

who was to teach and illustrate the doctrines of grace, in the midst of fiery opposition, must have been converted miraculously. His convictions of his own wickedness and the deceitfulness of his heart must have been intensely pungent, and his sense of deliverance by a crucified Saviour intensely vivid, or he never could set forth those truths justly and impressively. In short, now that we know the whole history of Paul, we see that his entire course, previous to conversion, was just the one best fitted to train him for the part God had assigned him. And yet, before his conversion, we should have wondered why God permitted such a furious persecutor to live and make havoc in the church.

If we follow down the history of the church for three hundred years after Christ, we shall find evidence of the wonder-working providence of God in the ten terrible persecutions which were then experienced. By these onsets, two important objects were accomplished, which probably could have been secured in no other way. The first was the purification of the church, and the second the speedy publication of the gospel in almost every land. For those who were persecuted without mercy at home were scattered abroad every where, and they *could not but speak the things which they had seen and heard*. Living thus in jeopardy of life, and hunted from place to place, they grew rapidly in piety, and, by their holy lives, won over many to embrace the true faith. Nor were the instruments wanting to carry on these persecutions. God had only to take away his restraining influences from the emperors of Rome, and to worry and devour the virtuous and the holy was only acting out the desires of hearts naturally ferocious and cruel, and rendered doubly malignant and vile by long indulgence. Hence it was, that after these despots had been used to accomplish these important objects for the