

with whose aid, the Spirit's agency, as with the washing of water, the Church is to be purified and cleansed: one of the means towards the fulfillment of the glorious destiny of Christ's beloved people. Need we point to the state of the world previous to the entrance of this light in order to appreciate aright the boon? Men groping on the most important points for light and intelligence, and yet finding what?—scarcely a ray of pure and unalloyed intelligence. And even if, here and there, did appear a few streaks of light, the harbingers of approaching day, why, then, they seemed only to render the darkness and obscurity more plain; merely served to show men the dim uncertainty in which they were, and in which, unless befriended from without, they must forever dwell.

Why, even as to man's eternity—the future destiny of that glorious—that immortal spirit entrusted to his charge -- that, to man, most important of all truths, what could it say? At best, alas! only some stray hints, dim and hesitating, and mingled sadly with alternating hopes and fears! But, as for certainty there was, there could be none. Oh! even at its best, what a lamentable condition on this momentous subject! All fluctuating and changeable. To-day a hint in one direction; and perhaps, to-morrow counterbalanced or uprooted by some opposite event. It is quite true there were intimations—at least there were figures and metaphors bearing on the point. Nature, with all her changes, and providence even, with its recurring events, and more especially man's own soul, with its instinctive fears and hopes, its longings and anticipations, each, doubtless, had its tale to tell. Each conveys instruction, and to us, with our improved knowledge, good and profitable instruction. But in those days, alas! their highest intimation was only conjecture and doubt. Nothing more! Yet how differently stands it now! Plainly, unmistakeably, has Christ brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, rolled away, and for ever, every doubt, or fear, or surmise on the subject. There, in that noble system of divine truth, with its delightful simplicity and its marvellous grandeur, man's eternity appears,—not now a questionable, but for ever a thoroughly established, a well authenticated fact. Aye, eternity, with its awful interests, its untold sorrows on the one hand, and its inconceivable blessings on the other! Now it stands before us as one of the sternest realities that meets us here. No self-flattery here. Certain we are that there it is, and that one day we must meet it.

Man's eternity! And what of his reconciliation to his God—the clearing away of those obstacles that meet us in our return to our Father's love? Often, so we read, had man, with the ordinary appliances around him, set about the investigation of this fact, as well as of the former; and, it is to be

feared, with not much better success. Here, as in the other case, nature, God's ordinary dealings with man, man's instincts, and the constitution of his mind, all were ransacked. But alas! how dim and obscure were the hints they gave. True, there were intimations of a merciful feeling on the part of God. Even with the tokens of a stern justice there were linked indications of a large, an extraordinary mercy and compassion. Even when the lash was exhibited to the view of the offender, it seldom, if ever, fell with that full and unbending severity with which, in justice, it might have fallen. And, if in nature and the ways of Providence, so much could be traced, there was in addition, that tendency in man's own nature—and that not a weak tendency either—to the side of mercy; and then it was asked, May we not, without injustice, reason from man to God. By the implantation of these principles in man has He not, in some measure, told us somewhat of Himself. Forbearance, and ultimately forgiveness, on proper conditions, showed themselves in most instances to be the qualities most approved of by the conscience, and which were attended with the happiest results. And the end of this enquiry was the establishment of the system of sacrifice. But even this seemed to have no stronger foundation than a high degree of probability. But now what reason is there for thankfulness! All uncertainty is gone, and in the most unmistakeable manner the truth presents itself—"I am the way, the truth, and the life!" Jesus once more the propitiation for our sins! the only sacrifice that can atone for iniquity! and still the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!

And what need to speak of the other truths contained therein? that clear line of duty mapped out for us, those encouragements to virtue and to piety, those continued warnings and threatenings. Why, we have only to observe the elevated condition of the world since these truths obtained a place in it, to know what we owe, and how we should be without them.

Christ loved the Church! To return. Let us trace out still further the windings of that stream at which we have glanced for a little already. A singular history, in some respects, it may seem to have. At one time appearing as a tiny struggling rill, scarcely able, one would suppose, to find its way through opposing barriers, yet struggling on. A little further on, and it swells. Its power increases, and it widens rapidly, bidding fair to be of some power and compass. Alas! for a time, its waters became turbid, and then are all but lost to human sight; only, however, to reappear in greater vigor and purity, and with still fairer promise of completing the course so well begun. Chequered has been the history of the Church,—sometimes in cloud, sometimes with bright and sunny skies; now in luxury and plenty, with a prospering gale wafting her along; and anon with the