours and fortunes, and acquired among the Paulicians the fame of a missionary and a martyr. They were not ambitious of martyrdom<sup>15</sup>, but in a calamitous period of one hundred and fifty years, their patience sustained whatever zeal could inflict: and power was insufficient to eradicate the obstinate vegetation of fanaticism and reason. From the blood and ashes of the first victims, a succession of teachers and congregations repeatedly arose: amidst their foreign hostilities, they found leisure for domestic

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C H A P. quarrels: they preached, they disputed, they  
 LIV. suffered; and the virtues, the apparent virtues, of Sergius, in a pilgrimage of thirty-three years, are reluctantly confessed by the orthodox historians<sup>16</sup>. The native cruelty of Justinian the second was stimulated by a pious cause, and he vainly hoped to extinguish in a single conflagration the name and memory of the Paulicians. By their primitive simplicity, their abhorrence of popular superstition, the Iconoclast princes might have been reconciled to some erroneous doctrines; but they themselves were exposed to the calumnies of the monks, and they chose to be the tyrants, lest they should be accused as the accomplices, of the Manichæans. Such a reproach has sullied the clemency of Nicephorus, who relaxed in their favour the severity of the penal statutes, nor will his character sustain the honour of a more liberal motive. The feeble Michael the first, the rigid Leo the Armenian, were foremost in the race of persecution; but the prize must doubtless be adjudged to the sanguinary devotion of Theodora, who restored the images to the Oriental church. Her inquisitors explored the cities and mountains of the lesser Asia, and the flatterers of the empress have affirmed that, in a short reign, one hundred thousand Paulicians were extirpated by the sword, the gibbet, or the flames. Her guilt or merit has perhaps been stretched beyond the measure of truth: but if the account be allowed, it must be presumed that many simple Iconoclasts were punished under a more odious name; and that some

who were driven from the church, unwillingly took refuge in the bosom of heresy.

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The most furious and desperate of rebels are the sectaries of a religion long persecuted, and at length provoked. In an holy cause they are no longer susceptible of fear or remorse: the justice of their arms hardens them against the feelings of humanity; and they revenge their fathers wrongs on the children of their tyrants. Such have been the Hussites of Bohemia and the Calvinists of France, and such, in the ninth century, were the Paulicians of Armenia and the adjacent provinces<sup>17</sup>. They were first awakened to the massacre of a governor and bishop, who exercised the Imperial mandate of converting or destroying the heretics; and the deepest recesses of mount Argæus protected their independence and revenge. A more dangerous and consuming flame was kindled by the persecution of Theodora, and the revolt of Carbeas, a valiant Paulician, who commanded the guards of the general of the East. His father had been impaled by the Catholic inquisitors; and religion, or at least nature, might justify his desertion and revenge. Five thousand of his brethren were united by the same motives; they renounced the allegiance of anti-christian Rome; a Saracen emir introduced Carbeas to the caliph; and the commander of the faithful extended his sceptre to the implacable enemy of the Greeks. In the mountains between Siwas and Trebizond he founded or fortified the city of Tephrike<sup>18</sup>, which is still occupied by a fierce and licentious

Revolt of the Paulicians, A. D. 845—880.

They fortify Tephrike.

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people, and the neighbouring hills were covered with the Paulician fugitives, who now reconciled the use of the Bible and the sword. During more than thirty years, Asia was afflicted by the calamities of foreign and domestic war: in their hostile inroads the disciples of St. Paul were joined with those of Mahomet; and the peaceful Christians, the aged parent and tender virgin, who were delivered into barbarous servitude, might justly accuse the intolerant spirit of their sovereign. So urgent was the mischief, so intolerable the shame, that even the dissolute Michael, the son of Theodora, was compelled to march in person against the Paulicians: he was defeated under the walls of Samosata; and the Roman emperor fled before the heretics whom his mother had condemned to the flames. The Saracens fought under the same banners, but the victory was ascribed to Carbeas; and the captive generals, with more than an hundred tribunes, were either released by his avarice, or tortured by his fanaticism. The valour and ambition of Chrysocheir<sup>9</sup>, his successor, embraced a wider circle of rapine and revenge. In alliance with his faithful Moslems, he boldly penetrated into the heart of Asia; the troops of the frontier and the palace were repeatedly overthrown; the edicts of persecution were answered by the pillage of Nice and Nicomedia, of Ancyra and Ephesus; nor could the apostle St. John protect from violation his city and sepulchre. The cathedral of Ephesus was turned into a stable for mules and horses; and the Paulicians vied with

