

they may be said to be *perfect* in contradistinction to those who have just set out on their christian course, though they may be sound and entire also.

Our Lord compares the Church to a field of corn in this respect :—there is “first the blade, then the ear, “after that the full corn in the ear.” They are all living characters which are distinguished by this metaphor, but not equal in respect to growth. Like the trees in a garden, some have so far attained perfection as to bring forth fruit; but their productions are various and will be progressive. So is it with Christians: however eminent they may be for gifts and graces, their feelings and language are identical with those of the Apostle,—“Not as though I had already attained, either were “already perfect, but I follow after;” I am pursuing the point to which God purposes to bring me; “I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God “in Christ Jesus.” The allusion also of the Apostle to “babes in Christ,”—to “young men,”—and to “fathers,” justifies the application, in a limited sense, of the term *perfect* to mature and advanced Christians, in contradistinction to those who have recently set out on their Christian course.

But the Scriptures notice a third stage of advancement in perfection, and that is *complete and consummate perfection*.

It is to this which the Apostle alludes when he speaks of the *spirits of just men made perfect*; that is sinless,—without flaw or blemish,—without fault before God: a state attainable only in the world to come, only by those who “have washed their robes and made them white in “the blood of the Lamb.”\*

I have introduced this lengthened definition of the term “perfect,” contained in the text, as well to avoid

---

\* For some of the sentiments here expressed, I am indebted to a Sermon of the Rev. R. Cecil on this text.