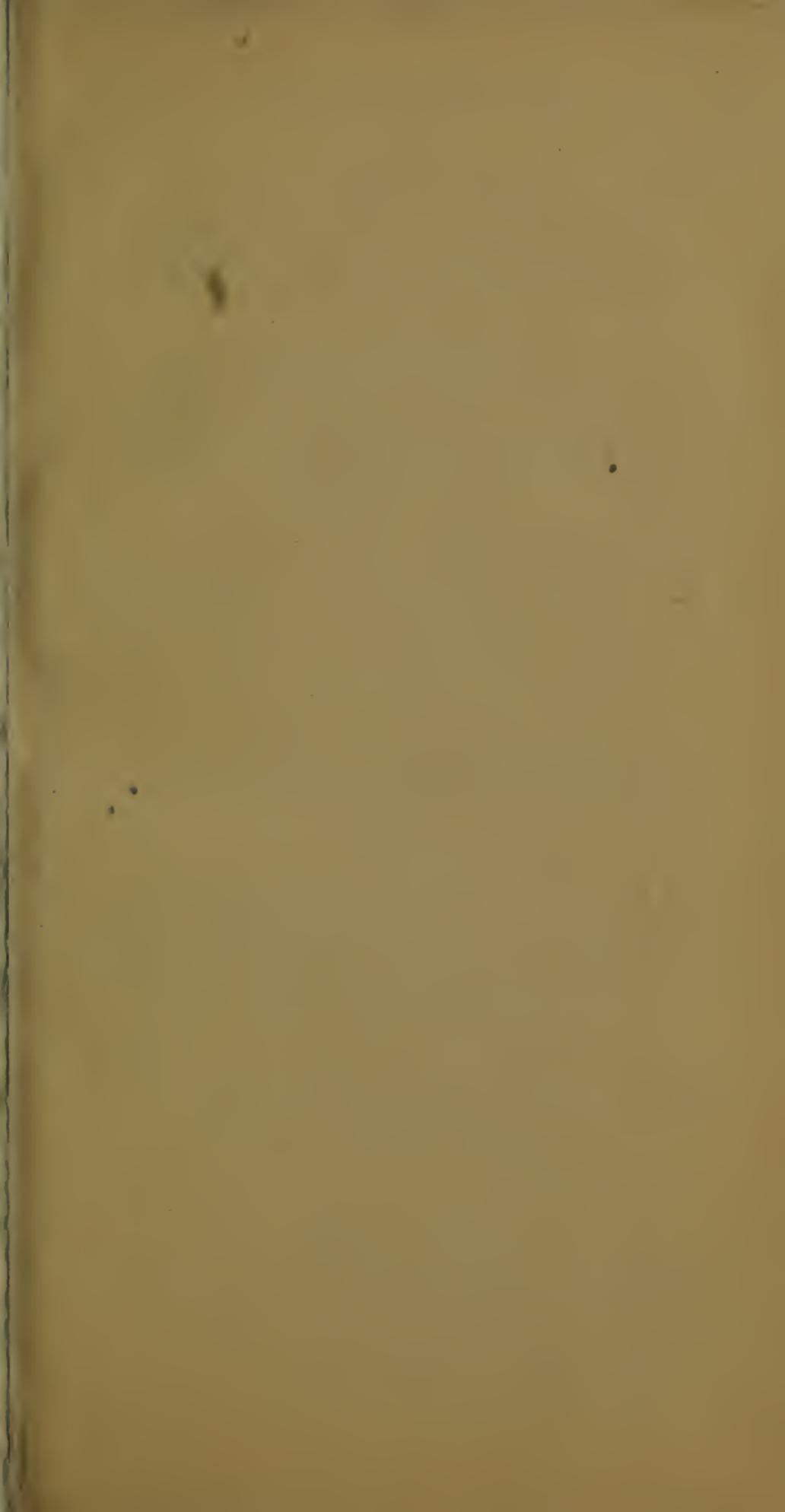


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DISCOURSES
ON THE
LOVE OF GOD,²⁴₂₀₁₃
AND ITS INFLUENCE
ON ALL THE PASSIONS:

WITH A DISCOVERY
OF THE RIGHT USE AND ABUSE OF THEM
IN
MATTERS OF RELIGION.

ALSO,

A DEVOUT MEDITATION ANNEXED TO
EACH DISCOURSE.

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PREFACE.

IN the first edition of these discourses, THE DOCTRINE OF THE PASSIONS stood as an introduction to them, wherein their general nature was explained, their various kinds reduced to some regular order, the uses of them in human life represented, and moral and divine rules were proposed for the government of these natural and active powers. This little treatise has been much enlarged, and printed by itself, under a distinct title, namely, *The doctrine of the passions explained and improved.* These *discourses of the love of God, and the use and abuse of the passions in religion* now follow; and since there are readers of a different taste, who have desired each of them alone, they may now choose for themselves, or they may order the bookseller to join them together if they please.

Many years are now passed since the general design of both these treatises was formed, and some brief sketches of them were drawn, which had lain by me in long silence among other papers.

That which inclined me, at last, to draw up these discourses, of the *use of the passions in religion*, into a more regular form, was the growing deadness and degeneracy of our age in vital religion, though it grew bright in rational and polite learning.

There are too many persons who have imbibed, and who propagate this notion, that it is almost the only business of a preacher to teach the necessary doctrines and duties of our holy religion, by a mere explication of the word of God, without enforcing these things on the conscience, by a pathetic address to the heart; and that the business of a christian, in his attendance on sermons, is to learn what these doctrines and duties are, without taking any pains to awaken the devout sensations of hope and fear, and love and joy, though the God of nature hath ordained them to be the most effectual allurements or spurs to duty in this present animal state. We are often told, that this warm and affectionate religion belongs only to the weaker parts of mankind, and is not strong and manly enough for persons of sense and good reasoning. But where the religious use of the passions is renounced and abandoned, we do not find this cold and dry reasoning sufficient to raise virtue and piety to any great and honourable degree,

even in their men of sense, without the assistance of pious affections.

On the other hand, it must be acknowledged also, there have been many persons who have made their religion to consist too much in the working of their passions, without a due exercise of reason in the things of God. They have contented themselves with some devout raptures, without seeking after clear conceptions of divine things, or building their faith and hope, and practice, upon a just and solid foundation of sacred knowledge. Whatsoever is vehement, if it hath but the name of God annexed to it, they are ready to think and call sacred and divine. This sort of religion lies very much exposed to all the wild temptations of fancy and enthusiasm: A great deal of the bigotry of the world, and the madness of persecution may be ascribed to this unhappy spring. I thought it necessary therefore to speak of the abuse of the passions, as well as the use of them, and to guard against mistakes on both sides.

As a foundation of these discourses, I chose to treat of the love of God, which in a sovereign manner rules and manages, awakens or suppresses all the other passions of the soul. The whole train of affections, both the painful and the pleasant ones, are under the power and regulation of love.

In my pursuit of this subject, I have endeavoured to avoid all extremes; that is, neither to turn religion into a matter of speculation or cold reasoning, nor to give up the devout christian to all the wandering fooleries of warm and ungoverned passion. I hope I have maintained the middle way, which, as it is most agreeable to the holy scripture, and to the genius of christianity, so it has produced the noblest fruits of righteousness in every age. On this account I may presume, that the track which I have pursued, will give no just offence to the wisest and the best of christians.

In order to make this work more serviceable to the purposes of practical godliness, I have endeavoured to form a pathetic meditation upon the argument of each discourse, that I might as far as possible, exemplify the practice of those things which I recommend to the world, and assist the devout reader to make a present use of them toward his advancement in the christian life.

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DISCOURSES
ON THE
LOVE OF GOD,
AND THE
USE AND ABUSE OF THE PASSIONS.

DISCOURSE I.

The affectionate and supreme love of God, Mark xii. 30.

“Thou shalt love thy Lord thy God with all thy heart.”

AMONG all the teachers of religion that have been sent from God to men, the two most eminent and illustrious are Moses and Christ; Moses the servant of the living God, and Christ his only begotten Son. Both of them lay the foundation of all true religion in the unity of God, and both of them make our religion to consist in love. Thus saith Moses in the sixth of Deuteronomy, whence the text is cited, and thus saith the blessed Jesus in the place where it lies, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love him with all thy heart.

It is no wonder that all the powers of our natures, with all the utmost extent of our capacities, must be devoted to the love and service of this God, since there is but one, since he is God alone, and there is none besides him, Isa. xlv. 6. He must reign over the heart and the soul, over all our intellectual and our bodily powers, supreme and without a rival.

Though the love of our neighbour is required both by Moses and Christ, as a necessary part of our religion, yet it must never stand in competition with the love of our God,

Some suppose the supreme and intense degree of this love, to be the whole design of Christ, in recommending the love of God to us in all these four expressions, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;" namely, to intimate in general that all the faculties of nature should be employed in the love and service of God, with the greatest intenseness and full vigour of exercise.

But if we should distinguish these sentences, according to the different powers of nature, into so many different significations, I think they may be most naturally thus explained: God must be loved with all the mind, that is, he must stand highest in the

esteem of the judgment: He must be loved with all the soul, that is, with the strongest attachment of the will to him: He must be loved with all the heart, that is, with the warmest and sincerest affection: And he must be loved with all the strength, that is, this love must be manifested by the utmost exercise and activity of all the inferior powers.

The heart in the language of scripture, and in the common sense of men, is the seat of the passions, that is, of fear, hope, love, hatred, joy, sorrow, shame, desire, and such like, which are usually called the passions or affections of the heart. I shall not stand in this place to give a more exact or philosophical account of them, having done that in another treatise.*

If it be inquired, why the heart is said to be the seat of the passions, there is this good reason for it, namely, it is by sensible effects on the heart, that several of the affections do chiefly exert and manifest themselves; and it was chiefly for this reason that the jewish philosophy gave the soul of man its chief residence in the heart, and made it to be the seat of the passions.

The heart also in scripture, and in almost all nations and languages, is used to

*The doctrine of the passions explained and improved.

express or imply sincerity; what is done from the heart is done sincerely; perhaps, because the passions are naturally sincere, and are not so easy to be disguised as the outward actions of men.

Now, since it is my design to treat of the exercises of the passions, or affections of the heart in the affairs of religion, I have chosen this sentence as the foundation of my discourses, the plain and obvious proposition contained in the words is this, viz.

“The Lord our God is the proper object of our most sincere affection, and our supreme love.”

It is not enough for the eye to be lifted up to him, or the knee to bow before him; it is not enough for the tongue to speak of him, or the hand to act for his interest in the world; all this may be done by painted hypocrites, whose religion is all disguise and vanity: But the heart with all the inward power and passions must be devoted to him in the first place: This is religion indeed. The great God values not the service of men, if the heart be not in it: The Lord sees and judges the heart; he has no regard to outward forms of worship, if there be no inward adoration, if no devout affection be employed therein. It is therefore a matter of infinite importance, to have the whole heart engaged steadfastly for

God ; if this be done, we shall have a sufficient evidence in ourselves, that we are truly religious, and are beloved of God.

