

THE NEGATIVE THEOLOGY, AND THE LARGER HOPE.

"Which say to the seers, See not : and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."—ISAIAH, chap. 30, verse 10.

"According as it is written, I believed, therefore have I spoken ; we also believe, and therefore speak."—II. CORINTHIANS, chap. 4, verse 13.

We have in these passages, two thoughts presented for our consideration on this anniversary occasion : 1st, The guilty clamour that prevails in many places at the present day, for a style of preaching that endeavors to quiet and stifle conscience ; and 2nd, The attitude that the pulpit should take, in refusing to conceal, or modify, or explain away the words spoken by almighty God.

Israel of old, conscious of wrong-doing and expecting just retribution, says to the Prophet : " Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits,"—that is, flatter us : tell us that after all we are not so bad as we seem and feel : stand between us and an angry God, and stay his righteous indignation. Speak to us things, in accordance with our prejudices and feelings, although they should be deceitful and false. Like the consumptive patient, who feels that his days are numbered, but finds momentary relief, if the Doctor will only say that still there is a little hope, and that the end may yet be far off ; so, backsliding Israel begs the Prophet for one word of comfort—one ray of sunshine amid the encircling gloom.

The Apostle Paul, when writing to the Corinthian Church, many of whom were leading grossly immoral and inconsistent lives, and whose plain language was calculated to give offence, equally with that of the Prophets of old,