

accidentalism. At one time, it comes as a gross overflowing of vice; at another, as an æsthetic religiousness, a love of the beautiful, of that which soothes and pleases, and not of that which instructs and purifies. At the present time, opposition to the truth shows itself, in different places, in these specified, and other ways; and we are all called upon to deal with it in some of its phases, and therefore have we need both to watch the signs of the times, and to gird on the whole armour of God.

Such observations have been elicited by the manifested desire for change in the forms of worship, and in the expressed weariness of listening to divine truth. Are these novelties? or are they forms of opposition which have been encountered before? Our text evidences that they are only modifications of certain forms of opposition to the gospel which were manifested in very early times. As early as the Apostle Paul's day, there were those who considered the preaching of the gospel, both as to its matter and manner, as foolishness. Was he thereby led to adopt a style of preaching more in accordance with the prevailing taste? By no means. If he had pleased men, and pandered to their follies and prejudices, he would not have been the servant of God. Nor must the ministers of Christ now yield to the unspiritual longings of the world; but, avoiding all just occasions of offence, hold forth the gospel in its simplicity and purity, knowing this, that though to the lost it will prove foolishness, to them that are called it will ever manifest itself as "the power of God and the wisdom of God" for salvation.

1st. The first thought suggested by the text is this:—That men are unable of themselves to discover a way of salvation.

The light of nature sufficed to lead men a certain distance in divine truth. Viewing the works of creation, they were impressed with the wisdom and power of the Creator. But how imperfect were their conceptions of him, and especially of his moral nature, let the superstitions of heathenism declare. The natural conscience revealed much of his will for the guidance of human conduct; but its protests against evil, its calls to virtue, were all too weak to resist the overflowings of sinfulness. Resistance weakened its voice, and continued disregard silenced it. Yet these, the testimony of nature to God, and the voice of conscience, left men without excuse, and demonstrated that the natural heart of man was alienated from God, and without the desire of knowing or glorifying him. They proved that the evil of ignorance lay not with God, but in man; in his disinclination to what was holy and divine. Men voluntarily shut their eyes to the light that was in and around them; they wilfully remained ignorant of what might have been known, preferring the darkness to the light. "When they knew

God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful."

Nor can it be said that the experiment of human nature was not fairly tried. The time was long. For thousands of years men were left to work out the knowledge of God; to grope, as it were, after him, by the aid of natural lights, if haply they might find him. For many ages the light of revealed truth was confined to one nation; all the rest of the world was left to the guidance of natural reason, and the dim traditions of the past. No doubt this was for wise and good ends: what these were we may not fully know; this we do know, that we are thereby satisfied that by the wisdom of man is not the knowledge of God.

The profound moral and spiritual darkness which overshadowed the lands of heathenism, the degradation of the masses, the debasing superstitions, and the unrebuked vice and licentiousness, present a fearful picture of the fruits of natural reason. When men boast of human wisdom, it is enough to point to these things in reply. Then was the night of humanity; the dawn appeared on the mountains of Judea, and the day was ushered in by the arising of the Sun of righteousness with healing under his wings. Surely such things are well fitted to humble the pride of intellect, and to satisfy us that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. There were great men in those days, men of mighty intellect, men who towered above their fellows as mountains above the plain, men whose eyes pierced far into the darkness of nature; yet they failed to find God; none of them could point out the road of acceptable approach to the Deity, nor provide a means of atonement for the sins of the world. God would hereby teach us that the true and saving knowledge of himself must come from on high. Human intelligence fails, man is unequal to the work of salvation, it is by the interposition of God that heavenly wisdom and eternal life must be brought to the soul. The lesson was a solemn one, and on a vast scale. Happy is the man who lays it to heart, renouncing self-confidence, forsaking all refuges of lies, and humbly seeking, as a gift from the mercy of the heavenly Father, what he cannot discover or procure for himself.

2nd. Not to dwell on a thought which is very familiar, consider, in the second place, how God was pleased to spread light and life amongst the children of men.

Man being unable of himself to attain to a saving knowledge of God, God was pleased to reveal himself, first by his prophets, who were from the beginning, and last of all by his Son, whom he set forth both as a Teacher of truth, and as the propitiation for the sins of the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. In Christ Jesus, God provided men with a sacrifice to atone for sin, and a righteousness to secure an eternal inheritance: to these he