In treating this subject, I shall consider these seven things :

1. What is presupposed and implied in the affectionate and supreme love of God.

2. What will be the effects of this supreme love to God on all the other passions, or how this divine passion will engage all the rest of the affectionate powers in the interests of religion.

3. Of what use and importance the passions are in religion, and what advantage is to be derived from them.

4. How far the passions may be abused, even in religious concerns, or what is the irregular use of them, and how their efforts should be limited and restrained.

Under each of these heads I shall propose some useful reflections.

5. We shall show how the affectionate christian may be vindicated against the cavils and reproaches of men, in his warmest exercises of devotion.

6. What relief or comfort may be given to humble and sincere christians, who complain that they feel but very low degrees of this affectionate love to God, or of the exercise of pious passions, either in public worship, or in their devout retirements.

7. What are the most proper and effectual methods of exciting and engaging the affections in religion. Of each of these in their order.

First, "What is presupposed and implied in the supreme and affectionate love of God?"

I answer, these five things :*

1. Some good degrees of the knowledge of God, and such an acquaintance with him, as may raise the highest esteem of him in our mind. It is impossible that we should love any thing that we know not; and it is not to be expected that we should love God supremely, or with all our heart, if we have not known him to be more excellent, and more desirable than all other things we are acquainted with. We must have the highest opinion of his transcendent worth or we cannot love him above all things.

It is granted, we may love or delight in some objects of an inferior nature as they

* I might have described the affectionate love of God here by the love of esteem, the love of benevolence and the love of complacency, according to the distributions of love in the "Treatise of the Passions," mentioned in the preface: but I chose rather in this place to show, what acts or operations of the understanding and will, are presupposed and included in the love of God: The more affectionate operations of it are reserved to the next discourse.

are instruments of our health, or ease, or comfort; so we are said to love our habitation and our food, because they minister to our conveniency or support in the present life. We may love some poor worthless wretches with good will and compassion, because we design to bestow some benefits upon them. We love our country and our kindred with a sort of natural attachment of the heart, because they belong to ourselves, and we are, as it were of a piece with them. We love our friends because we esteem them possessed of some valuable properties, and able to confer benefits on us, or to relieve our wants: But unless we see the great and blessed God, as a being possessed of the highest excellencies, and capable of bestowing on us the richest benefits; unless we see him as an all-sufficient good, we shall never love him with our whole heart: The affection to so unseen and spiritual a being as God is, can never rise high where the esteem is but low: Where the love ought to be superior to all other loves, the esteem must be transcendent.

2. The affectionate and supreme love of God, which presupposes a renewed mind, is usually accompanied by some hope of an interest in his favour, and the highest advantages from him. If I lie down in despair

of his mercy, I cannot look on God, even in all his supreme excellencies, with an eye of love. The devil, the worst of creatures, knows more of the transcendent glory and worth of the great God, than the wisest and the best of mortals here on earth: But he knows there is no hope for him to obtain an interest in his favour, and therefore he continues in his old enmity. His rebellion has cut him off from all expectation of divine mercy, and therefore he cannot love this God of infinite excellency. A dreadful state indeed for an intelligent being, that he cannot love what he knows to be infinitely amiable!

Hope is the most alluring spring of love. Terror and slavish fear stand opposite to this holy affection. Such "fear has torment in it, and so far as we fear God as an enemy, we are not made perfect in his love," 1 John iv. 18. We love him, because we hope that he has loved, or that he will love us; It is the assurance, or at least the expectation of some interest in God, that engages the most affectionate love: And, perhaps, the words of my text may have some reference hereto, when it is said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." When we believe or hope that the Lord is our God, we cannot but love him.

3. This love implies a strong inclination of the will towards God, a steady bent

of soul toward this blessed author of our being and happiness: it implies a choice of him above and beyond all things else, as our most desirable portion and our eternal good. If any thing in this world be the chosen portion of our souls, if any thing beneath and besides God be made our chief hope, our support, and our life, our hearts will run out in strongest affections toward it, for it is our chief happiness; and then we can never love God as it becomes a creature to love his Creator.

The holy Psalmist was a most affectionate lover of his God, and how often does he call him the "portion of his inheritance, his refuge and his hope?" Psalm lxvi. 5, Psalm cxlii. 5; and in Psalm lxxiii. 26, "Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Blessed saint! He hath chosen God for his eternal all.

Under this head I should add also, that where the will is thus attached to God, the soul will exert itself in continual wishes for the honour of God in the world: It is the nature of love to wish well, and to do good to the beloved object; and since God can receive no other good from us, but the manifestation of his excellencies and honours among men, we shall earnestly seek and wish this glory of God, if we are sincere lovers of him.

4. This affectionate and supreme love of God, includes in it an out-going of the heart after him, with most intense longings, and most pleasing sensations: This is what we are wont to call more eminently the love of desire, and the love of delight which I shall speak of more at large in the following discourse. The heart of a sincere good man is restless till it find God, that is, till it obtain a solid hope and persuasion of his love, and a growing conformity to him, and constant delight in him. The heart is not easy without God; it acquiesces and rests in him alone. If I have God for my friend, and my everlasting portion, I have all: If he be absent, "O that I knew where I might find him!" Job xxiii. 5. And if he manifests his presence with his divine influences, "Come back, O my soul, from amongst the creatures; come back, and return to God thy rest," Psal. cxvi. 7.

5. Where the love of God reigns in the affections, it will command all the other powers of nature, and all the rest of the passions to act suitably to this sovereign and ruling affection of love: The eye will often look up to God in the way of faith and humble dependence: The ear will be attentive to his holy word: the hand will be lifted up to heaven in daily requests: The knees will be bended in humble worship: All the

outward powers will be busy in doing the will of God, and promoting his glory: He that loves God will keep his commandments, and fulfil every present duty with delight. He will endeavour to please God in all his actions, and watch against and avoid whatsoever may offend him. And while the several outward powers are thus engaged, all the inward affections of nature will be employed in correspondent exercises. Supreme love will govern all the active train of human passions, and lead them captive to cheerful obedience.

This brings me to the next thing I proposed: But before I enter upon it I would make these four reflections, which will conclude the present discourse.

(This discourse may be divided here.)

REFLECTION I. How vain are all their pretences to love God, who know little or nothing of him, who are neither acquainted with the glorious perfections of his nature, nor with the wondrous discoveries of his grace! Love must be founded in knowledge. How vain are their pretences to love God with all their heart, and in a supreme degree, who never saw him to be a being of transcendent worth, of surpassing excellency, and capable of making them for ever happy: who value their corn, and their wine, and their oil, their business, their

riches, or their diversions, more than God and his love !

How senseless and absurd is the pretence to love God above all things, if we do not resolve to live upon him as our hope and happiness ; if we do not choose him to be our God and our all, our chief and all-sufficient portion in this world, and that to come. Where the idea of God as a being of supreme excellence doth not reign in the mind, where the will is not determined and fixed on God, as our supreme good, men are strangers to this sacred and divine affection of love. Till this be done, we cannot be said to love God with all the heart.

REFLECTION 2. How necessary and useful a practice it is, for a christian to meditate often on the transcendent perfection and worth of the blessed God, to survey his attributes, and his grace in Christ Jesus, to keep up in the mind a constant idea of his supreme excellence, and frequently to repeat and confirm the choice of him, as our highest hope, our portion and our everlasting good ! This will keep the love of God, warm at the heart, and maintain the divine affection in its primitive life and vigour.

But if our idea of the adorable and supreme excellence of God grow faint and feeble, and sink lower in the mind : if we lose the sight of his amiable glories, the

sense of his amazing love in the gospel, his rich promises and his alluring grace, if our will cleave not to him as our chief good, and live not on him daily as our spring of happiness, we shall abate the fervency of this sacred passion, our love to God will grow cold by degrees, and suffer great and guilty decays.

REFLECTION 3. How greatly and eternally are we indebted to Jesus the Son of God, who has revealed the Father to us in all his most amiable characters and glories, and brought him, as it were, within the reach of our love!

The three great springs of love to God are these: A clear discovery of what God is in himself: a lively sense of what he has done for us; and a well grounded hope of what he will bestow upon us. All these are owing chiefly to our blessed Jesus. Let us consider them distinctly.

2. It is he, even the beloved Son of God, who lay in the bosom of the Father, who has made a fuller and brighter discovery to us what God is, what an admirable and transcendent being, a spirit glorious in all perfections. It is true, the light of nature dictates some of these things to us, and the ancient prophets have given farther manifestations. "But none knows the Father so as the Son does, and those to whom the

Son will reveal him," Mat. xi. 27. That blessed person who is one in essence with the Father, must know him best. He "in whom dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9, "whose name is Emmanuel, God with us," Mat. i. 23, "or God manifest in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16, must know the Father with such an exquisite knowledge, as far transcends the reach of all our ideas.

Let it be noted also, that the blessed Jesus came down from heaven, not only to show God all glorious to men, but to make him appear all lovely and desirable in the eyes of sinners, by representing him in all the wonders of his compassion, and forgiving mercy. Even a great, a just, and a holy God, is lovely and amiable in the sight of guilty creatures, when he is willing to "reconcile the world to himself, in and by his Son Jesus Christ, not imputing to them their iniquities," 2 Cor. v. 19. Such a sight of God, is generally the first attractive of our love.

2. It is the Son of God who came to inform us what God has done for us, and thereby to engage our love. The reason of man and our daily experience teach us, that he is the author of our being and our temporal blessings: He "causes the sun to shine, and his rain to descend on the earth,"

Matt. v. 45; "he gives us fruitful seasons, and fills our hearts with food and gladness," Acts xiv. 17. But it is Jesus who hath told us the eternal counsels of his Father's love, and what kind designs he formed for our recovery from sin and hell, which in his own fore-knowledge, he beheld us fallen and miserable: He has told us, what eternal and unfailing provision God has made for us, by giving us into the hands of his Son, even into those hands, where he has intrusted the infinite concerns of his own honour; and that he appointed his Son to redeem our lives by his own bloody death.

This is glorious love indeed, and fit to allure and kindle our warmest affections to God.

It is the blessed Son of God himself, who, by his Father's appointment, has suffered agonies and sorrows of unknown kinds, unknown degrees for us. He poured out his own soul to death to secure us from the deserved wrath and vengeance of God: to make a way for us to partake of his Father's mercy.

3. Again, it is the same glorious person, the Son of God, who has informed us at large, not only what God has already done, but what he will do for us; and has given us the hope of everlasting blessings. He

has confirmed all the words of grace that God spake to men by angels and prophets in former ages; and he has added many a rich and most express promise of a glorious resurrection, and a future state; and set them before us in a divine light, beyond what the prophets or the angels ever knew in ancient times. He has assured returning sinners, of the pardon of their highest crimes, and the most aggravated iniquities, and he hath secured the everlasting favour and presence of God to all his followers: for by the Father's appointment he is gone to prepare mansions of glory for them, that where he is they may be also; that they may dwell with him, and with his Father for ever.

