

cidental?" We would, they would say "providential," and then the taunt is already half answered. For it is all very well to rebuke the spirit of boasting; the Scripture itself rebukes it, and says, Who maketh thee to differ? But does it follow that the goodness of Providence is not to be devoutly acknowledged? Does it make truth the less valuable that the mind that has been privileged to see it, must own a divine illumination? And if by human instrumentalities provided to us without our foresight, and by favourable influences brought to bear on us while yet unconscious of them, our minds were induced to choose the good and avoid the evil, are we less to appreciate the favour of Providence that led us thus in the right way and preserved us from the paths of the destroyer? The fact, if admitted, that under other circumstances we might have been what others are, is no argument that all circumstances are indifferent, or all creeds alike safe. The apostle does not speak thus. He distinguishes between the truth that saves, and the lie that is damning. He connects the hope of salvation with the belief and love of the truth, and he gives thanks on behalf of those—surely teaching them to be thankful themselves—whom God had chosen, and who by the gospel had been called. Only be sure that you have been brought to know the truth spiritually, and that you are able to give a reason for your faith and your hope; then care not for the taunt, you believe just as your fathers and others believed. None the worse surely for your faith, if these loved it before you; and only an additional reason for thanksgiving to God's preventing goodness, who, purposing your salvation, anticipated your own choice and counsel; and so early familiarized you with the lessons of wisdom that your decision at length for God and for truth seemed easy, and your very prejudices have seemed to be on virtue's side. But it is well, howsoever you derived your convictions, when you can say like the people of Samaria, to her who first guided them to Christ: "Now we believe, not because of your word, but we have heard him ourselves." So, however, led by parents, or led by pastors, bless God if you have heard and proved the word to your own content. And to him who would say: "Had you been born among Mahometans, you would have been a Mahometan; had you been trained a Ro-