[:Vol. I.

DECISION FOR CHRIST, and the featurest of the children of the Lord, I will follow thee whithersveyer thou goest."

Thur 9, 57.

Thy path is not where earth's glories shine, 12.

Through her fresh green fields where the flowers

are bright:
But the path thou choosest shall be mine, For rough or smooth it must be right. Though briers and thorns obstruct the way, O what are thorns or briers to me, If thy gracious words console and stay, ... If I may for ever follow thee!

(From a Scrap Book.)

SERMON BEFORE THE CHURCH MIS-SIONARY SOCIETY: 3 Preached in the year 1841. BY THE REV. FRANCIS CLOSE, OF CHELTENHAM.

I CORINTINANS, i. 21. After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleused God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that be-

The mighty aggressive movement of the Church of God upon the dark masses of Heathenism, in these last days, is beginning to attract universal attention. Not only the devout Christian, or the student of prophecy, but the legislator, the philosopher, the philan-thropist, even the mercantile speculator himself, is compelled in some measure to observe the progress of British Missions. It becomes therefore an important duty, calmly to consider the principles upon which these operations are conducted, and the results which have followed; that we may be enabled to determine whether this thing is of God, or whether it is a

merely human effort.

And when we would obtain a satisfactory answer to this question, to what test shall we have recourse?—in what balances shall we weigh it? Various opinions are entertained upon this subject; and many of them very erroneous. Some persons contemplate this great undertaking through the medium of their fancy and their romantic feelings; while others regard it on the principle of cold rationality. Some look at it through the medium of their own interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy; and so are tempted, alternately, either traced to its wisdom, and to the inflated pride to exaggerate or diminish their estimate of of its philosophy. Exactly parallel is the our successes, according to the particular conclusion at which St. Paul arrives, in anphecy; and so are tempted, alternately, either our successes, according to the particular conclusion at which St. Paul arrives, in anschool to which they belong. But whither other Epistle-Romans i.—where he gives a should a Christian turn, but to the New complete and succinct account of the origin Testament? And how may we hope so accurately to solve the problem, as by referring to that first great promulgation of the Gospel, by means of which the ancient world was evangelized; and by which we ourselves are now assembled to worship God, to hear His word, and praise Him? Turn we, then, to primitive Christianity.

This is not only the most simple, the most sure and certain, but it is the only authoritative guide in this matter. If this modern effort do not resemble the ancient--if it vary in principle, in manner, or in result-then we may safely disregard it as unworthy of our support. But if, after a careful comparison between the ancient and the modern attempt to promulgate the truth as it is in Jesus-if, after reading diligently the Acts of the Apostles, and gleaning from the inspired Epistles of those holy men the manner in which they first propagated Christianity, and the results which followed—if cover that the state of the Heathen is the same, that the remedy offered them is identical, and that the same blessing of God has followed—then the conclusion is unavoidable :—we are bound to promote this holy cause, and it is at

our peril we disregard it! This, then, shall be my present attempt—in simple dependence upon Hist, whose prerogative it is to bring strength out of weakness, and wisdom out of folly, and to impart salvation by the foolishness of preaching! In sole reliance on divine help and strength, and believing that there are many prayers ascending from the hearts of God's faithful people, I enter on this investigation. And may the Spirit of the Most High God descend, and move upon the face of this assembly !

In the words of the text, the Apostle pre sents a complete epitome of the first promulgation of Christianity. It shall be my endeavour carefully to compare this with our present extended effort to make the Redeemer's name known among the Gentiles.

I. Let us consider the testimony here AFFORDED US RESPECTING THE FIRST, PROMUL-GATION OF THE GOSPEL :- After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Here observe, First, THE CONDITION OF THE THEN HEATHEN worker ;- they knew not God, and they were lost. Secondly, THE REMEDY WHICH GOD PROVIDED FOR THEIR RELIEF; -the foolishness of Preaching: And, Thirdly, THE RESULT WHICH FOLLOWED; -It saved them that

I. Hear, then, the witness of Revelation, respecting the state of the Heathen World as It was in the days of the Apostle; -they knew recollect the period of history when this testimony was recorded. It was not in a barbarous
age, nor in an uncivilized, uneducated country,
that St. Paul uttered this declaration. It was
in the evening of the Augustin age; who who is the idea is that of preaching?
The words rendered "preaching? vary in the
original; here the idea is that of proc. Aninxa,
man's intellect, had been developed to the utmost extent; when he had learned all that not God!" Nor is it unimportant that we should most extent; when he had learned all that was great in science and in literature, in arts and in civilization !- it was when speetry, and painting, and oratory, and the metaphysical and mathematical sciences had been brought to a degree of perfection, to which, in these degenerate times; we scarcely aspire; -it was then that this testimony was borne. If was 1. February in 1 not on the wandering Arab's tent, not on the 1 Corinthians x. 20.

" Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy!" Nor was this merely coincidence: it was CAUSALITY. The language of my text, the testimony of all Scripture, and the evidence of universal History, substantiate this remarkable fact; viz. that unsanctified wisdom and intellectual cultivation have been the fruitful parents of idolatry and infidelity. In the proudest cities of the world, the wealthiest, the most highly cultivated, the most scientific, there have ever been found the most abominable idolatries, with their attendant licentiousness and infidelity—evils which Philosophy has itself promoted. So the Apostle declares, The world by wisdom knew not God; or as the original imports, "by means of wisdom:" that is, the world's ignorance of God emanated from wisdom itself!—a testimony borne, not only against that particular age, but against ull preceding ages. The phraseology of the text implies long anterior retrospection: After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God. After thousands of years had rolled by, St. Paul-looking back to Egypt, where Science was born and cradled—to Egypt, with its innumerable reptile gods—to Babylon, where Science was nourished and matured, and whither the Grecian Sages went to light their lamps; contemplating these ancient fountains of philosophy, no less than its wide flowing streams in times more recent— the inspired man traces all the spiritual blindness and ignorance of the world to the pride of its secular philosophy, and declares that the world by wisdom knew not God! With regard to Babylon more parlicularly—that gay, luxurious city, who thought to be a lady for ever the prophet Isaiah-chap. xlvii.-after having described the gross licentiousness and degrading idolatry which prevailed, records this testimony of God against her:—Thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Here all the abominations of Babylon are vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was durkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools:—and thence sprung their idolatry; for he adds, And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. In like manner, he teaches the Corinthians that this carnal knowledge, this secular philosophy, hinders, rather than promotes, the growth of true religion—1 Cor. iii.

18. If any man among you seemeth to be wise

God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Had they not been lost, they would not have stood in need of salvation by faith in Christ. And, melancholy as the truth may be, all Scripture, and more particularly the New Testament, declares that the heathen world, without the knowledge of the True God, is under His curse and condemnation;—that diabolical influence is extended over it—the sway of Satan, The God of this world; and that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: lost, ruined, perishing, they go down into darkness, without hope, without Christ, and without God in the world. —Dark picture of Heathenism, as drawn by an uncrring

in this world, let him become a fool that he may

the kingdom of heaven.—This, then, is the testimony of God respecting the heathen

2. But let us next consider the METHOD OF RELIEF WHICH GOD PROVIDED FOR THESE LOST ONES :- After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God ! Here is something in which the Lord delight-eth;—here is a thought rising in the deep eth;—here is a thought rising in the deep bosom of the Almighty, which diffused joy even in that tranquil holy place: It pleused God! And what was it that pleased God? It was that which man despiseth—It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Oh, let us beware how we say one word against preaching! Preaching is that which pleaseth God: it is the ordinance which the has seen fit; succially to amount for which He has seen fit specially to appoint for the salvation of sinners, and the gathering together of His elect. Very dangerous is it, to exalt one ordinance of God against another and to extol the Sacraments while we depre-

whatever may be the exact import of the word in the sacred text, the term "preaching" eems to be generally used in a peculiar sense in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the rest of the New Testament. Preaching may be distinguished in some measure, though not al-

Fphesians ii., 1-3, 12. I l'eter iv. 3, &c.

wild Indian's hut, that these words were in- together, from the ordinary instruction of which contains it! The Gospel so preached, profound widom that the light of Truth was scribed; but on the polished marbles of Athens pastors in the Church of Christ: it is not so gives an uncertain sound, and none will pre- confined for 2000, years to the little land of and on the walls of proud, imperial Rome.
With all their knowledge and intellectual cultivation, they knew not God. Alas, for the promulgation of the Truth to those who never pitiable result of human wisdom! heard it. It pleased God by the proclamation of His heralds, or by the evangelical declarations of His Missionaries, to save them that believe. Preaching is a summons from the God of heaven and earth, to His rebel, children, to lay down their arms. It is the proclamation of the lawful Sovereign; it is the offer of free pardon and mercy from the King of kings and Lord of lords.