Thus it appears that our everlasting thanks and praises are due to the blessed Jesus who has laid the foundation of an everlasting peace between an offended God and his guilty creature, man. He has revealed the great God to us, has told us what he is, and hath set him before us in his most amiable glories: He has taught us what wonders of mercy God hath wrought for us already, and what blessings he will bestow on us, through the future ages of eternity: And thus he hath opened all the springs of love to allure our hearts to God. What christian can withhold his love and

praise from so worthy, so divine a benefactor?

REFLECTION 4. I may therefore well add, in the last place, that no person in heaven or earth was so proper to recommend us to the love of God, as Christ Jesus our Saviour, who speaks the words of my text; He who was himself the beloved Son of God, the highest object of his Father's love, and the best and most perfect lover of his Father: He who was the great peace-maker between God and sinners, the chief minister and messenger of his Father's love to men. If he had not undertaken to make peace, we had still continued children of wrath, and in the same state with fallen angels, who are never invited to return to the love of God. There is no prophet, no messenger sent to require or charge them to love God, for there is no priest or peace-maker appointed for them.

Who is so fit a person to urge upon our consciences this blessed command of love to God, as he who came to redeem us from our state of rebellion and enmity, to deliver us from the anger of God, and the curse of the law, and everlasting death? Who can give us such pathetic motives, and so powerful a charge to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, as he who came to write his Father's love to us in the lines of blood,

even his own blood? He whose heart was pierced for the sake of sinful men; he who came to seal the covenant of love between God and man, with the anguish of his soul, and the blood of his heart? How all-glorious and well-chosen is this messenger of the love and precepts of God! This blessed prophet who is sent from God to recommend to us the eternal duty of divine love; who is also our great high-priest to reconcile us to God! Yet how little success has the message had on the hearts of men. What a sad and just occasion of shame and holy mourning! Forbid it, O God, that such a messenger, and such a message should be sent from heaven in vain.

MEDITATION.

“WHAT shall I do to become a true lover of God? Since I know there is but one God, I would give up my whole heart to him alone: I would fain have him to reign in my affections supreme and without a rival. But let me recollect myself a little. and let me not deny what God and his grace have wrought in my soul. Do I not love

him sincerely, and above all things? Am I not possessed of those qualifications which are contained and implied in the affectionate and supreme love of God? Let me run over them in meditation and self-inquiry.

“ Have I not beheld him as the first, and the best of beings? Have I not seen him most glorious in himself, and worthy of the highest esteem and love? Am I not deeply convinced, and firmly persuaded that he is the only all-sufficient good? That he is the overflowing spring of grace and blessedness? Have I not been taught to see the vanity and emptiness of all things beneath and besides God, and that without him I can never arrive at true happiness? Has he not the most transcendent place in my esteem? Yes, O Lord, through thy grace I can say, the creatures are nothing in comparison of thee; nor can any thing appear in my eyes more lovely and more desirable than God and his love.

“ Again: Have I not been invited and raised by thy grace to some humble hope of thy favour? Hast thou not revealed thyself, in thy word, as a God condescending to be reconciled to sinners, willing to be reconciled to me? As a God willing to make creatures happy, even every creature that desires to centre itself in God, and take up

its rest in him: O that sublime, that most excellent, that supreme Being, the holy and blessed God! How merciful! How compassionate! Have I not seen him in his word descending within the reach of my hope? And have I not rejoiced to think that he gives me leave to hope in him, as an eternal portion for my soul, and that he holds out the arm of his love to receive me?

“May I not proceed yet farther, O my God? Has not my will been drawn powerfully toward thee, and make choice of thee as my everlasting good? Have I not turned my back upon creatures at thy call, and divided myself from every thing, that I might be more nearly united to thee? Have I not renounced them all, that I might be entirely the Lord’s? Does not my soul with firm purpose cleave to thee, as my immortal portion, and my ever-during inheritance?”

“Yet again, O my Lord, does not my heart sometimes go out after thee, with most pleasing sensations? O that I could say it never wandered? But I humbly hope it will never, never be at rest while absent from God. Sometimes like the needle that is feebly touched with the sovereign influence of the load-stone, it may be drawn aside by other influences, and it is too ready to wander from the beloved point:

But may I not appeal to thee, O my God, that, like the needle, it is ever restless till it point to thee again, to thee, the object of my strongest desires, and my supreme love?

“Are not my flesh and spirit, with all their active powers, under the command of this divine principle, this holy fire of love? Does not this heavenly affection reign in my soul over all my faculties, all my senses, and all my passions? Are not all my little affairs in this world, and all my more important concerns, regulated and governed by his holy love? Canst thou bear the thought, O my soul, of acting contrary to this inward vital and reigning principle! Are not all my mortal interests subdued and devoted to divine love, and all my immortal interests united and summed up in it? “Whom have I in heaven, O Lord, but thee? and what is there on earth that I desire in comparison of thee?” Psalm lxxiii. 25.

“These eyes of mine, whither shall they look but toward thee? These feet, whither shall they go but on thy messages? What shall these hands do, but the work which thou appointest them? what is there that my tongue is employed in with so much delight as in speaking of thee, and to thee, my Lord and my God? All that I am, and

all that I have, is thine for ever and ever :
Am I not then a sincere lover ?

“ Blessed be the name of Jesus the son of God, and my Saviour, that has descended from heaven to dwell with dust and ashes, that he might bring such worthless wretches as we are, within the attractive force of divine love. Our sins stood between God and man, like a wall of dreadful separation ; but by his glorious atonement he has removed the bar, and made the way of access to God free and open, that God and man might be united in the bond of perpetual love : he called sinners by his own voice, and he calls them still by the word of his gospel, to partake of this privilege. O blessed messenger of divine love ! And he sends down his Spirit from heaven, where he dwells, to make us willing to partake of this felicity, and to draw our hearts near to God. Come, O divine Spirit, come, dwell in this heart of mine, as an unchanging principle of holy love. Guard my heart from all meaner allurements and influences, while I am travelling through the dangerous region of this world, till I have arrived beyond the reach of danger, till I rest for ever in the bosom of God, my supreme love, and my everlasting all.”

DISCOURSE II.

Divine love is the commanding passion.

HAVING declared at large, in the former sermon, what is implied in the supreme love of God; the second general head of discourse requires me to show, how this one passion of divine love will influence all the other affections to the heart. The whole world are witnesses to this effect of love in the common affairs of mankind; and this powerful passion still retains its own nature and sovereignty over the rest, when God is the object of it, which will appear in the following instances:

I. If the soul be warmed with divine love, "the various discoveries that God makes of himself to us, will not only be matter of frequent contemplation, but of pleasing wonder." Admiration or wonder is a noble passion, arising from the view of something that is new and strange, or upon the notice of some rare and uncommon object. Now when so glorious and transcendent a being as the great and blessed God becomes the object of our notice and our love, with what pleasure do we survey his glories,

which are so rare, so uncommon, that there are none to compare with them? We shall meditate on the surprising discoveries that he has made of himself, till we find new matter of holy admiration in all of them. Sincere and fervent love is ever finding some new beauties and wonders in the person so much beloved.

The lover of God traces the footsteps of infinite wisdom and all-sufficient power, in the works of nature and providence. "When he beholds the heavens, the work of the fingers of God, and the moon and stars which he has created," Psalm viii. 3. he first observes their immense vastness, their order and beauty, and wonders at the skill and divine contrivance of him that made them: "O Lord, how great, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all." Psalm civ. 24. And then he wonders again at the condescending goodness of God to his little creature man: "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldst visit him?" Psalm viii. 4. The loving-kindness of God has many admirable circumstances in it, as well as his wisdom and power; and therefore the royal Psalmist calls it marvellous, Psalm xxxi. 21; and spends many a psalm in the devout admiration of it.

Many of the providences of God are surprising: "He alone doth great wonders," Psal. cxxxvi. 4. In the heavens and in the earth he doth "things unsearchable, marvellous things without number," Job v. 9. The soul that loves God will recall his ancient wonders with sweet delight, Psalm lxxvii. 11; and will take notice of all his marvellous ways in his present conduct of the world and the church.

The glorious perfections of God and his works afford sufficient matter for the pleasurable and everlasting entertainment of this holy passion: he is an immense ocean of glories and wonders. There is nothing in God but what would be marvellous and astonishing to us, if we had our eyes divinely enlightened, and our hearts fired with divine love. Every creature has something in it that surpasses our knowledge, and commands our admiration: but what are all these in comparison of God, the all-wise and almighty artificer, who made them all by his wisdom, and the breath of his mouth? The soul that loves God is ready to see and take notice of God in every thing: he walks through the fields, he observes the wonders of divine workmanship in every different tree on his right hand and on his left, in the herbs and flowers that he treads with his feet, in the rich diversity of shapes, and

colours and ornaments of nature: he beholds and admires his God in them all. He sees the birds in their airy flight, or perched upon the branches, and sending forth their various melody: he observes the grazing flocks, and large cattle in their different forms and manners of life; he looks down upon little insects, and takes notice of their vigorous and busy life and motions, their shining bodies, and their golden or painted wings; he beholds and he admires his God in them all: In the least things of nature, he can read the greatness of God, and it is what of God he finds in the creature, that renders creatures more delightful to him. Creatures are but his step to help him to raise toward God.

If it were possible for our admiration to run through and view all the marvellous things of nature and providence, there would remain still a vast field of wonders in his word, in his law, in his gospel, in his transactions of grace with the children of men. David, that intense lover of God, meditated on his statutes, his word, his testimonies; he searched "wondrous things out of his law," Psal. cxix. 18; and ever found something in them worthy of his high esteem, and his holy joy. "O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy

commandments are exceeding broad," Ps. cxix. 96, 97. But above all, the riches of mercy manifested in the gospel, awaken and raise the holy soul to a sublime degree of astonishment. "This is the Lord's doing indeed, and it is marvellous in our eyes," Psalm. cxviii. 23. This was "the mystery that was hidden in God, and kept secret since the world began; it was concealed from ages and generations, and now is made manifest, to the intent that now unto principalities and powers of heaven, as well as men on earth, might be made known by the church, the manifold, the amazing wisdom of God," Rom. xvi. 25, Eph. iii. 9. There is enough in his gospel to raise the wonder even of the sinners that refuse it: "hear ye despisers and wonder and perish," Acts xiii. 41. Much more will it seize and employ the admiring powers of every holy soul, that has tasted of the love of God, and been partaker of this salvation. There is a divine and ten fold pleasure attends this exercise of sacred admiration, while the soul, in the language of faith and love can say "Thou art the God who alone dost wonders, and thou art my God for ever and ever?"