and pillage  
Asia Minor.

the Saracens in their contempt and abhorrence of images and relics. It is not displeasing to observe the triumph of rebellion over the same despotism which has disdained the prayers of an injured people. The emperor Basil, the Macedonian, was reduced to sue for peace, to offer a ransom for the captives, and to request, in the language of moderation and charity, that Chrysocheir would spare his fellow-christians, and content himself with a royal donative of gold and silver and silk garments. "If the emperor," replied the insolent fanatic, "be desirous of peace, let him abdicate the East, and reign without molestation in the West. If he refuse, the servants of the Lord will precipitate him from the throne." The reluctant Basil suspended the treaty, accepted the defiance, and led his army into the land of heresy, which he wasted with fire and sword. The open country of the Paulicians was exposed to the same calamities which they had inflicted; but when he had explored the strength of Tephricce, the multitude of the Barbarians, and the ample magazines of arms and provisions, he desisted with a sigh from the hopeless siege. On his return to Constantinople he laboured, by the foundation of convents and churches, to secure the aid of his celestial patrons, of Michael the archangel and the prophet Elijah; and it was his daily prayer that he might live to transpierce, with three arrows, the head of his impious adversary. Beyond his expectations, the wish was accomplished: after a successful inroad, Chrysocheir was surpris'd

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CHAPTER. and slain in his retreat; and the rebel's head was triumphantly presented at the foot of the throne. LIV. On the reception of this welcome trophy, Basil instantly called for his bow, discharged three arrows with unerring aim, and accepted the applause of the court, who hailed the victory of the royal archer. With Chrysocheir, the glory of the Paulicians faded and withered<sup>20</sup>; on the second expedition of the emperor, the impregnable Tephrike was deserted by the heretics, who fled for mercy or escaped to the borders. The city was ruined, but the spirit of independence survived in the mountains: the Paulicians defended, above a century, their religion and liberty, infested the Roman limits, and maintained their perpetual alliance with the enemies of the empire and the gospel.

Their decline.

Their transplantation from Armenia to Thrace.

About the middle of the eighth century, Constantine, surnamed Copronymus by the worshippers of images, had made an expedition into Armenia, and found, in the cities of Melitene and Theodosiopolis, a great number of Paulicians, his kindred heretics. As a favour or punishment, he transplanted them from the banks of the Euphrates to Constantinople and Thrace; and by this emigration their doctrine was introduced and diffused in Europe<sup>21</sup>. If the sectaries of the metropolis were soon mingled with the promiscuous mass, those of the country struck a deep root in a foreign soil. The Paulicians of Thrace resisted the storms of persecution, maintained a secret correspondence with their Armenian brethren, and gave aid and comfort to

their preachers, who solicited, not without success, the infant faith of the Bulgarians<sup>22</sup>. In the tenth century, they were restored and multiplied by a more powerful colony, which John Zimisces<sup>23</sup> transported from the Chalybian hills to the vallies of mount Hæmus. The Oriental clergy, who would have preferred the destruction, impatiently sighed for the absence, of the Manichæans: the warlike emperor had felt and esteemed their valour; their attachment to the Saracens was pregnant with mischief; but, on the side of the Danube, against the Barbarians of Scythia, their service might be useful, and their loss would be desirable. Their exile in a distant land was softened by a free toleration: the Paulicians held the city of Philippopolis and the keys of Thrace; the Catholics were their subjects; the Jacobite emigrants their associates: they occupied a line of villages and castles in Macedonia and Epirus; and many native Bulgarians were associated to the communion of arms and heresy. As long as they were awed by power and treated with moderation, their voluntary bands were distinguished in the armies of the empire; and the courage of these *dogs*, ever greedy of war, ever thirsty of human blood, is noticed with astonishment, and almost with reproach, by the pusillanimous Greeks. The same spirit rendered them arrogant and contumacious: they were easily provoked by caprice or injury; and their privileges were often violated by the faithless bigotry of the government and clergy. In the midst of the Norman war, two thousand

