

SHORT HISTORY OF RELIGION.

HISTORY BEFORE CHRIST.

I. *From Adam to Moses.*

1. IN the beginning God created Heaven and Earth. He said, '*Let them be made,*' and they were made. In six days God made the whole world—the sun, moon, and stars; the plants, trees, and animals; and, last of all, He made man to His own image and likeness. The first man was called Adam, and the first woman Eve. They were just and holy, and the favorites of God. They lived happy in a delicious garden called Paradise, and they and their descendants were never to die.

2. God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat of the fruit of the tree that stood in the midst of the garden, lest they should die. But the serpent said to them: '*If you eat thereof, you shall be as Gods.*' Adam and Eve believed the serpent, and broke the command of God. For this sin of disobedience punishment immediately came upon them and all their descendants. They were driven from the garden of Paradise, were doomed to death and many hardships,

1. How did God create Heaven and Earth? In how many days did He create all things? When did He create man? How did He distinguish man from the other creatures? What were the names of the first man and woman? Were they also liable to sin, as we are? Where did they live? Were they and their children ever to die?

2. What commandment did God give to Adam and Eve? What did the serpent tell them? What did Adam and Eve do?

and were to be banished from God for ever. Nevertheless, God had compassion on them, and promised them a *Saviour*, who should reconcile them again to Him, and make them partakers of eternal happiness in Heaven, provided they did penance (Gen. iii. 15).

3. Cain and Abel, sons of our first parents, offered sacrifice to Almighty God. God was pleased with that of the virtuous Abel, but not with that of the wicked Cain. Cain, being exceedingly angry at the preference given to his brother, killed him; and in punishment for this crime he was cursed by God, and became a vagabond upon earth.

4. The descendants of Cain were wicked, like their father, and gradually seduced even the good; inasmuch that, in process of time, all men turned away from God and sank deeper and deeper into sin and vice. God then resolved to destroy the degenerate race of Adam by a universal deluge (B.C. about 2350). The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, and the waters rose fifteen cubits, or twenty-seven feet and a half, above the highest mountains. All living creatures on the face of the earth perished in the flood, except the pious Noe, with his family, and the animals that were with him in the ark, which he had built by the command of God. In thanksgiving for this escape, Noe erected an altar and offered a burnt sacrifice to the Lord, who, in return, blessed him and his sons, and promised him that 'there should no more be waters of a flood, to destroy all flesh' (Gen. ix. 15).

Were they punished for it? Were they alone punished? What punishment came upon them? Did God then abandon them? What did he promise them?

3. Who were Cain and Abel? How did they worship God? Was God pleased with their sacrifices? What did Cain do, and what became of him?

4. Were the descendants of Cain good or wicked? What evil did they do? What did God then resolve to do? How long did it rain? To what height did the flood rise? Did all living creatures perish? What did Noe do when he came out

5. The descendants of Noe became so numerous that they soon began to spread abroad into all lands. However, before separating, they determined to build a tower, the top of which should reach to Heaven. But God confounded their language, so that they were unable to understand one another and were obliged to desist from building it; and the tower was called the *Tower of Babel*, or *Confusion*. Noe's descendants also gave themselves up to their wicked inclinations, and degenerated so far that, instead of adoring the true God, they worshipped the sun and the moon, men and animals, and even idols of gold and silver, and of stone and wood. This shameful idolatry brought with it all kinds of sins and vices, which again prevailed in a frightful manner among mankind.

6. God, however, provided that the true faith and the hope in a future Redeemer should not entirely vanish from the earth. For this purpose He chose Abraham (B.C. 1920), made a particular covenant with him, and promised him that the '*Messiah*' should be born of his posterity, saying: 'In thee shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed' (Gen. xii. 3). Therefore God also distinguished Abraham and his descendants—who were called *Hebrews*, and afterwards *Israelites*, or *Jews*—from all other nations, and, during the course of time, often revealed Himself to them in a wonderful manner.

7. In order to try the faith of Abraham, God com-

of the ark? What new kindness did God show to Noe and his sons?

5. Did the descendants of Noe multiply much? What did they attempt to do? How was their undertaking frustrated? What was the tower called? Did the descendants of Noe remain faithful to God? What was the consequence of their idolatry?