I might add after all, there is yet still another world of wonders to employ the lover of God, and that is, the person of his

Son Jesus Christ our Saviour. There God discovers himself in his fullest grace and wisdom, in his highest power and perfection. The attributes of the Father shine transcendently glorious in his Son, and become the object of love and wonder to men and angels. He is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. All the marvellous things that God the Father ever wrought, was in and by his Son. Did he create all things out of nothing? It was by Jesus Christ, Eph. iii. 9. Does he govern the world with amazing wisdom? It is by making his Son Jesus, the Governor and Lord of all things. Does he redeem and save guilty sinners from everlasting misery? These wonders of mercy are transacted by the cradle and the cross of Jesus, by the death and the life of Christ, by the sorrows, the sufferings, and the victories of the Son of God. His name is called Wonderful, Isa. ix. 6. For he who is the child born, is also the mighty God: The infant of days is the everlasting Father, the first and the last, the beginning and the end of all things! What sublime and sacred raptures of love and wonder join together, when a devout christian contemplates his God in his nature, in his providences, in all his works, in the pages of his holy book, and

in the face of his Son the blessed Jesus? But I have dwelt too long amidst these divine wonders, the following particulars must be more briefly handled.

II. Divine love will command the affection of holy desire. A sense of the favour of God, and the influences of his grace will be the matter of our most intense wishes and importunate requests. We shall long for the presence of God above all things, both here and hereafter. This was the fixed desire, this the passionate aspiration of the holy Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 58: "I entreated thy favour with my whole heart." What warm and pathetic language breaks from the lips of this great Saint, this sublime lover of God, in the 42d, 43d, and 84th Psalms? "My soul longeth, yea fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God: as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. Early, O God will I seek thee, for thy loving-kindness is better than life." When he dwells in his own palace he longs for the divine presence, Psal. ci. 2. "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. O when wilt thou come unto me?" But his eminent desire is to dwell for ever in the sanctuary; "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may

ever abide in his house, there to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire and converse with him in his holy temple," Psalm xxvii. 4. O happy soul, where all these active springs of passion are touched and influenced by divine grace! Hunger and thirst, and all the longing powers and appetites of animal nature, are too few and too feeble to express the holy desires of a soul breathing after the presence of its God.

III. When the love of God reigns in the heart, all the joys and pleasures of the man will unite and centre in God. It will be our sweetest satisfaction, and most exalted delight, to have God ever near us, and to be ever near to God. As absence from God is a pain at the heart of a lively christian fired with divine love, so his glorious presence is his chief joy. With what affectionate language does the holy soul of David rejoice in God, as his God! and how does he employ the charming arts of poesy and music to express his own joys and the praises of his almighty friend? One must run through a multitude of his psalms to copy out the bright expressions of holy delight which he found in the love of God; even the prospect and hope of waiting on him in his temple, fills his spirit with sacred pleasures, Psal, xlii. 4: "I will go to the

altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy : yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God." Psalm lxiii. 5, 6. "When I remember thee on my bed, and meditate on thee, in the night watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with the marrow and fatness and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips."

This joy, which is derived from the love of God, is supreme over all other joys, and independent of other comforts: when all the nether springs of delight among creatures are dried up, this is a fountain of eternal pleasure, a spring of ever-flowing delight, Hab. iii. 17, 19. "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, and there shall be no fruit in the vine; though the field shall yield no meat, and the flock shall be cut off from the fold: yet the Lord God is my strength: I will rejoice in the Lord; and joy in the God of my salvation.

IV. Where the love of God prevails in the heart, every thing that belongs to God, his word, his institutions, his church and people, will in some proportion be the objects of our choice and love, of our holy desire and delight.

Has God condescended to give us his word, to write a book of knowledge and grace for the use of men? How much delight will the holy soul take in reading and

hearing the blessed words of this book! A flame of heavenly love kindled in the heart, will engage us to converse often with those divine notices of himself, which God has sent us from heaven. Our delight will be placed in the law and gospel of our God, "and therein shall we meditate day and night, Psalm iv. 2. "Oh how I love thy law, says David, it is my meditation all the day; and in the night he remembers the name of God," Psalm. cxix. 55, 97.

Has the great God built a temple for himself on earth, even the assemblies of the saints? Has he appointed methods of worship in which men shall address his majesty and whereby he will make them partakers of his love? How desirous is the lively christian to attend on all these methods of divine appointment, to abide in the sanctuary, to frequent the house of prayer, and wait for the manifestations of the power and glory of God? "I have loved the habitation of thy house, says David, and the place where thy honour dwelleth," Psalm xxvi. 8. "How amiable are thy tabernacles O, Lord of hosts!" Psalm lxxxiv. 1.

Has God raised up children for himself, out of the sons and daughters of fallen Adam? Then "every one that loves God, will love his offspring too," 1 John v. 1. This is one of the chief evidences of a sin-

cere love to God, when we love his people and those who bear his image, without the narrow view of a sect or party, or particular tribe of such a name. The saint loves all the saints, and the christian loves all christians ; those who are most like to God “are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all his delight,” Psalm xvi. 2. And therefore he pities them under all their sorrows, and he relieves their wants according to his power, because they stand in so near a relation to the God whom he loves, and bears his lovely image, 1 John iii. 16, 17.

Has the great and glorious God one peculiar Son, his first-born, his only begotten, who bears his perfect image, and whom he loves above all the rest? This also is the chief object of a christian’s love. Not father nor mother, son nor daughter, nor the wife of the bosom, lie so near the heart of a christian, as the Son of God doth. He not only bears the nearest resemblance to God, but he is one with God ; “in him dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily :” Col. ii. 9. He is “Emmanuel, God with us,” Mat. i. 21. “God manifested in the flesh,” 1 Tim. iii. 16. There is more of the power and wisdom ; there is more of the majesty and mercy of God, shines through the human nature of his Son Jesus, than in all the millions of men and angels,

and all the worlds of unknown creatures that God ever made: And therefore the sanctified affections of the soul go forth in the strongest manner towards Jesus the Son of God: He is in their eyes the chiefest of ten thousand, altogether lovely.

V. Where the passion of divine love reigns gloriously in the heart, every creature separated from God will fall under a holy neglect and contempt. Nothing will serve or satisfy the good man, in the room and place of his God. All things, when laid in the balance, are lighter than vanity; they are in his esteem, "like the small dust of the earth before a mountain, or the drop of a bucket, when compared with the ocean," Isa. xl. 15. The language of such a soul is, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee, Psalm lxxiii. 25. Creatures, with all their attractions and allurements, have no power to charm his heart away from God: The divine lover is crucified to the world: it is like a dead thing to him, tasteless, disrelishing, worthless and vain: There is a vast emptiness, and wide and universal desolation in the world, if the soul see not God in it.

Business and diversions, cities and palaces, with their various ornaments, fields and groves, spring, summer, and autumn,

with all their flowery beauties, and their tasteful blessings, are some of the delights of the sons of men : Books and learning, and polite company, and refined science, are the more elegant joys of ingenious spirits : These things are the enticing gratifications of the senses of the mind of man : they are all innocent in themselves, they may be sanctified to divine purposes, and afford double satisfaction, if God be amongst them : But if God be absent, if he hide his face, or frown upon the soul, not palaces, nor groves, nor fields, nor business, nor diversions, nor all the flowery or tasteful blessings of spring or summer, not the more refined joys of books and learning, and elegant company, not all the rich provisions of nature or art, can entertain or refresh, can satisfy or please the soul of a christian, who is smitten with the love of his God.

I add farther, if the affectionate christian find not God even in his church and ordinances ; if his mind be not raised to heavenly objects in the house of God, and in his sacred institutions, they are all empty and unsatisfying ; there is no life nor pleasure in them ; a hypocrite is content with outward forms, and is well pleased with having paid his devoirs, and made his appearance in the church ; but the heart that loves God sincerely cannot be satisfied with

mere bodily devotion, nor with any pictures, shadows, or emblems of divine things, unless God who is the life, the spirit, and the substance, be there, and manifest himself in a way of mercy; unless God fill his own institution with his own presence, that is with the influences of his grace, with the enlightening, the sanctifying and the comforting operations of his own spirit.

VI. The love of God prevailing in the heart, will awaken zeal and activity, and holy delight, not only in the duties of worship, but in all manner of services for God in the world. Can I do any thing for God whom I love? saith the christian; That shall be my joyful work. There is no labour or fatigue too much to sustain, no suffering too hard to endure, for the sake of God, who is so supremely beloved. What shall I do to honour the King of heaven, and to render him honourable in the earth? How shall I spread his glory before the eyes of men, who in himself is so transcendently glorious? and what shall I render to the Lord my God, for the multitude of mercies which he has conferred upon me? Psal. cxvi. 13. Divine love will make the law of God delightful in the practice of it, and none of his precepts will be a burden to the affectionate and lively christian, 1 John v. 3. "This

is the love of God, that we keep his commandments ; and his commandments are not grievous."

The soul that loves God will be always aspiring after greater degrees of holiness, because it renders the man more like God : It is commonly said of friendship or sincere love, that it either finds or makes persons like to each other. Love to God is an assimilating principle, it works more and more, till we are transformed by degrees into his image : and if we are affectionate lovers of God, we shall never be perfectly pleased with ourselves, till we are delivered from the bondage of this sinful flesh, till we awake out of this dull and stupid state, into the world of spirits made perfect, and are there satisfied with the likeness of God. This heavenly delight shall be yet more exalted, when our bodies shall be raised in the likeness of our glorified Redeemer, and our flesh and soul together shall be made to resemble the holy Jesus in greater perfection. With what a gust of sacred pleasure does the beloved disciple express himself, 1 John iii. 1, 2. " We shall be like him, when we shall see him as he is ;" and when with David we awake out of the dust of death, " we shall see the face of God in righteousness, and be satisfied with his complete likeness," Psalm xvii. 15.

VII. Every thing that offends or dishonours the blessed God, will be a matter of hatred and aversion to the divine lover : and every thing whereby God had been offended in time past, will be the occasion of shame and grief. "I hate vain thoughts," saith holy David, "but thy law do I love," Psal. cxix. 113. Sin is the object of constant hatred in all its views, because it is contrary to the nature, the will, and the law of God, who is the supreme object of love : The good man is exceeding fearful of doing any thing that may offend or displease his God. When his soul looks back upon his own sins, he finds abundant matter for sorrow and holy shame, for self-resentment and pious indignation. O how hateful have all my sinful thoughts been ! My proud, my angry, and my revengeful thoughts ! That covetousness, that malice and envy, which have been working in my heart ! Those wandering imaginations which have called me away from the blessed God, even from the midst of his worship ! How vile and guilty is my tongue, because of the foolish and passionate, and sinful words that I have spoken ! What a multitude of evil actions have been scattered up and down throughout my life, and intermixed with my behaviour towards God and man !