CHAP. five hundred Manichæans deserted the standard  
 LIV. of Alexius Comnenus<sup>24</sup>, and retired to their native  
 homes. He dissembled till the moment of revenge;  
 invited the chiefs to a friendly conference; and  
 punished the innocent and guilty by imprisonment,  
 confiscation, and baptism. In an interval of peace,  
 the emperor undertook the pious office of reconciling  
 them to the church and state: his winter-quarters  
 were fixed at Philippopolis; and the thirteenth  
 apostle, as he is styled by his pious daughter,  
 consumed whole days and nights in theological  
 controversy. His arguments were fortified, their  
 obstinacy was melted, by the honours and rewards  
 which he bestowed on the most eminent profelytes;  
 and a new city, surrounded with gardens, enriched  
 with immunities, and dignified with his own name,  
 was founded by Alexius, for the residence of his  
 vulgar converts. The important station of Philippopolis  
 was wrested from their hands; the contumacious  
 leaders were secured in a dungeon, or banished  
 from their country; and their lives were spared  
 by the prudence, rather than the mercy, of an  
 emperor, at whose command a poor and solitary  
 heretic was burnt alive before the church of St.  
 Sophia<sup>25</sup>. But the proud hope of eradicating  
 the prejudices of a nation was speedily overturned  
 by the invincible zeal of the Paulicians, who  
 ceased to dissemble or refused to obey. After  
 the departure and death of Alexius, they soon  
 resumed their civil and religious laws. In the  
 beginning of the thirteenth century, their pope  
 or primate (a mani-

fest corruption) resided on the confines of Bulgaria, Croatia, and Dalmatia, and governed, by his vicars, the filial congregations of Italy and France<sup>26</sup>. From that æra, a minute scrutiny might prolong and perpetuate the chain of tradition. At the end of the last age, the sect or colony still inhabited the vallies of mount Hæmus, where their ignorance and poverty were more frequently tormented by the Greek clergy than by the Turkish government. The modern Paulicians have lost all memory of their origin; and their religion is disgraced by the worship of the cross, and the practice of bloody sacrifice, which some captives have imported from the wilds of Tartary<sup>27</sup>.

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In the West, the first teachers of the Manichæan theology had been repulsed by the people or suppressed by the prince. The favour and success of the Paulicians in the eleventh and twelfth centuries must be imputed to the strong, though secret, discontent which armed the most pious Christians against the church of Rome. Her avarice was oppressive, her despotism odious: less degenerate perhaps than the Greeks in the worship of saints and images, her innovations were more rapid and scandalous: she had rigorously defined and imposed the doctrine of transubstantiation: the lives of the Latin clergy were more corrupt, and the Eastern bishops might pass for the successors of the apostles, if they were compared with the lordly prelates, who wielded by turns the crosier, the sceptre, and the sword. Three different roads might introduce the Paulicians into the heart of

Their introduction into Italy and France.