This peculiarity of preaching is strongly marked in verse 17. When St. Paul says, Christ sent me, not to baplize, but to preach the Gospel, he would not lead us to suppose for a moment that he depreciated the sacred ordinance of baptism; but, that the administration of that sacrament formed no part of the herald's office, to which he felt himself more particularly called. His first and highest duty was, to publish his message—to proclaim mercy and salvation to a gailty world—to call upon the rebels to lay down their arms ;-and when they had submitted and obeyed, when they had repented and believed, then he would cause them to be baptized, and to be signed with the sign of the cross, the emblem and seal of the faith into which they had been baptized. The same appointed order is observed in the original commission of all Apostles and Ministers: Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every crea ure—baptizing them:—first preach, and then baptize. Preaching is the converting ordinance; baptism the seal and ratification of conversion. Preaching, in this sense, is for unbelievers; the Sacraments are for the edification and sanctification of be-

lievers. Nor must the substance of this preaching be overlooked. This proclamation—this message of mercy—may all be comprised in one word; it is—Christ. Christ, the first; Christ, the last; Christ, the alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending. When the Apostles first stole from house to house among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, what did they preach? They taught and preached Jesus Christ. When Philip went down to Samaria, what message did he deliver? he preached Christ uno the m! When Paul was apprehended, and was suffered to address the people at the top of the stairs, he testified of esus, who met him in the way. On Mars' Hill, to the polished Athenians, he preached Jesus, and the Resurrection; and his uniform determination was to know nothing among the Gentiles, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Salvation, full, free, complete, offered, without money and without price, to guilty, lost, and ruined man—this is preceding—this is the proclamation of the grace of God. To exhibit Christ, in all the glories of His person, as God manifest in the flesh, as Immanuel, God with us; in all the sufficiency of His offices, as the Prophet, Priest, Advocate, and King of His people; in all the riches of His grace, pardoning the vilest sinners, receiving the faraway prodigal again to His bosom, sanctifying and building up His elect people—this is o be wise. He must unlearn his knowledge; he must retrace his steps; he must humble the pride of his philosophy and wisdom. Except ye be converted, and become as lettle children, said our Blessed Lord, ye shall not enter into preach the Gospel: he that preacheth Christ, preacheth the Gospel; and he that doth not set forth Christ, preacheth not the Gospel.

One great peculiarity, however, in that preaching which please h God, and which He has appointed for the salvation of the world, the philosophic Greeks, the cross of Christ was foolishness; and to those alone who believed, was it the power of God unto salvation according to the assertion of the eighteenth verse, The preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness.—But this is by no means the principal, nor the most obvious and striking interpretation of this phrase. By intended the simplicity of preaching—un-adorned, and undisguised by human wisdom and philosophy. He says, in verse 17: Christ sent me, not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. And again, in the twenty-fifth verse, The foolishness of God is wiser than man; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. It is evident here, that he is contrasting the simplicity and apparent feebleness of the office of preaching with the profound wisdom of man proving, that the foolishness of God is wiser than men. In like manner, in the second chapter, he declares further: And I, bre-thren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring un'o you the testimony of God. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling: And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, bu in the power of God. We learn from these various passages, that it is possible not only not to preach the Gospel at all, but even so to preach Christ and His Gospet, that we strip them of their power. It is not preaching alone that will save souls, but the foolishness of preaching—the simplicity of it. Conceal it in the tangled web of human sophistry, garnish it with the flowers of human cloquence, obscure it with the dusky mantle of antiquity, present it in a lordly dish and what do you? You adestroy its hidden power! You make the cross of Christ of none effect! You may attract the eye of man from the precious and lovely pearl, to the gorgeous stones in which it is set : you divert the mind from the jewel, to the casket

* Aus v. 12. viii. 5. xxii. 2.