6. Were the true religion and the hope in the Redeemer entirely to vanish? How did God prevent it? How were the descendants of Abraham called? What favor did God bestow on them?

7. How did God try the faith of Abraham? How did he

manded him to offer his only son Isaac in sacrifice upon Mount Moria. Abraham set out without hesitation. He himself placed the wood for the burnt offering upon his son, and ascended the mountain with him. When they had reached the summit, Isaac willingly laid himself on the wood to be offered up in sacrifice ; but God saved the pious Isaac through an angel, blessed Abraham for his obedience, and renewed his former promises to him.

Isaac was here a figure of the future Saviour of the world, who, in obedience to His Father, took the wood of the cross upon His shoulders, and carried it to Mount Calvary, to sacrifice Himself upon it for our redemption.

8. The patriarch Jacob was the son of Isaac, and lived with his family in the land of Chanaan, the country into which God had called Abraham. He had twelve sons, who became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. One of them, Joseph, was chosen by God to be, through what happened to him in his life, a figure of Jesus Christ. Having been sold by his brothers, he was carried into Egypt, where he was falsely accused and cast into prison. After recovering his liberty, the king made him chief ruler over all Egypt ; and as, by his wisdom and prudence, he saved the country during seven years from a dreadful famine, he was called 'Saviour of the world' (Gen. xli. 45). Jacob also, at his invitation, went down, with all his family, into Egypt and settled there. Before his death he pronounced this remarkable prophecy regarding the Redeemer : '*The sceptre (supreme power) shall not be taken away from (the tribe of) Juda (his son) till He come that is to be sent ; and He shall be the expectation of nations*' (Gen. xlix. 10).

fulfil the command of God ? What did Isaac do ? Did God suffer him to be killed ? How did God reward Abraham ? What mysterious signification does the sacrifice of Isaac contain ?

8. Who was Jacob, and where did he live ? How many sons had he, and what did they become afterwards ? What was Joseph chosen by God to be ? What happened to him ?

And, in fact, when Christ, who *was sent by God*, was born, Herod, an Idumean, sat on the throne of the kings of Juda, and the kingdom was evidently approaching its end.

II. *From Moses to Christ.*

9. After Joseph's death, the Israelites grew into a great people, insomuch that the Egyptians, fearing they might become too powerful, reduced them to the hardest slavery. At length the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and commissioned him to lead the children of Israel back to Chanaan (B.C. 1500). Pharaoh, King of Egypt, would not let them go ; and therefore Almighty God sent dreadful plagues over all his dominions. At last an angel in one night slew all the first-born of the Egyptians. But the destroying angel did not harm the Israelites, because they had sprinkled the doors of their houses with the blood of the paschal lamb, which, according to God's command, they ate that very night.

By this was foreshown how, one day, mankind should be delivered from eternal death by the Blood of Jesus Christ, the true Divine Paschal Lamb, which we eat in the Holy Eucharist.

10. Then Pharaoh permitted the Israelites to depart ; but he soon regretted it. In all haste he collected his troops, and pursued the unarmed Israelites to the shores of the Red Sea. Here, struck with alarm and dread of being drowned or slaughtered, they implored the assistance of God ; and Moses, by the com-

Did Jacob remain in Chanaan ? What did he prophesy before his death, and about whom ? How was it fulfilled ?

9. What happened to the children of Israel in Egypt ? Whom did God appoint to deliver them ? How did He appear to Moses ? Did Moses meet with any opposition ? What did God do to the Egyptians ? Did the angel hurt also the Israelites ? Why did he not hurt them ? What did the blood of the paschal lamb signify ?

10. Did Pharaoh continue keeping the Israelites in bondage ?

mand of God, stretched forth his rod over the Red Sea; and, behold, the waters were divided before them, and stood like a wall on their right hand and on their left, and they passed through on dry ground. Pharaoh rushed furiously after them into the midst of the sea; whereupon Moses once more stretched forth his rod over the waters, and they suddenly returned to their former place, and buried Pharaoh with his whole army in the deep.

