

"that they all might be damned," as necessarily importing that every adherent of the Papacy is doomed to certain destruction.* But surely it is a very solemn warning of the danger of wilful departure from the truth; for the Apostle at least affirms that where error works its full effect in enslaving the mind and corrupting the heart, it is indeed deadly or damning. Nor are the fatal consequences the less certain, that in righteous judgment a Holy God may have permitted the victims of deadly error to be deceived, yea, has "sent them strong delusions that they should believe a lie." For still it is, because they received not the love of the truth, and first of all had pleasure in unrighteousness. How relieving it is to find such an awful statement accompanied with so clear a testimony to the certain connection between faith and salvation!—"they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." This implies that salvation is in very deed brought nigh. How relieving it is also to find, along with this prediction of the dismal night of error that was soon to set in upon the church, so distinct an intimation of its destined close also, or of the sure decline of antichristianism, and its destruction in due season: "that wicked one, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming!"

The Apostle moreover comforts himself with the assured expectation which he felt warranted to entertain, that faithful witnesses should not be wanting in the darkest time, and that these, his converts at Thessalonica, should stand fast in the hour of temptation.¹³ It is well, however, to be warned against even the beginnings of spiritual declension; and it is just when one is contemplating the dismal effects of error in those who have never been truly enlightened, that the most intense gratitude should be felt to a gracious Providence, if it has prevented us from the seducing and corrupting influences which might have proved fatal to us no less than to others. This is the spirit that characterizes the apostle's expressions in the verses we have selected for exposition:

* The word literally means "judged,"—yet in the sense of "condemned" as our version takes it.