

selves deeply concerned in precepts with which in reality we have little or nothing to do. And it is no imputation cast on the wisdom or goodness of God, to assert that all parts of the Scriptures are not equally intelligible to all men, because this is a defect (if we may use such an expression in treating of such a subject) which arises from the natural condition of things, and for which the natural condition of things supplies a remedy. For the same diversity of talents and education which renders some men better qualified than others to understand and interpret the bible, provides also a resource for the ignorant, in the assistance which they may derive from the studies of the more discerning and more learned of their brethren."

Many remarks will crowd on the mind of the Catholic while he peruses this passage: we shall notice one. Mr. Bloomfield tells us, that the obscurity of passages in Holy Writ arises from the natural condition of things, and that the natural condition of things supplies a remedy. The natural condition of things is a happy expression: but let us put it to the test, and see how well it applies in the present instance. The Church of England, as every one knows, is engaged in a controversy with the Independents on the divinity of Christ. We will take the two celebrated texts. *I and my father are one. The Father is greater than I.* Either of these texts, taken separately, is in appearance easy to be understood. Place them by each other, and they become obscure. Does the obscurity arise from the condition of things? No: it arises from the apparent contradiction between them, whence it is necessary to explain one by the other, though neither affords any clue by which you may discover the origin of the difficulty. But then, says Mr. Bloomfield, the condition of things supplies a remedy in the assistance to be derived from men of talents and education. But if men of talents and education, disagree, where is the remedy?—The minister of the Church of England will give me one explanation, the minister of the independent congregation another. Both may be supposed men of education, both blessed with talents. Truly in this case the remedy, as is vulgarly said, will prove worse than the disease: it will make obscurity more obscure.

Mr. Bloomfield proceeds in the language of Catholic polemics.

"But to say that the bible, when put into the hands of the unlearned, requires no comment nor explanation, is to say that no important passages of Scriptures can be misunderstood by the sincere inquirers after truth: and yet all the numberless sects into which the Christian world is divided, if questioned as to the authority on which they ground their contrary doctrines, refer us to the bible."

He is, however, soon compelled to adopt that language of uncertainty and conjecture which has arisen from the first, the fundamental principle of the reformation, and the consequent divisions of those who have left the Catholic communion to follow different and often contradictory systems of belief. He says.

It is not for us to determine, whether the man-

sion of heaven be a palace with many gates: but of the countless variety of paths by which Christians seek to arrive at it, some must surely be more direct and safe than others: it is therefore our duty, at the same time that we point out to our weaker brethren the high prize of their calling, and teach them duly to appreciate its value, it is our duty, I say to place them, if we can, in that line of faith and practice which we ourselves believe to be the safest and the best."

After describing the exertions of the Society, whose cause he advocates, he proceeds thus:

"If Christianity is to be propagated at all, it must be in some particular form of profession: as to what this form should be, mankind are divided in opinion. The bible, it is true, is the standard by which they are to be judged of: but if every man is to be left without help or guidance to construct his own creed from the Bible, we know that an endless diversity of belief will ensue, and that all cannot be right. We believe that in all points of importance, the doctrine and regimen of our church are scriptural and primitive; and that therefore our profession is the true one. It is possible that we may be mistaken, but that does not affect the present question. As long as we believe that we are right, and that others are wrong, that is, as long as we are conscientious members of our own establishment, it would be difficult to select any charitable institution, which has equal claims upon our liberality with that whose object is to promote the cause, and propagate the blessings of genuine Christianity, by putting into the hands of the lower classes of society the volume of Holy Writ, and by teaching them to understand the mystery of Godliness in that sense, in which so many pious and learned men have for so many ages concurred." p. 18.

Is this then the result of the reformation; of that glorious work which was to bring back men to the profession of genuine Christianity? Is this the result, that no man can be certain whether he follow the true religion of Christ or not? Yes; so it is.—The reformation has "left every individual to construct his own creed from the Bible:" or if it has afforded him "help and guidance," it is the help and guidance of men fallible like himself. Hence it has stripped religion of certainty; it has reduced it to a mere matter of conjecture. Though the most learned man "believe that his profession is the true one," yet he knows, as Mr. B. observes, "that it is possible he may be mistaken. But where do the Scriptures give to the religion of Christ these attributes of doubt and uncertainty?"

Mr. B. tells us, that the object of the Society is to propagate genuine Christianity, by putting the bible into the hands of the lower classes, and "teaching them to understand it in that sense in which so many pious and learned men have for so many ages concurred." that is, in plain English, by interpreting the Bible according to the tradition of the established Church. This is not the language, but it is, and always has been, the practice of the Protestants. They declaim, indeed, against the Church of Rome, for explaining the Scripture according to tradition. "This is in "the natural

condition of things:" for otherwise they could not excuse their rebellion against her authority. But in practice they explain the Scripture themselves according to their own tradition, preserved in their respective creeds, confessions, and articles. And this also is in the "natural condition of things;" for otherwise their Churches could not be preserved. They would fall into fragments: they would offer a scene of even more lamentable confusion than they do at present. Nor is there any thing surprising in this contradiction between their practice and professions. It is the inevitable consequence, when men rise in opposition to legitimate authority, and arrogate to themselves the very authority which they have disclaimed in others.

As to the two societies, it is easy to predict their fate. In defiance of the efforts of Mr. Bloomfield and his colleagues, the bible society will continue to eclipse its orthodox antagonist. It is founded on principles more congenial to the public opinion: its interests are espoused and propagated with greater enthusiasm: and the meetings of its auxiliary societies afford more numerous opportunities to young and would-be orators, to display their eloquence to an applauding auditory. But in a few years the charm of novelty will have worn away; and it will gradually sink into the obscurity and insignificance which have so long been the lot of the Society for promoting Christian knowledge.

*Copy of a Lettre vnto Mastyr Hawkyns, Ambassadour with the Emprors Magestic.*

[From the Harleian MSS.—See Archæologia.]

"In my most hartie wise I commende me unto you and even so woulde be right gladd to here of your welfare, &c. These be to advertise you that inasmoche as you nowe and than take some paynes in wrytyng unto me I woulde be lothe you shuld thynke your Labour utterly lost and forgotten for lake of wrytyng agayne, therefore and bycause I reken you be some dele desirous of suche newis as hath byn here with us of late in the Kyngis graces matters, I cntend to enforme you a parte thereof accordyng to the tenure and purporte vsyd in that behalf. Ande fyrste as touchyng the small deternacion and concludyng of the Matter of devorse betwene my Lady Kateren and the Kyngs gracie, whiche said matter after the Convocacion in that behalf hadde deternyed and agreed accordyng to the former consent of the Vniuersities, yt was thought convenient by the Kyng and his lernyd counceill that I shuld repayre unto Dunstable, which ys within iiiiij myles vnto Ampnell where the said Lady Katheren kepeth her howse, and there to call her before me, to here the synall Sentance in this said mateir. Notwithstandyng she would not att all obey thereunto, for whan she was by Doctour Lee cited to appe[ar] by a daye she utterly refused the same, sayyng that inasmoche as her cause was before the Pope she would have none other Judge, and therefore would not take me for her Judge. Nevertheless the viijth daye of Mayo, accordyng to the said appoyntment, I came vnto Dunstable, my Lorde of Lyncoln, heying assistante vnto me, and my Lorde of Wynchester, Doctour Bell, D. Clay