C H A P. Europe. After the conversion of Hungary, the  
 LIV. pilgrims who visited Jerusalem might safely follow  
 the course of the Danube: in their journey and  
 return they passed through Philippopolis; and  
 the sectaries, disguising their name and heresy,  
 might accompany the French or German caravans  
 to their respective countries. The trade and  
 dominion of Venice pervaded the coast of the  
 Adriatic, and the hospitable republic opened her  
 bosom to foreigners of every climate and religion.  
 Under the Byzantine standard, the Paulicians  
 were often transported to the Greek provinces of  
 Italy and Sicily; in peace and war they freely  
 conversed with strangers and natives, and their  
 opinions were silently propagated in Rome, Milan,  
 and the kingdoms beyond the Alps<sup>22</sup>. It was soon  
 discovered, that many thousand Catholics of every  
 rank, and of either sex, had embraced the Manichæan  
 heresy; and the flames which consumed twelve  
 canons of Orleans, was the first act and signal of  
 persecution. The Bulgarians<sup>23</sup>, a name so innocent  
 in its origin, so odious in its application, spread  
 their branches over the face of Europe. United  
 in common hatred of idolatry and Rome, they  
 were connected by a form of episcopal and  
 presbyterian government; their various sects were  
 discriminated by some fainter or darker shades of  
 theology; but they generally agreed in the two  
 principles, the contempt of the old testament,  
 and the denial of the body of Christ, either on  
 the cross or in the Eucharist. A confession of  
 simple worship and blameless manners is extorted

from their enemies; and so high was their standard of perfection, that the encreasing congregations were divided into two classes of disciples, of those who practised, and of those who aspired. It was in the country of the Albigeois<sup>30</sup>, in the southern provinces of France, that the Paulicians were most deeply implanted; and the same vicissitudes of martyrdom and revenge which had been displayed in the neighbourhood of the Euphrates, were repeated in the thirteenth century on the banks of the Rhône. The laws of the Eastern emperors were revived by Frederic the second. The insurgents of Tephric were represented by the barons and cities of Languedoc: Pope Innocent III. surpassed the sanguinary fame of Theodora. It was in cruelty alone that her soldiers could equal the heroes of the Crusades, and the cruelty of her priests was far excelled by the founders of the inquisition<sup>31</sup>; an office more adapted to confirm, than to refute, the belief of an evil principle. The visible assemblies of the Paulicians, or Albigeois, were extirpated by fire and sword; and the bleeding remnant escaped by flight, concealment, or catholic conformity. But the invincible spirit which they had kindled still lived and breathed in the Western world. In the state, in the church, and even in the cloister, a latent succession was preserved of the disciples of St. Paul; who protested against the tyranny of Rome, embraced the bible as the rule of faith, and purified their creed from all the visions of the Gnostic theology. The struggles of Wickliff in

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Persecution  
of the Albi-  
geois,  
A. D. 1200,  
&c.

CHAP. England, of Huss in Bohemia, were premature  
LIV. and ineffectual; but the names of Zuinglius,  
Luther, and Calvin, are pronounced with grati-  
tude as the deliverers of nations.

Character  
and conse-  
quences of  
the reforma-  
tion.

A philosopher, who calculates the degree of their merit and the value of their reformation, will prudently ask from what articles of faith, *above or against* our reason, they have enfranchised the Christians; for such enfranchisement is doubtless a benefit so far as it may be compatible with truth and piety. After a fair discussion we shall rather be surpris'd by the timidity, than scandalis'd by the freedom, of our first reformers". With the Jews, they adopted the belief and defence of all the Hebrew scriptures, with all their prodigies, from the garden of Eden to the visions of the prophet Daniel; and they were bound, like the Catholics, to justify against the Jews the abolition of a divine law. In the great mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation the reformers were severely orthodox: they freely adopted the theology of the four, or the six first councils; and with the Athanasian creed, they pronounced the eternal damnation of all who did not believe the Catholic faith. Transubstantiation, the invisible change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, is a tenet that may defy the power of argument and pleasantry; but instead of consulting the evidence of their senses, of their sight, their feeling, and their taste, the first protestants were entangled in their own scruples, and awed by the words of Jesus in  
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the institution of the sacrament. Luther maintained a *corporeal*, and Calvin a *real*, presence of Christ in the eucharist; and the opinion of Zuinglius, that it is no more than a spiritual communion, a simple memorial, has slowly prevailed in the reformed churches<sup>33</sup>. But the loss of one mystery was amply compensated by the stupendous doctrines of original sin, redemption, faith, grace, and predestination, which have been strained from the epistles of St. Paul. These subtle questions had most assuredly been prepared by the fathers and schoolmen; but the final improvement and popular use may be attributed to the first reformers, who enforced them as the absolute and essential terms of salvation. Hitherto the weight of supernatural belief inclines against the Protestants; and many a sober Christian would rather admit that a wafer is God, than that God is a cruel and capricious tyrant.