11. The children of Israel had now to travel through a vast wilderness, and came, fifty days after their departure from Egypt, to Mount Sinai, where God, amidst thunder and lightning, gave them the Ten Commandments, written on two tables of stone. He also renewed with them the covenant He had made with their fathers, and regulated their religious and civil duties by most salutary laws. But the people soon forgot the Commandments and blessings of God, and continually complained and murmured; nay, they debased themselves to such a degree that they made a golden calf, and adored it as their god.

12. In punishment of these and many other grievous sins, the Israelites had to remain forty years in the desert, until another and better generation had grown up. Nevertheless, God continually bestowed favors upon them. He rained bread, called *manna*, from Heaven for them, and gave them water from a rock; and at last, after Moses' death, He conducted them into Chanaan, or Palestine, the promised land, which

What did he do soon after? What did the Israelites do on their part? How were they delivered? How did God punish Pharaoh?

11. Did the Israelites now go on straight to Chanaan? How long were they journeying from Egypt to Mount Sinai? What happened at Mount Sinai? Did God give them the Ten Commandments only? What return did they make for all these benefits?

12. How was their ingratitude punished? Did God abandon them altogether? What favors did He still show them? When, and how, did they get possession of Chanaan? Is there not a figure in all this? What does the deliverance from Egypt

they conquered with His powerful assistance, and divided into twelve parts, giving one of them to each of the twelve tribes.

All this was a figure of the future salvation of mankind (1 Cor. x. 6). The deliverance from the bondage of Egypt signifies our liberation from the slavery of Satan by Jesus Christ. The journey through the wilderness signifies our pilgrimage in this world, where God gives us His laws, nourishes us with the true Bread of Heaven, and strengthens us with the life-giving fountains of grace. The land of promise refers us to Heaven, which we can conquer and take possession of only after combating the world, the flesh, and the devil.

13. In this beautiful country the Israelites lived happy, and were blessed by God, until, contrary to His express command, they united themselves by marriage to the Gentiles, or Pagans, and thereby fell again into vice and idolatry. As often as they turned away from God He abandoned them to their enemies; but when they returned to Him, He raised among them pious heroes called *Judges*, such as Gedeon, Jephthe, and Samson, who rescued them from their foes.

14. For more than four hundred years the people of Israel were ruled by the high-priests and Judges, who were invested with supreme authority over them; but at length they desired to be governed, like the neighboring nations, by a king. In compliance with their wish, God appointed Saul to be their king, and the Prophet Samuel anointed him in 1095 B.C. He was, however, afterwards rejected by God for his disobedience, and was succeeded by David in 1055. David was strong and mighty: when only a youth, he

signify? What does the journey through the desert signify? What does the promised land call to our mind?

13. How long did the Israelites remain happy in the promised land? What happened to them when they offended God? How did God help them when they repented?

14. Who were the first rulers of the people of Israel? How long were they governed by them? Who was the first King of Israel? Why was he rejected by God? By whom was

had slain the giant Goliath; and having been made king, he extended his kingdom by splendid victories. He served God with an upright heart, and composed in His honor those beautiful sacred songs called *Psalms*, in which, by Divine inspiration, he prophesied many things concerning the Redeemer of the world, who was to be born of his family, and whose kingdom should have no end. For this reason Christ is also called the Son of David.

15. Solomon, his son and successor, was a wise and great king. He built a magnificent temple to the Lord in Jerusalem about the year 1000 B.C. The Sanctuary, or Holy of Holies, was overlaid with plates of the purest gold; and in it was kept the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the two Tables of Laws written by God Himself. The high-priest was the only person who was allowed, once a year, to enter the Sanctuary. The people of Israel had no other temple, nor was any one permitted to offer up sacrifice in any other place, than the temple of Jerusalem. Solomon, however, did not persevere in wisdom and goodness. He married pagan wives, and, towards the end of his life, had the misfortune of being seduced by them from the service of God into the impious practices of idolatry.

16. After Solomon's death, his kingdom was divided (B.C. 980). The tribes of Juda and Benjamin remained faithful to King Roboam, his son, and formed the kingdom of *Juda*, the chief city of which was Je-

he succeeded? What can you tell me of David? Was he also pious? Why are his Psalms so very remarkable? Why is Christ also called the Son of David?