All these create bitter uneasiness and pain in the remembrance, because they are offences against a God who is supremely beloved. What holy confusion, what meltings of heart in secret sorrow, do the true lovers of God feel, after they have indulged temptation, fallen under some more grievous sin, defiled their consciences, and dishonoured their God? What pangs of inward remorse, and what sincere indignation against themselves? And as an evidence of their love to God, they sometimes see reason to confess and bewail their folly, even in the sight of men. Holy David was not backward upon such occasions, to confess his grief for having offended his God: We may read the mournings of his love, in his penitential Psalms, particularly Psal. li. 3, 4—17: and he offers a broken and a contrite heart in sacrifice, to that God whom he had offended.

A true and affectionate lover of God is pained at the heart, and feels a sensible inward sorrow to see how iniquity abounds in the land, to behold the laws of God broken by his fellow-creatures, and his holy name blasphemed. "I beheld the transgressors, and I was grieved because they kept not thy word: Rivers of tears run down my eyes,

because men break thy holy law," Psalm cxix. 136, 158.

VIII. Every thing that has a tendency to divide the soul from God, is matter of religious jealousy and holy fear. Divine love hath its jealousies: If we love God with intense affection we shall feel an inward anxiousness and solicitude, lest our hearts depart from the living God, and lest God should hide himself in his displeasure from our souls. This is what holy David is ever afraid of, and begs that God would not hide himself in anger. The apostle Jude, verse 21, bids us "keep ourselves in the love of God:" The holy soul will watch against every thing that may begin a separation, or break the divine friendship, and it grows jealous of every thing that comes too near the heart.

When the true lover of God is deeply engaged in the businesses of the present world he manages them with a pious caution, lest his soul should be immersed and drowned overwhelming cares, or overladen with increasing riches; he is watchful, and afraid lest the dust and rubbish of this world should bury the holy seed in the heart, should obstruct the growth of religion, should carry off the thoughts from God to

idols of gold and silver, and thus defile the soul.

If he has any share amongst the honours and equipages, the gay diversions and pleasures of life, he is afraid lest they should fill his heart with vanity, lest they should tincture his spirit with sensuality and intemperance, and thus take away the taste and relish of divine love.

If providence call him sometimes into vain and wicked company, he is afraid of tarrying too many hours in the midst of them, lest "evil communication should corrupt good manners," 1 Cor. xv. 33; and therefore "he will not stand among the counsels of the ungodly, nor walk in the way where sinners dwell," Psalm i. 1. He shuns them as a pestilence, because their ways are contrary to the pure and holy nature of that God whom he loves.

Those studies, those employments, those recreations and amusements, which make the heart forget God, or withhold it too long from him, are uneasy and painful to a soul inflamed with divine love.

As it is the language of the sinner who is weary of God, "When will the new moon be over, and the sabbath be done," that I may return to my trade and my labour, to my buying and selling, and the daily busi-

ness, of this dying life? So the sincere lover of God is ready to say, What, nothing but business and labour for the bread that perisheth? Nothing but buying and selling, and seeking gold and silver, food and raiment? Alas, how unhappily am I detained all the day from my God by these embarrassments! When will the evening come, and the season of pious retirement? When will the sabbath appear, that I may spend my hours with God, and begin to taste what heaven is?

IX. Where the divine principle of the love of God reigns in the heart, all sinful passions toward God and men will be subdued by it.

1. Toward God. One would think indeed, that man should not dare to indulge any sinful passion towards his Maker; but so corrupt are our hearts, that we dislike the holy nature of God, we are displeased with his will, and his holy commandments are grievous to us, till the love of God subdue this inward aversion of the heart to holiness, and reconcile us to the law of God by the constraining influence of divine love.

Again we are ready to repine at the hand of the Lord, to murmur against heaven, and to quarrel with our Maker, when we meet with disappointments in our affairs: We are inclined to grow peevish and fretful

against providence, when we lose some desirable comfort or sustain some heavy sorrow, or long and tiresome sickness; but holy love silences every murmur, and quashes every repining thought. Where the love of God prevails, afflictive scenes of life will never awaken resentment against heaven, but always meet with patient submission. The sacred lover is not angry with his God when he smites him, for he ever supposes there is a just reason for every stroke of his Father's rod; "Either, says he, my sins have deserved his correcting hand, or these sorrows are sent to examine what grace there is in my heart, and to make trial of my faith: Still I am persuaded there is love at the bottom of all these troubles, and it is the hand of love that smites me; for my Saviour hath said it. Rev. iii. 19; "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten;" and the holy apostle assures us, Heb. xii. 6, that "God corrects every son whom he receives."

2. Divine love mortifies and subdues our disorderly and sinful passions toward our fellow-creatures; wrath, revenge, malice, envy, are all subdued and kept under by this sovereign principle of divine love. That soul in whom this sacred passion keeps a constant flame, is not easily roused to a wrathful or resenting temper, by the affronts

and injuries we sustain from men. The lover of God is meek and gentle under many insults and reproaches: He can forbear and forgive, for he knows that his God hath borne long with him, and forgiven him ten thousand provocations. Thus the sovereignty of divine love appears, in that it can suppress as well as raise the other passions.

X. Where divine love reigns in eminent degrees, there will be a humble holy desire to pass even through death itself to meet with God, the supreme object of love, and to dwell for ever in his presence. If faith be not too feeble, or the frailties of animal nature too prevalent, the divine lover will encounter death with courage, and with a sacred joy, because it will bring him to the enjoyment of his God. When the dust returns to earth, the soul of every man returns to God as a judge, and the soul of a good man to God as a friend, and father, and rewarder, Eccl. xii. 7. If "we are absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 8. In this view of things, the holy lover is ready to say, what is there in death so terrible, that the presence of Christ, and the enjoyment of my God, has not something infinitely more delightful to overbalance it? Love is stronger than death.

The love of God has been found stronger in a holy soul than all the pangs and terrors of death, even a death of violence and martyrdom: The one influences and impels toward heaven more powerfully than the other can terrify or discourage: United faith and love have passed through fires of torment, and seas of blood, in order to see God and dwell with him in his heavenly habitation. This leads to the next particular.

In the last place, I add, that as hell will be matter of utmost aversion, and holy fear to a sincere lover of God, because it is an everlasting separation from God, so heaven will be the object of desire and joyful hope, because there God manifests himself to all that love him, in his highest glory and his richest grace.

The soul that loves God with warm affection, cannot bear those dreadful words, 2 Thess. i. 9, of "being punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. To be without God in the world," during the short space of our continuance here, is a very formidable and grievous thing to the good man; but to be cursed and condemned to depart from God for ever, this is the very hell of hell, if I may so express it, in the esteem of the soul that loves God: To be divided for ever from God, the spring of life and love, and

all happiness ; to be separated for ever from God, the infinite and the all-sufficient good ; to be thrust out for ever from the presence of God, the most lovely and the best of beings ; to see him no more, to love him no more, and to be for ever banished from his love ; the very thought of it gives the holy soul more anguish than it is able to bear.

On the other hand, heaven, which is the dwelling-place of the Most High, is the mark which the good man ever aims at, that he may see God face to face. When his love rises high, he is ever breathing passionately after this blessedness, and lives with delight upon the promises which give him this joyful hope. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," Mat. v. 8. "The good man's affections are set on the things above, where Christ is at the right hand of God," Col. iii. 1. 2. "His treasure is on high, and his heart is there also," Mat. vi. 21.

If we love God with all the heart, we shall keep heaven always in our eye. The foretaste of it will be our present comfort and support ; the thoughts of being for ever with God, will sweeten all the sorrows of life, and will take away the bitterness of affliction, and ease the pains of death. As Jacob cheerfully sustained a hard servitude of seven years in Chaldea, through heat

and cold, through frosts, and wind, and sunbeams, for the love of Rachel, so the christian endures all the labours and conflicts, all the fatigues and distresses of life in this lower world, with patience, and with holy pleasure, in hopes to dwell for ever with God, whom his soul loves supremely above all creatures.

Divine love commands and influences, excites or subdues the other passions of nature, and makes them all subservient to its own great designs, that is, to the honour and to the enjoyment of God, and the object of this divine affection.

(Here this discourse may be divided.)

Before I proceed to the third general head, I shall endeavour to improve this discourse by these three useful reflections.

REFLECTION I. "How happy and easy a rule is here given us to examine how stands our love to God, and whether we love him with all our heart." Are the other passions of nature influenced by this love? Surely it is impossible for us in this present state of flesh and blood, to love God with our whole hearts, and yet to feel no sensible workings of fear or hope, desire or anger, in correspondence with this holy passion: To have no pleasure nor sorrows, no holy

longings, nor holy joys acting in concert with this principle of divine love.

Believe me, Sirs, there are no outward actions, no visible attendances on public worship, no bodily services, no costly sacrifices can so happily evidence our sincere love to God, as the steady and constant workings of the other inward powers of nature in a conformity to this holy principle. A hundred outward plausible actions may be the cloak of vice, the disguise of hypocrisy. Vain Pharisees may make broad their phylacteries, may tithe their herds and their flocks, as well as mint and cummin, may give much alms, or build hospitals and churches; but the various inward affections of nature can never be kept in any regular and steady exercise of piety, by all the toil and skill of a hypocrite. And on the other hand, if the heart be thoroughly devoted to the love of God, this love will reign sovereign among the other passions. The other passions will obey love, and we may judge by their obedience, how far the love of God prevails.

REFLECTION II. "If mankind be examined by this rule, how few sincere lovers of God will be found among them!" It is a vain thing for a man to say, "I love God with all my heart," when his strongest desires and his most relishing joys centre in

meaner objects ; when his highest hopes and his most painful fears, his deepest anxieties and disquietudes of mind, are always raised and sunk again by the things of this world only, and the changing scenes of this mortal state.

Alas ! How few are there whose love to God does not fall under some just suspicion, when brought to this test ! Let us survey the world round about us, and observe what it is that influences the various passions of men, even those who are called christians, and would be thought the disciples of Christ.

Some have their hearts so filled with the business of this life, and the love of money, as their chief idol, that all their desires their fears, and their hopes, and the perpetual course and labour of all their powers, keep this point ever in view, and in warm pursuit : The disappointment of a small sum, the loss of a few pounds will hang upon their spirits with a constant heaviness, and create them more pain than twenty sins against God their Maker. What shall we think of these people, who love riches so well, that if their hands and their heads would hold out, and day-light would last, they would never be weary of this chase, nor require cessation or respite. Does the love of God appear as the supreme and reigning passion

in such earthly souls as these ? There have been some in all ages, and there are the successors of them in our day, who have loved gold and silver with so warm a passion, even to the very end of life, that if they could but have contrived how to carry it away with them to the other world, there would have been but little silver, and scarce any gold left in our world long ere this time. This has employed their morning thoughts and evening affections, their earnest wishes, and their busy fingers day and night, so as to leave little room for the love of God and religion.