† 1 Corinthians ii. 2.

pare themselves to the battle. It is only simple, plain, affectionate, Scriptural declarations of God's Truth, unreserved, full, and free, flowing from the heart, and spoken in the power and demonstration of the Spirit—it is only such and heaven, and in hell, that man never yet preaching as this, that can save them that believe. This is God's remedy. This is that, which the Apostle declares was the salvation of the heathen world. It was not pompous revelation from heaven. All this was by the shows, nor complicated ceremonies nor empty forms: it was not the elevation of the Host, nor the sounding of sweet music, nor those things which delight the carnal senses of man: it was not these which subdued the world to Christ; but it was before the simplicity of God's Truth that the proud Dagon of heathen superstition bowed, and sunk, and fell down! And in the course of years, the still small voice of this blessed Gospel won its way from heart to heart, like the trickling brook through the pebbles of the valley, until it fell into the wide ocean of God's mercy, and the civilized heathen world became Christian.

3. This leads me to consider THE RESULT WHICH FOLLOWED FROM THE APPLICATION OF THIS BLESSED REMEDY TO THE HEATHEN WORLD.

In no part of the original commission of our Lord to His Disciples, nor in any of the writings of His Apostles subsequently, can I find any intimation that all the world would believe, and be saved. From the very wording of the first divine commission, a different conclusion might be expected:—Go ye into all the world, said our Lord, and preach the Gospel to every creature. But will every creature receive it ?- He adds: He that beliereth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be damned. And this is the nature of the Gospel dispensation to the end of time: for he adds, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Thus it hath been from the beginning until now; and for any thing we can see to the contrary, so it will be. Exactly in accordance with this view is the language of the Apostle in my text: It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save—whom? ALL THE WORLD? EVERY CREATURE? NO-THEM only THAT BELIEVE. An attentive perusal of the beau-tiful Gospel history, as detailed in the Acts of the Apostles, will lead inevitably to the conclusion that the first promulgation of Christianity proceeded far more slowly than is generally supposed. The descriptions we meet with in the writings of some persons, would lead us to imagine that an Apostle had but to appear in a heathen city, and all the gods bowed down before him, and every man immediately acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah. But, so far from this, the history records, that in some class he was beaten and persecuted; in others, he was beaten with stripes: he scatters his seed in different places, here a little, and there a little: here certain men cleave unto him—there some of them believe: Lydia a seller of purple, or a Roman jailor: two or three, or a household: and at hest, what is it? It came to pass, that some believed, and some believed not; or, it is related, that As many as were ord ined to eterned life, believed. Such is the description of the first promulgation of Christianity afforded us in the Acts of the Apostles. The Truth was not embraced immediately by every one who heard it; but many years were occupied in its publication; and nearly three conjuries clapsed before the civilized world became Christian. And we have reason to be cauwe come to hasty conclusions reous, lest specting the results of the modern attempt to diffuse Christianity, through a mistaken es-

timate of the original and Apostolic Mission. But there is one characteristic of these results which demands our attention. In all cases, the Gospel saved them that believed :upon this important truth the mind should dwell. Look at the converts; whether they were of Jewry, or of Corinth, or of Athens, or the barbarous people at Melita; wherever it might be, the effect which followed the preaching of the Gospel was the same :- As many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name : which were born, no! of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of In the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and indeed throughout the whole of the New Testament, we meet with beautiful descriptions of the moral change which took place in the converts: They passed from death unto life-from darkness to lightfrom the power of Satan unto God. Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of wr Urd Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Men as fierce as lions, became as gentle as lambs; ferocious men became kind; licentious men pure; impious men devout. These—these were the effects, which uniformly followed in them that believed! This was the result, which the Apostle described: After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew no! God, it pleased God by the fo lishness of preaching to save them that believe—to save them with an everlasting and complete salvation-to deliver them from the curse and burden, from the practice and dominion of sin-to set their hearts at liberty; so that, like the lame man in the Temple, they walked, and lesped and praised God.

