

is shown by the fact, that it was what actually took place when the obstinacy of men, in refusing to follow the course indicated, rendered coercion necessary; for it is evident, that the compulsion eventually laid upon them was for no other purpose, than to constrain them to take the very course which they had without compulsion declined to follow.

Well, then, we find the several families of Noah's descendants perversely keeping together, leaving many fair regions of the world without inhabitants. Eventually, we find that the population of the still united families, had extended itself so far as the land watered by the Tigris and Euphrates, and had come, whether by succession, or consent, or violence, under the chieftainship of "a bold, bad man," of the name of Nimrod. Concerning the possible character of this man much has been written; but we really know nothing more than that he was a strong, forceful, and unscrupulous character, a leader of men in his generation, and the first founder of the Assyro-Babylonian empire, which however small in its beginning, was destined, ages after, to overshadow nations.

Having come thus far, and finding nothing beyond them to the south and west but inhospitable deserts, they may easily have supposed that their extension had already reached the bounds of the habitable earth, and that to disperse, in order to explore those seemingly uninhabitable regions, would be peril to their existence. These apprehensions coincided with the policy of their leader, whose ambition seems to have aimed at nothing less than the rule over mankind, which could only be secured by keeping the families of Noah together. They, therefore, perhaps at his suggestion, concluded to make their stand against further dispersion in the fertile land and by the abundant rivers to which they had come. But coming, as they did, from a land of mountains, and from the sacred shade of Ararat, into flat plains seemingly as boundless as the sea; and observing that in this plain—the unexplored extent of which must have been greatly exaggerated in their minds—any marked object, such as a tree, could be seen from a great distance, they concluded to set up a lofty tower which would at once, as a common centre, be to them what the mountain of the ark had been; and would at the same time declare their purpose not to disperse, and by a signal landmark from afar, protect them, as they thought, from being lost or acceded to by the illimitable plain. In this way we may recognize the natural actions of men who, having these objects in view, find themselves for the first time without those landmarks and objects of distant recognition which mountains afford.

So they set about to build a city, and therein "a tower whose top should reach unto heaven." They used for this purpose the materials still employed in the same country, where there is no stone, and where the dryness of the climate prevents the need of burnt bricks. They constructed their works of sun-dried masses of mud, cemented and strengthened with the bitumen which is abundantly produced in the same region. Two mighty heaps are found on the desolated site of Babylon, formed of the foundations and fallen superstructure of great ancient works thus constructed; and it is thought by some that one of these (either the Mujelhe or the Birs Nimroud) may present the foundations of the very building which those men undertook, but were prevented from completing, although in later ages it may have formed the basis of the tower which counted among the wonders of the ancient world.

"He who sitteth in the heavens" derided this foolish attempt to frustrate his councils. Hitherto they had all spoken the language of the antediluvians, and of their father Noah. This, indeed, had alone rendered possible the union which they were so anxious to preserve. But God "confounded their language," so that they could no longer understand each other, and they were not only constrained to abandon their work, but their continuance together became no longer practicable or convenient. As the researches of the most learned philologists have appeared to show that the languages of men may be traced to three principal roots, it is enough to suppose that the result was the formation of two new languages, which, with that already existing, would give one to each of the families of Noah—thus constraining their separation, their dispersion, and the fulfilment of their destinies. But if any one thinks this number of languages inadequate to the proper distribution of mankind—we contend not. It is quite possible that each of these three stems of language might have run into branch dialects unintelligible to those by whom the other dialects were spoken. A very limited degree of experience suffices to show how unintelligible the different dialects of the same language may become to all but those who use them. Du Bartas, whom we formerly had occasion to quote, gives a graphic and curious account of the immediate effect of the confusion of tongues upon the operations of the builders of Babel:—

"Bring me, quoth one, a trowel, quickly, quick;
One brings him up a hammer: Hew this brick,
(Another bids), and then they cleave a tree:
Make fast this rope; and then they let it flee.
One calls for planks; another mortar lacks;
They bear the first a stone—the last an axe.
One would have snakes; and him a spade they give;
Another asks a saw, and gets a sieve.
Thus crossly-cross, they prate and pant in vain;
What one hath made, another mars again."

THE POOR MAN'S EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

There can be nothing more unjust than the conclusion that the poor man has no evidence within reach, because he has not the external. We will not allow that God has failed, in this respect, to prepare for the poor. We will go into the cottage of the poor disciple of Christ, and

we will say to him, "Why do you believe upon Jesus? You know little or nothing about the witness of antiquity. You know little or nothing about the completion of prophecy. You can give me no logical, no grammatical, no historical reasons for concluding the Bible to be, what it professes itself, a revelation, made in early times, of the will of the Almighty. Why then do you believe upon Jesus? What grounds have you for faith, what basis of conviction?"