Others there are who make honour and esteem, or perhaps the grandeur and pomp, and equipage of life, the chief objects of their love. Their hopes and cares, their desires and inquiries are, how shall I shine among men, and make a figure in the world ? Every gay gilded thing they see raises their wishes : Ambition, honour and applause, engage their whole souls. A fancied contempt or neglect of them stirs their jealousy, and awakens all their uneasy passions. They mourn more, and are more inwardly and deeply vexed for one reproachful word from men, than for all their own affronts to the great and blessed God. Can the love of God reign in a heart so puffed up and filled with self and vanity ?

There are others again, whose idol is pleasure and vain delight. A round of pleasing amusements, a succession of sensualities, is their chief good : This employs their constant contrivances, this engages their hopes and fears, and every passion. They spend their anxious inquiries upon the gratification of appetite, humour and fancy : “ What shall I eat, and what shall I drink : How shall I dine elegantly, and regale myself at the table ? What are the most luxurious dishes in season, and where shall I find gay or merry company in the evening ? ” The tavern, or the meaner drinking-house, the comedy, or the ball, and every place of pastime, whether lawful or unlawful, detain their souls as well as their bodies, and engage their thoughts long beforehand. Does the sincere love of God reign in such sort of spirits ?

These are the things that busy and engross the daily passions of men, and scarce a small corner of their hearts is left for God and religion. But let us remember God as an all-glorious and sovereign being, his holy jealousy forbids him to accept of a corner of the heart. He refuses and disdains every lover that does not give up his whole self to him with all his powers. “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul : ” Every

affection must and will be employed in a pious manner, where divine love is, as it always ought to be, the supreme passion. But, alas ! how few souls are thus moulded and refined, how few are regulated and governed by a divine principle ! Man is the creature of God, and owes his all to him ; but the creature man does not love his Creator.

REFLECTION III. If divine love be so sovereign and ruling an affection, then “ the best and noblest method for governing all the passions, is to get the love of God rooted in the heart, and to see that it maintains its supreme dominion there.” What uneasy creatures are we made by our various passions ? How often do they disquiet and torment the soul ? How headstrong is their violence, like a horse unbroken and untamed ? How sudden are their starts ? Their motions how wild and various ? And how unruly are their efforts ? Now if one had but one sovereign bridle, that could reach and manage them all ; one golden rein, that would hold in all their unruly motions, and would also excite and guide them at pleasure ; what an invaluable instrument would this be to morals ! Surely such an instrument is the love of God, such an invaluable regulator of all the passionate

powers : and it will have this effect, where it is strong, and supreme, as it ought to be.

You that are daily disturbed and led astray by rising passions of various kinds, come to the lectures of the gospel, come to the doctrine of the blessed Jesus : Come see the love of God displayed in its most surprizing and powerful colours ; come learn to love your Maker, dressed in the riches of his grace : and may your souls be fired with divine love, till all your carnal fetters are melted off ; till you exult in a divine liberty ; till you lead captivity captive, and reign and triumph over all your vicious affections, which had so often before disquieted and enslaved you.

And here again we may take up a melancholy complaint, how few are there who are taught to regulate their passions by divine love. What wild work do these unruly powers make among mankind ! How dreadfully do they carry away multitudes into mischief and ruin for want of this holy government ! How very few have attained this heavenly gift, this sacred principle, this golden rein of universal influence, that would hold in, and guide and manage all the passions to glorious advantage !

MEDITATION.

“ BUT it is time now, O my soul, to call thy thoughts away from the multitudes of mankind, and to look carefully into thyself. There is reason enough for grief and lamentation indeed, if we survey the thousands round about us, who are mere slaves to their earthly passions, who let them loose among creatures, and show very few tokens and evidences of a supreme love to their Creator: But would it not be matter of far more painful, more penetrating and inward sorrow, if thou shouldst carry this evidence, this test of divine love, into thy own retirements, and shouldst hardly be able to prove thyself a lover of God?—Awake, awake to the work O my heart! Inquire, examine, and take a strict account how are thy passionate powers employed? Go over thy various affections, and inquire of all them, how stands thy love to God?

“Admiration is described as the first of the passions: It arises on the notice of something new, or rare and uncommon: But it never ceases nor is lost in the contemplation of God, whose glories are infinite, and in whom the holy soul always finds something new and wondrous. He is a rare and uncommon object indeed, for there is

but one such being in heaven and earth ; There never was but one from all eternal ages past, nor ever will be but one to all future eternal ages.

“Hast thou seen him, my soul, so as to love him? then thy work of pleasing contemplation and wonder will be still renewed : Among creatures we go on to admire what we love. But the love of the Creator will lead us to everlasting admiration. And if thou lovest him, thou wilt ever find something new and wondrous in him, as thy knowledge of him increases. Ask thyself then, hast thou seen the glories and the graces of thy God, so as to wonder at the infinite variety of his wisdom, the greatness of his majesty, and the condescensions of his mercy? Are his displays of glory in nature and providence, in the Bible and in the church, and especially in his beloved Son Jesus, the matter of thy joyful meditation and high esteem? Does a sense of his transcendant grandeur and goodness strike thee, as it becomes a creature to be stricken with the ideas of a God, that is, with a holy veneration, and with an awful delight? The love of so sublime and infinite a being, is naturally turned to pleasing adoration, and becomes an act of noble worship : But when earthly lovers adore their meaner objects, to express the strength of their

love, they turn idolaters, and affront God their Maker. Remember, O my soul, God alone must be adored.

“But proceed now, and ask, how stand thy desires and wishes? Is the favour, the presence, and the enjoyment of God the object of thy strongest desires, and of thy constant pursuit? Dost thou long after a sense of the pardon of sin, the love of God, and a preparation to dwell for ever with him, above all things besides.

“Yet further inquire, what is thy heart's chief delight? Are those the sweetest seasons of life when thou art brought nearest to God in the temper of thy spirit, in the lively hope of his love, and in humble converse with him? Are the secret hours of retirement dear and delightful to thee, above all human society? Are the workings of thy heart, in warm and affectionate devotion, thy sweetest pleasures? Can it be that ever I should love God supremely, and yet not find my converse with him to be my supreme joy?

“Again: Are the things that relate to God and eternity the objects of my choice and love, above and beyond the things that relate to men and this life? What value hast thou, O my soul, for the Bible, the book of God? His words will be treasured up in the heart, and will become the sweet entertain-

ment of thy solitary hours, if God himself has the highest room in thy affections. Let me inquire again, how stand my desires toward the sanctuary, toward the places and seasons of divine worship? Am I glad when they say unto me, come, let us go up to the house of God?" Psal. cxxii. 1. Are the courts of Zion my delight, because the blessed God manifests his power and glory there? Do I love the saints of God? Is the company of lively christians refreshing and entertaining to me, above all the idle discourse of the world, or the vain merriments or more polite amusements of the age? Do I look upon the children of God with a peculiar respect, with an eye of distinguishing love, and that for this reason, because they stand related to God, and bear his image? Do I feel a sympathy with them in their sorrows? Do I pity and relieve from my very heart the poor in this world, who are the sons and daughters of the most high God? And is Jesus, the supreme Son of God, the highest in my esteem, and the dearest to my heart?

"Ask yet again, O my soul; is every thing little and contemptible in thy eyes, in comparison of the things of God? Can any thing fill up the room and place of God? Or canst thou say all things are emptiness and vanity where God is not? When St. Aus-

tin, who was exceeding fond of the writings of Cicero, the Roman orator, came to taste the pleasures of religion, by the knowledge of Christ, the writings even of Cicero lost their relish with him, because he found not Christ there. How stands it now with thee, in respect of some of thy dearest delights of nature? Are they all placed, as they ought to be, in thy esteem, infinitely below God? Are thy best earthly joys empty and unsatisfying without God? canst thou say, in the language of this apostle, and assume his triumph, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, by whom we are brought near to God the Father? Phil. iii. 8.

"Inquire yet again, does thy love to God awaken and employ thy zeal and holy activity for his honour? Art thou solicitous to keep all his commandments, and hereby manifest thy love? There is no evidence of the love of God can be sufficient or sincere, if this be wanting. Dost thou seek to grow more and more like to God? Dost thou breathe earnestly after greater conformity to Jesus, the first and the brightest image of the Father? Is it a pain to thee to find thyself so unlike him, whom thou lovest supremely? Love will create likeness.

“ Let us examine thee now, my heart, how stand thy uneasy and painful affections? Hast thou a rooted hatred of every sin? Hast thou an inward aversion to every thing that displeases God? dost thou look back on thy own former transgressions, with holy shame and sincere sorrow? Art thou covered with an inward blush at the recollection of thy past follies? Are thy sins thy heaviest burden, and thy most uneasy load? Has thy sincere and unfeigned repentance been manifested by all the proper passions that attend a penitent, by self-abasement and inward confusion, by mourning in secret, and a holy displacency and resentment against thyself and thy folly? And is it a grief and pain to thee, to see and hear others transgress against thy God, and affront his law and his love?

“ Seek yet further: Hast thou a watchful jealousy over thyself, lest thou wander from God? A constant solicitude of mind, lest thou offend and displease him whom thou lovest supremely? Dost thou stand afar off from every temptation, as one afraid to be defiled with sin, and dishonour thy God? Art thou cautious of that company, of that business, of that diversion or delight which has before ensnared thee, and broke thy holy intercourse with God?

“ Ask again, O my heart, hast thou subdued thy uneasy passions of anger, frowardness and resentment, against God and against man, by the over-coming influence of divine love ? Hast thou a submissive and humble carriage under hard providences and sore disappointments from the hand of God ? Dost thou love him so well, as not to murmur at his holy conduct, nor quarrel with his government ? And hast thou acquired the sacred power and skill of suppressing thy wrath and revenge against men, by the constraining influence of the love of God ? Dost thou forbear and forgive those who offend thee, from a sweet sense of the forbearing and forgiving love of God towards thee ? If thy love to God has yet done little of this service, if it has not begun to make thee meek and mild, and dispassionate under afflictions from the hand of God, or the affronts of men, it has not acquired any great prevalence in thee, and there is too much reason to suspect the sincerity of it.

“ Come yet further, O my soul, take a step forward, and look towards death and eternity. Art thou willing to cross the dark valley, in order to dwell with thy beloved ? I grant nature has its frailties and fears : I grant also, that the want of assurance of salvation damps the wings of thy soul, which

would be stretched forward to the enjoyment of God in the heavenly country: I would put the question therefore, in a gentle and favourable manner. Hast thou any desire to leave this sinful world, to quit all thy dearest hopes and interests here, for the sake of dwelling with God on high? Suppose thou hadst a steady hope of his love, and the pains of death were mitigated, hast thou an inward breathing and tendency towards the happiness that arises from the presence of God? O blessed souls, whose love is risen to so transcendent a degree, that they are not afraid even of the sharpest pangs, and the terrors of death! They can venture with pleasure to cross the swellings of Jordan, that they may enter into the promised land, and dwell in the city of their God.