But this subject would be incomplete, if we did not notice the important declaration of the Apostle, that all these things were by the wisd.m of God. This expression must be referred to the whole passage—to the wisdom and to the findishness, to the ignorance and the illumination. It was in the deep wisdom of G.d, that He permitted the heathen world to grope at noon-day as in thick darkness: it was in His

· lohn i. 12, 13, to Corinth vi bliss

confined for 2000, years to the little land of Cansan, and to the narrow tribes of Israel: and thus man was left to struggle with the omnipotency of his own knowledge, wisdom, and phi-losophy; that it might be made clear, in earth permission of God—The times of this ignorance, God winked at: but the ficilihness of preaching was the direct ordinance of God: and both alike proclaim His wisdom: for this feelishness of preaching, this doctrine of grace, this salvation of the tender of tion of thousands, was drawn out of the profound wisdom, as well as out of the tender love and good pleasure of our God.

Thus have we contemplated the words of the text as an epitome of the early promulgation of Christianity; exhibiting alike the state of the then world, the remedy provided for them, and the results which followed.

(To be continued.)

AGAINST PREVAILING ERRORS.

THE LORD BISHOP OF WORCESTER.

(II. PEPYS, D. D.)

"Give not needless offence to the laity. I am far from recommending any improper compromise with the vices, the follies, or even the prejudices of your people. Preach the word of God fearlessly, nor ever allow the shame of man to prevent you from performing your im-portant functions, through evil report and good report; but such a conscientious discharge of your duties, as the ministers of Christ, is perfectly consistent with the exercise of a due discretion in things indifferent. Thus if certain forms, which may or may not be sanctioned by the practice of primitive antiquity, but which have certainly fallen into desuctude for the last two hundred years, convey to the minds of the laity the impression of a tendency towards the formality of the Romish service, it would be most unwise, especially without the authority of his di-ocesan, for any young minister to attempt their revival. It is a trite observation, that no quality of the human mind is more rare than that of common sense; and certainly we have never had so much cause to make it, as when we have seen churches deserted, and consequently the means of usefulness in a minister entirely destroyed, because he would persist, in opposition to the expressed wishes of his congregation, in performing certain forms, which, however in themselves indifferent, give offence to them. Things in themselves indifferent, cease to be so when the adoption of them creates a suspicious feeling in the minds of those committed to our charge, and indisposes them to our ministry. Your especial office will be to win souls to Christ; and for this purpose it will be neces-sary that while you are harmless as doves, you should likewise be wise as scrpents; and such wisdom will be evideed, not in running counter to the prejudices, however unfounded, of your people, but in conciliating their affections, and consulting their wishes in things indifferent, thereby obtaining an ascendancy over them in regard to those matters which really concern their everlasting salvation; therefore, my beloved brethren, give no of-fence in any thing, that the ministry be not "I cannot quit this subject without advert-

ing to one practice, which I have reason to believe has been adopted in more than one church of this diocese; and which is so unreasonable in itself, and so unsupported by any rubric or canon of the Church, as to demand the most marked reprehension from me. The practice to which I allude, is that of the minister turning his back upon the congregation while reading the solemn services of our Church. There are two objections to this practice: the first is, that it prevents the minister from being heard by his congregation-no slight objection this, when it is recollected how many of a congregation, in a rural parish especially, are either without prayer-books, or if they have them, are unable to read them. The second is, that it can only be founded upon the Romish notion, that the officiating minister prays for and not with his congregation: Now, it is impossible to take the most cursory view of the rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer, without being convinced that the congregation have a part, and a very important part, assigned to them in the performance of divine service. The General Confession, the Lord's Prayer, when ever it occurs, and the Belief, sre directed to be said by the whole congregation, while the repetition of the alternate verses in the versicles and the psalms, as well as the joining in an audible 'Amen' at the termination of every prayer pronounced by the minister, attest the intention of the compilers of our liturgy that the people should take an active share in the performance of divine service; and not remain, as they do wherever the Roman Ca-tholic religion prevails, either perfectly passive, or engaged only in their private devotions, while the officiating priest is offering prayers for them. Such an intention, however, must be defeated and the Roman Catholic practice countenanced, whenever the minister, by turning his back upon the congregation, renders it impossible for the greater portion of them to hear him.

"This, indeed, is but one among many norellies which have been introduced by some injudicious clergymen into the service of the church, by which it would appear that they are anxious to try the experiment how nearly they can approximate to the practices of the Romish Church without renouncing commusnion with that to which by their ordination vows they ought to feel conscientiously hound; against those I cannot too emphafically caution you. While they are cal-