15. Who was Solomon? What famous building did he erect? How was the Sanctuary decorated, and what was kept in it? What did the Ark of the Covenant contain? Who was permitted to enter the Sanctuary, and how many times a year? Had the people of Israel any other temples, or altars? Did Solomon remain wise and good? What made him leave the service of God?

16. What happened after Solomon's death? Which tribes formed the kingdom of Juda? Who was its first king? Which

rusalem. The other ten tribes chose Jeroboam for their King, and made Samaria the capital of their kingdom, which from that time was called the kingdom of *Israel*. At the same time they abandoned the religion of their fathers, built a temple for themselves at Samaria, and introduced many kinds of the most abominable idolatry. God, therefore, delivered them into the hands of the pagan king, Salmanasar, who destroyed the kingdom of Israel for ever, and led the people to Ninive, into the Assyrian Captivity (B.C. 718). The kingdom of Juda was also repeatedly chastised by God for its many transgressions. In 606 Nabuchodonosor (Nebuchadnezzar) II. took Jerusalem, pillaged the temple, and sent the sacred vessels and a large number of Jews to Babylon; and in 588 he entirely demolished the temple and the city, carried Sedecias, the last King of Juda, with the rest of the inhabitants, into the same Babylonian Captivity. But the kingdom of Juda was not destroyed for ever, like the kingdom of Israel, that had forsaken the religion of its fathers.

17. These severe judgments of God did not by any means overtake Juda suddenly and unexpectedly. Men enlightened by God, who were called Prophets, had announced them long before, confirming their words by great miracles, in order to rouse the people to repentance. These same prophets also promised pardon to those who should repent, and prophesied of the Redeemer who was to come. In their books, written many centuries before Christ, we read all the

was its capital? How many tribes constituted the kingdom of Israel? Whom did they choose for their king? Which was the capital of the kingdom of Israel? Did it remain faithful to God? How did God punish it? Did the kingdom of Juda also sin against the Lord? Was it also chastised, and how? Was not its punishment less severe than that of the kingdom of Israel, and why?

17. Did the judgments of God come upon them quite unexpectedly? How did God forewarn the people? Did the prophets only announce God's judgments? What have they fore-

circumstances of His life and sufferings: His birth of a Virgin at Bethlehem, His office of teaching, His miracles, His passion, His death, His resurrection, the sending of the Holy Ghost, the destruction of Jerusalem, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the splendor of the Christian Church; nay, Daniel foretold the very year in which the Saviour was to appear. The most remarkable amongst the prophets are Elias, Eliseus, Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel, and Daniel.

18. During the time of the Captivity, illustrious examples of rare virtues were given by Tobias at Ninive; and at Babylon, by the chaste Susanna, by the three young men in the fiery furnace, and by Daniel in the lions' den. The Babylonian Captivity had already lasted seventy years, when Cyrus, King of Persia, took Babylon, and, by Divine inspiration, gave permission to the Jews to return to their own country (B.C. 536) and to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. In a short time the second temple was finished; and when the old men began to complain that its magnificence was far inferior to that of the first, the Prophet Aggeus foretold to them that the glory of this latter house should be greater than that of the former, because the '*Desired of all nations*,' the Messiah, would enter it (Agg. ii. 8-10).

19. Esdras and Nehemias now reestablished the Divine service in conformity to the law, and collected the Sacred Scriptures, which thenceforth were diligently read and interpreted. All the people shed tears and repented most sincerely. They never more

told of the Messiah? Which prophet foretold the time of His coming most precisely? Which are the most remarkable among the prophets?

18. Who distinguished themselves by their virtues at Ninive and Babylon? How long did the Babylonian Captivity last? How was it brought to an end? What did the Jews most urgently set about after their return? Was the new temple as magnificent as the one that had been demolished? In what was it superior to the first one?

19. What is to be observed about Esdras and Nehemias? How did the people then behave? Did they remain faithful to

returned to the sin of idolatry, which had brought upon their fathers the grievous sufferings of their captivity. When, some time later, Antiochus, King of Syria, tried to compel them to adore idols, they resisted most courageously under the command of the High-Priest Mathathias and his sons; nay, many of them, animated by the glorious example of the aged Eleazar, of the seven brothers, commonly called the Machabees, and of their heroic mother, preferred to suffer the most atrocious of deaths, rather than disobey the law of God (B.C. 170-143).