“What is it, O my heart, what is it in the word HELL that strikes thee with so much horror? Is it the thought of an endless separation from thy God? What is it that makes the name of HEAVEN carry so pleasing a sound? Is it because thy God dwells there in his fairest glory, and in his richest grace? The mere dread of hell, as a place of sorrow and pain, and the desire of heaven, as a mere state of rest from trouble, and of some sort of unknown happiness, are no manner of evidences of any

love to God, much less of a supreme love, such as God requires. The passions of nature may be awakened by natural self-love at the views of heaven and hell, when set merely in this light: But it is the hope of being for ever with the Lord, that is the chief allurements of heaven in the eye of the sacred lover; and it is the eternal absence of God gives hell its blackest colours, and its most formidable appearances.

“Hast thou O my soul, run over all thy passions in this inquiry? And what is the result of thy labour? Canst thou stand this test? Art thou a lover of God with all thy heart? If thou find this divine principle, this sovereign and holy affection reigning within thee, bless the distinguishing grace of God, who has kindled this heavenly flame, and cherish it with perpetual care. Set a guard upon every affection, lest it wander from its duty. O may divine love maintain its rightful dominion, and universal sovereignty in my soul. Let me keep God always near me, and watch against the seducing influence of tempting creatures, that I may ever preserve the love of God in its supreme fervency, and its unrivalled influence: Then my whole nature, with all its powers, shall be thine O my God, for ever and ever.” Amen.

DISCOURSE III.

The use of the passions in religion.

WE have seen already what is included in "loving God with the heart, and how this divine love will influence all the other affections into a suitable and correspondent exercise." We proceed now to,

The third general head of discourse, and that is to show the use of the passions in religion, or what advantage may be obtained by them, or expected from them in the christian life: And here we shall find the advantages of them so great and numerous, as will render it necessary for every one who professes serious religion to have the affections of his soul engaged in it.

Advantage I. "The passions being duly awakened, will set the powers of the understanding at work, in the search of divine truth and religious duty, and render the knowledge of God exceeding desirable to sinful men." We are by nature thoughtless of God and divine things: A little, a very little general knowledge of religion satisfies our desires, because we imagine it

is sufficient for our necessities. The bulk of mankind have their passions touched with earthly things, and they are ever inquiring who will show us where corn and wine, the pleasures of sense, the possessions of this world, honours or preferments are to be gotten? Too many are ready to join with the profane wretches, who are described in Job xxi. 14: "They say unto God, Depart from us we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" we do not want to know much of God, nor what is our duty to him.

But when the arrows of conviction strike through the soul, when the heart is awakened to a pathetic sense of sin, and the fear of divine vengeance possesses and torments the spirit, then it is the most importunate inquiry of the heart and the lips, "What shall we do to be saved!" Acts xvi. 30. How shall we escape the wrath to come? How is the governing justice of the great God to be satisfied for our offences? What is the way to be made partakers of his pardoning mercy? "Wherewith shall I appear before the Lord, and in what manner shall I bow myself, and worship the most High God?" Micah vi. 6. This was the language of the awakened jailor, who had just before scourged the saints of the Lord, the holy apostle, Acts xvi. 30. This

was the earnest cry of the crucifiers of Christ himself, at St. Peter's sermon, "when they were pricked to their hearts," Acts ii. 37. This is the language of nature, convinced of sin, and the danger of divine indignation. St. Paul learned all the terrors of the Lord, and felt all his painful passions in uproar, when he was struck down to the dust, with the dreadful and overwhelming glory in his way to Damascus, Acts ix. 3. And with what intense and hasty zeal did he make this inquiry, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" verse 6. And when he had learned the knowledge of Christ, as the only way to the favour of God and salvation, how highly doth he value it! Phil. iii. 8. "Yea, doubtless and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord."

If I am awakened to a sense of sin, and fear the anger of God, I shall long to know the awful extent of his power, and the terrible effects of his anger, as well as the methods of obtaining his grace. If I love him, I shall spend many pleasant hours of inquiry into his amiable excellencies. Each pious passion will promote its peculiar inquiries. Fear and love will wander with holy awe, and delight among his glories, and be ever pursuing further knowledge of

his perfections : If I love God with warm and devout affection, I shall rejoice daily to find new discoveries of his unsearchable wisdom, his all-sufficient power, his immense goodness, and the unbounded riches of his grace : I shall trace his wondrous footsteps through this beautiful creation, and endeavour to find his way in the track of daily providences : I shall survey him and his attributes in his book of grace, and dwell upon his divine features in "Jesus the image, and the brightness of his glory;" Heb. i. 3. and I shall search further continually into the knowledge of Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh : I shall dig in the mines of scripture for treasures of divine knowledge, and never grow weary of the work. I shall be always inquiring, "What shall I do to please and serve him," who is the object of my highest love? and how I shall obtain stronger sensations and assurances of his favour, and dwell forever in his presence, who is the life and the joy of my soul? We long still to know more of this transcendant being whom we love : It is this divine passion that animates these inquiries after the knowledge of God ; and this shall render them infinite and everlasting, because God the object of them is everlasting and infinite.

Advantage II. "The affections being once engaged, will keep the soul fixed to divine things. The sense of them is impressed deeper on the mind, by the exercise of devout passions, and it will abide there much longer." Even where reason is bright, and the judgment clear, yet it will be ineffectual for any valuable purposes, if religion reach no farther than the head, and proceed not to the heart: It will have but little influence, if there are none of the affections, engaged. Notions of religion in the understanding, without any touch upon the passions, have been compared to the stars in a winter midnight, bright and shining, but very cold: or rather to the meteor, which is called a shooting star, which vanishes quickly, and is lost in darkness.

Suppose we are convinced by calm reasoning of the being of a God, of the duties which we owe our Creator, of his government of the world, and of his final judgment; suppose we are led into a demonstration or evident proof, that we are guilty creatures, having broken the laws of God, and that there is no salvation for us, but in and by a mediator; suppose we are really convinced in our judgment, that there is a heaven or a hell, that awaits our departure from this world; that we must die shortly, and that we are for ever miserable without

pardoning mercy, and sanctifying grace; all this is valuable in its kind, and is necessary in order to salvation: But if all this knowledge make no impression on the affections, it is not likely to abide with us, nor to do us much good: Knowledge wears off the mind, if never used. Cold, unaffecting notions, will have no powerful influence to reform our lives. Every new scene of business or pleasure, brushes off these thoughts of religion from our souls, where they have not been let into the heart, nor possessed the passions: they “vanish like the morning dew or like an early cloud that passes away,” Hosea vi. 4.

It is one great end and design of the passions, to fix the attention strongly upon the object of them, to settle the thoughts with such intenseness and continuance on that which raises them, that they are not easily taken off. What we fear or desire, what we love and hope for, what we lament or rejoice in, will seize and busy our minds, and take them up perpetually, notwithstanding the importunities of other businesses or cares: The passions are supremely importunate, and will be heard. Now if the passions are strongly engaged for God, the world will have but little power to call off the heart from religion.

Suppose two preachers were desired to minister to the same auditory, on a day of fasting or praise, and on the same subject too. One of them has all the beauty, force and skill of clear and calm reasoning; the other not only instructs well, but powerfully moves the affections with sacred oratory: which of these two will best secure the attention of the people, and guard them from drowsiness or wandering? Surely he that touches the heart will fix the eyes and ears, and all the powers; while he that merely endeavours to inform the head, will find many wandering eyes, and some sleepers.

Suppose two persons have heard the same discourse from the pulpit, which was both rational and pathetic. One of them is pleased with the fine reasoning of the preacher, and hath his judgment convinced of the necessity and importance of the duty which he is exhorted to practice, and goes no further; the other hath also felt the very same conviction of his understanding by force of argument, and at the same time finds his soul touched inwardly with an emotion of the lively passions; he is awakened and surprised with an awful concern about his past neglects, and a holy fear of divine anger; he is struck to the heart with sentiments of piety, he is grieved and

ashamed at his folly, he is filled with zeal and holy purposes: Pray, which of these two will have the discourse dwell most upon their hearts; which is like to remember this sermon longest, and which is most likely to put it in practice?

This leads me to the third particular.

Advantage III. "All the duties of holiness are rendered much easier, and temptations to sin much weaker, when religion hath taken hold of the heart, and the passions of the soul are engaged in it." Passion animates all the inferior powers of nature, and strengthens them in all their operation. It is a sort of life and fire within the hearts of men, which God the Creator hath ordained to be ever ready there, to give force and spirit for present action. He knew our nature wanted this spur, this inward spring of activity.

Suppose we had been left merely to the exercise of our reason and judgment, to inform us when it was proper to eat and drink, without having any such appetites as thirst and hunger: It is possible indeed, that life might have been maintained, but we should have been often ready to neglect the proper seasons of food, and nature would have been supported but in a feeble and languishing manner, without such regular and constant nourishment as we want, and that too

without any sensible delight. But the keen appetites of hunger and thirst are implanted in our very natures, to awaken us to take our solid and liquid food, and that with constancy and natural pleasure. It is for the same end, that all the passions were wrought into our constitution by our great Creator, that we might have some more vigorous principles than the mere power of reasoning to animate us to activity on all just and proper occasions.

Suppose I were told that my house was on fire at midnight, and my cold reason informed me, that in a little time I and my goods might be consumed, it is probable I should think of using some method to save myself: But the passion of surprise and fear exerts itself in a moment, and hurries me out to make an immediate escape. Fear was wrought into human nature for such purposes as these. In such a fright we can almost move mountains, and perform wonders, to the utmost limits of the strength of man, in order to save ourselves or our dear relatives from the flames. Cold reasoning, without passion, would have no such sovereign and powerful effects.

Thus it is in things of religion. A cold information that misery will be the consequent of sin, or even a rational conviction of the distant danger of hell, without the

passion of fear, would never animate the man to cry out, with such importunate inquiries, "What shall I do to escape everlasting burnings?" It is this passion of fear that constrains him to fly for his life to the hope that is set before him in the gospel, and to make him escape as Lot did from Sodom, without looking back on the allurements of sin.

I might give instances of the like kind in the affection of divine love. I may learn by reason that God is to be honoured and obeyed, because he is my Creator and my Lord: I may be convinced of the beauty of virtue, and the excellency of religion, and that all the precepts of it are reasonable; yet these precepts will carry but a feeble sway with them, and have a very imperfect influence on my practice, in opposition to all my carnal interests and corrupt inclinations, if I have nothing to move me but the mere use of my reason, telling me it is a proper thing to obey the great God. This will not do the work, if I have no affectionate love to God as a Father and a Saviour.

