

III. Ecclesiastical History

(1) History ecclesiastical receiveth the same divisions with history civil: but further in the propriety thereof may be divided into the history of the Church, by a general name; history of prophecy; and history of providence. The first describeth the times of the militant Church, whether it be fluctuant, as the ark of Noah, or movable, as the ark in the wilderness, or at rest, as the ark in the Temple: that is, the state of the Church in persecution, in remove, and in peace. This part I ought in no sort to note as deficient; only I would that the virtue and sincerity of it were according to the mass and quantity. But I am not now in hand with censures, but with omissions.

(2) The second, which is history of prophecy, consisteth of two relatives—the prophecy and the accomplishment; and, therefore, the nature of such a work ought to be, that every prophecy of the Scripture be sorted with the event fulfilling the same throughout the ages of the world, both for the better confirmation of faith and for the better illumination of the Church touching those parts of prophecies which are yet unfulfilled: allowing, nevertheless, that latitude which is agreeable and familiar unto divine prophecies, being of the nature of their Author, with whom a thousand years are but as one day, and therefore are not fulfilled punctually at once, but have springing and germinant accomplishment throughout many ages, though the height or fulness of them may refer to some one age. This is a work which I find deficient, but is to be done with wisdom, sobriety, and reverence, or not at all.

(3) The third, which is history of Providence, containeth that excellent correspondence which is between God's revealed will and His secret will; which though it be so obscure, as for the most part it is not legible to the natural man—no, nor many times to those that behold it from the tabernacle—yet, at some times it pleaseth God, for our better establishment and the confuting of those which are as without God in the world, to write it in such text and capital letters, that, as the prophet saith, “He that runneth by may read it”—that is, mere sensual persons, which hasten by God's judgments, and never bend or fix their cogitations upon them, are nevertheless in their passage and race urged to discern it. Such are the notable events and examples of God's judgments, chastisements, deliverances, and blessings; and this is a work which has passed through the labour of many, and therefore I cannot present as omitted.

(4) There are also other parts of learning which are appendices to history. For all the exterior proceedings of man consist of words and deeds, whereof history doth properly receive and retain in memory the deeds; and if words, yet but as inducements and passages to deeds; so are there other books and writings which are appropriate to the custody and receipt of words only, which likewise are of three sorts—orations, letters, and brief speeches or sayings. Orations are pleadings, speeches of counsel, laudatives, invectives, apologies, reprehensions, orations of formality or ceremony, and the like. Letters are according to all the variety of occasions, advertisements, advises, directions, propositions, petitions, commendatory, expostulatory, satisfactory, of compliment, of pleasure, of discourse, and all other passages of action. And such as are written from wise men, are of all the words of man, in my judgment, the best; for they are more natural than orations and public speeches, and more advised than conferences or present speeches. So again letters of affairs from such as manage them, or are privy to them, are of all others the best instructions for history, and to a diligent reader the best histories in themselves. For apophthegms, it is a great loss of that book of Cæsar's; for as his history, and those few letters of his which we have, and those apophthegms which were of his

own, excel all men's else, so I suppose would his collection of apophthegms have done; for as for those which are collected by others, either I have no taste in such matters or else their choice hath not been happy. But upon these three kinds of writings I do not insist, because I have no deficiencies to propound concerning them.

(5) Thus much therefore concerning history, which is that part of learning which answereth to one of the cells, domiciles, or offices of the mind of man, which is that of the memory.

Revision #1

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Updated 2019-08-13 15:58:06 UTC by Textpedia