Yet the services of Luther and his rivals are solid and important; and the philosopher must own his obligations to these fearless enthusiasts<sup>34</sup>. I. By their hands the lofty fabric of superstition, from the abuse of indulgences to the intercession of the Virgin, has been levelled with the ground. Myriads of both sexes of the monastic profession were restored to the liberty and labours of social life. An hierarchy of saints and angels, of imperfect and subordinate deities, were stripped of their temporal power, and reduced to the enjoyment of celestial happiness: their images and relics were banished from the church; and the

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credulity of the people was no longer nourished with the daily repetition of miracles and visions. The imitation of Paganism was supplied by a pure and spiritual worship of prayer and thanksgiving, the most worthy of man, the least unworthy of the Deity. It only remains to observe, whether such sublime simplicity be consistent with popular devotion; whether the vulgar, in the absence of all visible objects, will not be inflamed by enthusiasm, or insensibly subside in languor and indifference. II. The chain of authority was broken, which restrains the bigot from thinking as he pleases, and the slave from speaking as he thinks: the popes, fathers, and councils, were no longer the supreme and infallible judges of the world; and each Christian was taught to acknowledge no law but the scriptures, no interpreter but his own conscience. This freedom however was the consequence, rather than the design, of the reformation. The patriot reformers were ambitious of succeeding the tyrants whom they had dethroned. They imposed with equal rigour their creeds and confessions; they asserted the right of the magistrate to punish heretics with death. The pious or personal animosity of Calvin proscribed in Servetus <sup>35</sup> the guilt of his own rebellion <sup>36</sup>; and the flames of Smithfield, in which he was afterwards consumed, had been kindled for the Anabaptists by the zeal of Cranmer <sup>37</sup>. The nature of the tyger was the same, but he was gradually deprived of his teeth and fangs. A spiritual and temporal kingdom was possessed by

the Roman pontiff: the Protestant doctors were subjects of an humble rank, without revenue or jurisdiction. *His* decrees were consecrated by the antiquity of the Catholic church: *their* arguments and disputes were submitted to the people; and their appeal to private judgment was accepted beyond their wishes, by curiosity and enthusiasm. Since the days of Luther and Calvin, a secret reformation has been silently working in the bosom of the reformed churches; many weeds of prejudice were eradicated; and the disciples of Erasmus <sup>38</sup> diffused a spirit of freedom and moderation. The liberty of conscience has been claimed as a common benefit, an inalienable right <sup>39</sup>: the free governments of Holland <sup>40</sup> and England <sup>41</sup> introduced the practice of toleration; and the narrow allowance of the laws has been enlarged by the prudence and humanity of the times. In the exercise, the mind has understood the limits, of its powers, and the words and shadows that might amuse the child can no longer satisfy his manly reason. The volumes of controversy are overspread with cobwebs: the doctrine of a Protestant church is far removed from the knowledge or belief of its private members; and the forms of orthodoxy, the articles of faith, are subscribed with a sigh or a smile by the modern clergy. Yet the friends of Christianity are alarmed at the boundless impulse of enquiry and scepticism. The predictions of the Catholics are accomplished: the web of mystery is unravelled by the Arminians, Arians, and

CHAP. Socinians, whose numbers must not be computed  
LIV. from their separate congregations. And the pillars  
of revelation are shaken by those men who  
preserve the name without the substance of reli-  
gion, who indulge the licence without the temper  
of philosophy <sup>42</sup>.