20. Four thousand years had elapsed since the creation of the world, and the signs that were to precede the coming of the Redeemer of mankind were now accomplished. The Jews longed for it with the greatest anxiety, and even among the Gentiles there was a current opinion that a great Ruler was to rise in Judea. The corruption in which the world was sunk was unbounded. The Jews, indeed, still acknowledged the one true God; but impious sects, such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, had sprung up amongst them, and a great corruption of morals had gained ground. Most of them honored God only with their lips, but their conduct was according to the sinful desires of their heart. All other nations, even the most enlightened among them, the Greeks and Romans, were devoted to the most shameful idolatry. Innumerable were the gods and goddesses to whom they built temples and altars, and offered sacrifices, even of human beings; and whom they believed they particularly honored when they extolled their infamous vices and imitated them without shame or fear.

their Lord and God? How did they show their fidelity? Who especially distinguished themselves at that time?

20. How many years had the world existed before the coming of the Messiah? Were all the signs of His coming accomplished at that time? What was the prevalent feeling of the Jews and the pagans? What was the state of the world? How did this corruption appear among the Jews? And how amongst the other nations? In what did the abomination of idolatry con-

Such were the heathens, as St. Paul testifies (Rom. i. 29-31): 'Filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness; full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity; whisperers, detractors, hateful to God, contumelious, proud, haughty, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, foolish, dissolute, without affection, without fidelity, without mercy.' Who was then able to help and save mankind? God alone; and He did help and did save them. As He had promised to our first parents in Paradise, and foretold by the prophets, He now showed mercy to mankind, when in their utmost degeneracy, and sent them a Redeemer and Saviour; for 'God so loved the world as to give His Only-Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting' (John iii. 16).

HISTORY OF CHRIST.

21. The world was at peace; Augustus was Emperor of Rome, and Herod, the Idumean, King of Judea (§ 8), when the promise of God and the predictions of the prophets were accomplished. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Redeemer of the world, was born, in a stable at Bethlehem, of Mary, a virgin, descended from the royal family of David. His birth was announced by angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem, and by a star to the Wise Men in the East. The cruel Herod made every effort to discover the Divine Infant, that he might put Him to death; but by the Lord's command, Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, fled with Him and His mother to Egypt, and

sist? What character does St. Paul give of the heathens? Was there any one then who could help mankind? Did He help them, and how? What did Christ Himself say on this subject?

21. Under what emperor and what king was the Redeemer born? Where, and of whom, was He born? Who was first told of His birth, and by whom? What did King Herod try to discover, and why? What did St. Joseph do? Where did

did not return till after the death of Herod. Jesus then led a retired life at Nazareth in Galilee, was subject to His parents, and 'advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men' (Luke ii. 52). When He was twelve years old, He went with His parents to Jerusalem to celebrate the Pasch, or Passover, and remained there three days in the temple, astonishing even the Scribes, or doctors of the law, by His wise questions and answers. At the age of thirty He went to the river Jordan to be baptized by John the Baptist. When He came out of the water, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in the shape of a dove, and a voice came from Heaven, saying: 'This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (Matt. iii. 17).

22. Jesus then retired into the desert, and after having fasted and prayed there forty days and forty nights, He began to preach the Gospel—that is, the good tidings of the kingdom of God on earth. He travelled about the towns and villages, and proved His Divine mission and the truth of His doctrine by His holy life, by miracles and prophecies. Those who heard Him were filled with wonder and amazement. Multitudes of people followed Him, praised and extolled Him as the true Messias, and said, 'Never did man speak like this man' (John vii. 46). Jesus selected from His followers twelve men whom He called His *Apostles* or messengers. They were to be witnesses of His doctrine and works, that, after His ascension into Heaven, they might preach what they had seen and heard of Him to all nations. These are the names of the twelve Apostles: Simon, who is

Jesus spend His childhood after His return from Egypt? How did He live there? What did He do when He was twelve years old? What did He do when He was thirty? What happened at His baptism?

22. What did Jesus do after His baptism? What does the word *Gospel* mean? How did Jesus prove His Divine mission? What impression did He make upon the people? How many Apostles did He choose? What does the word *Apostle* signify?