Now if the poor man lay bare his experience, he will, probably, show how God hath prepared for him, by giving such a reply as the following: "I lived long unconcerned about the soul. I thought only on the pleasures of to-day: I cared nothing for the worm which might gnaw me to-morrow. I was brought, however, by sickness or by disappointment, or by the death of the one I best loved, or by a startling sermon, to fear that all was not right between me and God. I grew more and more anxious. Terrors haunted me by day, and sleep went from my pillow by night. At length I was bidden to look unto Jesus as 'delivered for my offences, and raised again for my justification.' Instantly I felt him to be exactly the Saviour that I needed. Every want found in him an immediate supply; every fear a cordial; every wound a balm. And ever since, the more I have read of the Bible, the more have I found that it must have been written on purpose for myself. It seems to know all my cares, all my temptations; and it speaks so beautifully a word in season, that he who wrote it must, I think, have had me in his eye. Why do I believe on Jesus? Oh, I feel him to be a divine Saviour—that is my proof. Why do I believe the Bible? I have found it to be God's word—there is my witness."

We think, assuredly, that if you take the experience of the generality of christians, you will find that they do not believe without proof. We again say that we cannot assent to the proposition, that the christianity of our villages and hamlets takes for granted the truth of the Bible, and has no reason to give when that truth is called in question. The peasant who, when the hard toil of the day is concluded, will sit by his fireside, and read the Bible with all the eagerness, and all the confidence, of one who receives it, as a message from God, has some better ground than common report, or the tradition of his forefathers, on which to rest his persuasion of the divinity of the volume. The book speaks to him with a force which he feels never could belong to a mere human composition. There is drawn such a picture of his own heart—a picture presenting many features which he would not have discovered, had they not thus been outlined, but which he recognises as most accurate, the instant they are exhibited—that he can be sure that the painter is none other but he who alone searches the heart. The proposed deliverance agrees so wonderfully, and so minutely, with his wants; it manifests such unbounded and equal concern for the honour of God, and the well-being of man; it provides, with so consummate a skill, that, whilst the human race is redeemed, the divine attributes shall be glorified; that it were like telling him that a creature spread out the firmament, and inlaid it with worlds, to tell him that the proffered salvation is the device of impostors, or the figment of enthusiasts.

Yea, and it is a growing and strengthening evidence which God, of his goodness, has thus prepared for the poor. Whenever they obey a direction of Scripture, and find the accompanying promise fulfilled, this is a new proof that the direction and the promise are from God. The book tells them that blessings are to be sought and obtained through the name of Christ. They ask and they receive. What is this but a witness that the book is divine? Would God give his sanction to a lie? The book assures them that the Holy Spirit will gradually sanctify those who believe upon Jesus. They find the sanctification following on the belief, and does not this attest the authority of the volume? The book declares that "all things work together for good" to the disciples of Jesus. They find that prosperity and adversity, as each brings its trials, so each its lessons and supports; and whilst God thus continually verifies a declaration, can they doubt that he made it? And thus, day by day, the self-evidencing power of Scripture comes into full operation, and experience multiplies and strengthens the internal testimony. The peasant will discover more and more that the Bible and the conscience so fit into each other, that the artificer who made one must have equally fashioned both. His life will be an on-going proof that Scripture is truth; for his days and hours are its chapters and verses realized to the letter. And others may admire the shield which the industry and ingenuity of learned men have thrown over christianity. They may speak of the solid rampart cast up by the labor of ages; and pronounce the faith unsailable, because history, and philosophy and science, have all combined to gird round it the iron, and the rock, of a ponderous and colossal demonstration. We, for our part, glory most in the fact, that Scripture so commends itself to the conscience, and experience so bears out the Bible, that the Gospel can go the round of the world, and carry with it, in all its travel, its own mighty credentials.—*Melville's Bible Thoughts.*

FORGIVENESS.—How great is the contrast between that forgiveness to which we lay claim from God towards us, and our temper towards others! God, we expect, will forgive us great offences—offences many times repeated; and will forgive them freely, liberally, and from the heart. But we are offended at our neighbour, perhaps, for the merest trifles, and for an injury only once offered; and we are but half reconciled when we seem to forgive. Even an uncertain humour, an ambiguous word, or a suspected look, will inflame our anger; and hardly any persuasion will induce us for a long time to relent.