

their condition is fixed for ever, whether for weal or woe.

This is a view of our condition which ought never to be absent from our minds: for it is in proportion as we realize it, that we will act suitably to the end of our being. And it is a view which ought more especially with governing influence to rule in us your guides to immortality, and to accompany us in every word that we speak in public, and every discourse that we prepare in private for your instruction; so that we may appear before you as immortal beings addressing their fellow immortals, and acquit ourselves of the solemn responsibility which rests upon us as watchmen in Israel, who have to render so strict an account. The words of our text are a peculiarly awakening call on us so to do; for they were delivered under circumstances of no ordinary solemnity. All the visions of this mysterious book were at length unfolded to the Apostles. The page of the future History of the Church: was spread out before him in all its chequered colours of light and shade. He saw the conflict between truth and error, light and darkness, from the birth of Christianity to the consummation of all things;—the alternate successes and reverses, but the final triumph of the cause of Heaven; he saw all this before his astonished vision, with the various manifestations of character which it was the occasion of calling forth,—the civil tyranny, the grinding oppression, the impure idolatry of the enemies of Christ, on one side, on the other, the unswerving loyalty, the undying attachment of the persecuted yet persevering friends of Jesus, throughout the whole period of the eventful conflict. Here then, the angel unfolds the visions to the inspired prophet, or (what is more probable from verses 12, 13,) Jesus Christ

himself, the great Angel of the Covenant, whom the visions mainly respected, steps forth; and as John was on the point of sealing them, says, "Seal not the saying of the Prophecy of this Book, for the time is at hand." The unchangeable issue of the fulfilment of the prophecies, to the friends and enemies of Jesus, is thus solemnly announced in the words of our text. "He that is filthy, &c." These words, whether we view them as a parenthesis in which the sacred writer expresses his own feelings, or, as is more probable, the language of the Angel of the Covenant, he declares in the context that he will come quickly to give to every man according to his works,—challenge the most serious attention of all to whom they are proclaimed: for all of us have the same interest in the solemn truths that they announce. They speak of the approach of a period when the characters of all shall be unalterably fixed:—the wicked, left hopelessly wedded to their wickedness, and the righteous immutably confirmed in righteousness and true holiness. The eventful period referred to, is the coming of Christ to judge the world, when He will summon all that lived upon the earth before his tribunal, and will pronounce the irreversible sentence which will determine their eternal destiny. Comparing the interval between the present and that day, with the eternity which succeeds it, it may be considered as already at hand, and accordingly the context says so. But viewed in reference to the measurements of time which obtain among men, it may be still considered as distant: for many events in the plan of Providence foretold in this Book,—many revolutions among the nations, which still occupy numerous pages in the world's history, remain yet to be unfolded, ere the arrival of this