

Whatever philosophy may boast of the light of nature, whatever the powers of reason by their most unwearied exertions may have investigated, yet all who can justly appreciate the inestimable privilege of possessing the written word of God, that word which its Author " * has magnified above all things," will most gratefully and devoutly acknowledge that this is the sole authentic repository of divine wisdom, truth, mercy, and consolation to mankind.

Of this great blessing it has pleased Almighty God of his infinite goodness to make us partakers: it is a gift which we have " freely received;" the legacy of Heaven, transmitted to us through many generations by the God of our Fathers; and which we are bound not only to preserve among ourselves, but also to propagate as widely as possible for the general benefit of our fellow creatures.

The occasion therefore on which we are now assembled concerns not merely the

* Psalm cxxxviii. v. 2.