It is a knowledge and belief of the truth of the gospel, joined with love to Christ my Redeemer, that makes me zealous to fulfil every duty. Christianity itself is thus excellently described by the apostle, it is

“faith working by love,” Gal. v. 6. A mere knowledge of any person will not make us grow like him, but love hath an assimilating and transforming power: The divine affection of love will work perpetually within us, and never cease till it has made us like our beloved object, till it has made us holy as God is holy, and formed heaven within us.

And when this warm love to God our Maker, and to Jesus our Saviour, is joined to a lively hope of everlasting happiness, how do these united passions invigorate the soul in duty, and bear down all temptations before them? Great is the constraining power of these divine affections, hope and love: They break through all obstacles that stand in the way of salvation: When they are united together they arise to holy joy; and among the saints of the Old Testament, as well as the New, the joy of the Lord was their strength, to fulfil all the duties of religion and righteousness,” Nehem. viii. 10. This sacred temper of mind carried out the patriarchs of old, and the heroes of the ancient church, to obey the call of God with courage, to leave their own native country and their friends, to wander through the earth as strangers and pilgrims, and to live upon a naked promise: This taught Moses to esteem the reproach of

Christ, and the hope of the Messiah, greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt: This enabled the pious Jews to work wonders of righteousness, to venture into the dens of lions, to dare the edge of the sword, and combat the violence of fire; to endure the trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, to pass through showers of stones, and engines of torture, despising death in its most frightful forms, and not accepting deliverance. These are the wonders which are ascribed to faith in the 11th chapter to the Hebrews: But it was faith animated by divine love; it was faith rising high in the hope of a better resurrection. A naked and simple belief of things unseen, would scarce have wrought these amazing effects in human nature, without some warm and joyful efforts of the affections of hope and love.

Behold the hero of the gospel, St. Paul, that little contemptible figure of a man, bearing down all opposition before him in his sacred course of zeal and duty. Under this influence he can triumph over all the formidable things of nature, and the terrors of this world, Rom. viii. 35. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Who shall divide our hearts from him? Who shall make us weary of his service or tempt us away from the faith and obedience of his

gospel? " Shall tribulation, shall distress, shall persecution, shall famine or nakedness or peril or sword?" As it was written of the saints in former ages, so shall it be fulfilled again in our age, " for thy sake we can bear killing all the day long." The sheep of Christ can stand the axe, or the knife of slaughter: In all these things we are more than conquerors, through the grace of Christ that hath loved us. Every holy martyr hath made it appear, that love is stronger than prisons or death: It hath its flames that are superior to common fire, and can overcome all the terrors of men.

When this divine love and hope have possessed the spirit, what poor and paltry things are all the allurements of flesh and sense? How feeble and insufficient are all the gay and glittering appearances of nature in this world, all the flatteries of pride and sensuality to draw the heart away from God? The holy soul can boldly withstand all the enticements of sin, when divine grace has seized the affections, and got possession of those sprightly and active powers.

What the nerves and spirits are to animal nature, the same thing are the passions to the soul: They are its very nerves and spirits, its most vigorous and unwearied springs of action, both in the zealous dis-

charge of every duty, and the firm resistance of every temptation to sin. These active springs set all nature at work in the affairs of grace.

The sanctified affections are so great a part of the new creature, that the very graces of the holy Spirit are called by their names. What is divine love, religious fear, and heavenly hope? What is a sacred contempt and disdain of sensual vanities, and an immortal aversion to sin, and utter abhorrence of it? What are holy desires, penitent sorrows, and spiritual joys? What is all this blessed catalogue of the fruits of the spirit, but the passions of nature refined and renewed by grace?

It is the influence of religion on the passions, that doth in a great measure make the difference between the true christian and the mere outward professor: The mere professor may know as much of the doctrines of religion, and of the duties of it, as the most religious man: but he doth not fear and love, and desire and hope, and mourn and rejoice, as the true christian doth. If a bare rational knowledge of divine things were sufficient to make a true disciple of Christ, the greatest student in divinity, and especially the sharpest critic in scripture, would be the best christian: But it is not always found so; critics and students, rich

in knowledge, may have cold hearts, and lie dead in a state of sin.

Advantage IV. “The practice of religion are not rendered easy, by having the affections employed in it, but they become pleasant and delightful, and every sin is more painful to the soul where the passions are engaged for God.”

If the christian be employed in holy meditation, how does the soul that loves God travel with delight over the various scenes of his glory, in the lower and the upper worlds! How does he dwell upon the majesty and the mercy of his heavenly Father; upon the excellencies of Christ the Saviour, upon his offices and his dignities from day to day! How pleasurable doth the mind diffuse itself in contemplation upon his pre-existent state, when he dwelt in the Father's bosom; his condescending incarnation and coming into flesh and blood, the labours and sorrows of his life, the anguish and amazing love of his death, the glory of his resurrection, the honours paid him at his ascent to the throne of God in heaven, the efficacy of his intercession, and the joyful and dreadful appearance of the great Judge, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to be admired of his saints, and to give vengeance and destruction to those who have ridiculed and rejected the gospel

of his grace? How are the thoughts fixed on the sacred theme, without an inclination to rove and go astray? How are the powers of imagination devoutly employed, when the holy passions are roused into activity; when our fear, our hope, our love, our joy are all in happy exercise? But if these are absent, and we are left merely to rational enforcements of duty on the mind, without love or affection in the heart, with what a cold indifference do we set about the work? How fluttering are our thoughts! How wandering are our hearts! And every flying fancy calls us away, and scatters our powers among a thousand vanities.

I might instance in the duty of prayer or praise, when the love of the heart flames out into holy desires, how ready and eager is the soul to seek the Lord! Not the shadows and silence of the midnight, not the early business and cares of the morning, can withhold the good man from calling upon his God. "With my soul have I desired thee in the night, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early," Isa. xxvi. 9. "And I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried to the Lord," Psalm cxix. 147. Or if the heart be warmed with a sense of divine mercy, and kindled into religious joy, how gloriously does the tongue break forth into praises! "Bless

the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits," Psalm ciii. 1, 2. "Seven times a-day will I praise thee: My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise: Awake, my tongue, my glory, awake to the joyful work," Psalm lvii. 7. 8.

While the pious affections are duly engaged in prayer, even a common christian is enabled to make divine work of it: Our minds never want matter, nor our tongues expression. Sense and language are very much at the call of devout passions, where the mind is tolerably furnished with the principles of religion; and then the soul converses with its Maker with unknown delight. But when we are impelled by a mere precept commanding us to our knees, and conscience goads us on as it were to the task and drudgery of prayer, without any devout affection, how cold is the heart! How languid the worship! How dry the mind! How scanty the language! The invention and the lips strive and labour, and all to little purpose. In such a case, I cannot but think that well composed forms of devotion may be useful helps to awaken the drowsy powers, and to call up sleeping religion. But where these powers are awake

and lively, such helps are less needful in our praying seasons.

The same experiment may be repeated in reading the word of God. How full of sweetness and holy pleasure are the discoveries and the promises of the Bible, when devout affections are at work! How sweet are the histories of Abraham and David, the prophecies of Isaiah, and the predictions that point to Christ! How glorious the epistles of Peter and Paul! How divinely pleasing is the gospel of John, and the dying discourses and prayers of our Saviour in the 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of this evangelist! How full of rapture and holy transport are the Psalms of David! We enter into his spirit, and we feel his divine sentiments and joys. But what a deadness, what a dryness overspreads even the most delicious and heavenly parts of those divine writings: what an insipid and tasteless thing is the gospel itself, when the holy passions are all asleep!

So it is in hearing sermons: When our sacred affections are awake, we dwell on the lips of the minister, as on the lips of an angel of God: every sentence seems to come from heaven; and even a feeble teacher, with all his infirmities, at such a season seems like a divine messenger, and raises your attention and delight. But the cause

is within yourselves, the activity of your devout affections under the influence of divine grace.

Is not benevolence and kindness to our fellow-creatures, liberality to the poor, and especially to our fellow-christians, another part of our religion? "Pure religion and undefiled—is this, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction,"—James i. 27. "He that loves God, must love his brother also," 1 John iv. 21. But how can we fulfil the several duties of help and relief, defence and consolation to our brethren, if we do not indulge the warm and tender affections of pity and sympathy, and love? The bounty of the hands, even to the most distressed object, will be but scanty and small, if there be no compassion in the heart: but when we love our brethren for God's sake, and excite in our hearts all the friendly and compassionate affections towards the poor and the miserable, then covetousness and self love lie down vanquished, and have no power to withhold the hand from a liberal distribution of blessings to those that are in need. Compassion melts the heart, and makes the hands flow with bounty and relief.

I might give other instances also of the same happy effect of holy passion in the more difficult duties of religion, in mortifi-

cation of most beloved sins, as well as in denying our most darling interests for the sake of Christ. How sweet is it, saith St. Austin, under the power of divine love, how sweet is it to abstain from all the old, sweet and sinful delights of the flesh? "Herein is our love to God manifested, that we keep his commandments; and none of his commands are grievous," 1 John v. 3.

And as the duties of religion are fulfilled with unusual delight, so every sin becomes more painful to the heart, when the passions are divinely tintured. The very dwelling of sinful principles in the heart, the working of unruly appetites and unholy inclinations, and the first motions of pride, and wantonness, and malice, and envy, and love of the world, are all very grievous to the soul whose affections are renewed and sanctified. Every compliance with temptation breaks in upon the sweet serenity and peace of the spirit, and gives it great disquietude. Read the case of the holy Psalmist and of St. Peter, after their folly. Thus it is in some measure with every sincere and lively christian; nor is the spirit ever at rest after any remarkable sin, till that sin hath been made bitter to the soul, and till the soul has made fresh and warm application

to the throne of grace, by humble repentance and faith in the blood of sprinkling.

It is a known doctrine both in the Jewish and Christian church, that not only the pleasant, but the painful and uneasy passions of the heart are consecrated to divine purposes, sorrow for sin, and deep mourning, teach us powerfully "that it is an evil and bitter thing to forsake the Lord our God; and in this manner our wickedness is appointed to correct us, and our backslidings to reproach us," Jer. ii. 19. By grief of the soul, and by the sadness of the countenance arising from it, Solomon tells us, "the heart is made better," Eccles. vii. 3. When holy David began to be "sorry for his sin, when he watered his couch with his tears, when his eyes were consumed with grief, and he roared by reason of the disquietness of his heart." Psalm vi. 3, 6, 7, he was then under the workings of recovering grace. When St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians made them sorry for their connivance at the incestuous iniquity of one of their members, he tells them, in his second letter, how necessary, this sorrow was, this godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation: What a train of holy passions attended it! What indignation against sin, and the sinner! What holy fear of defilement by communi-

on with such a crime, or the indulgence of it! What vehement desire after cleansing and forgiving grace! What revenge against such foul iniquity! What zeal to approve themselves clear before God and man! 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10, 11.

The blessed "God does not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men;" Lam. iii. 33. and he would not have made the sorrows and the bitter groans of repentance so necessary a part of the christian life, had he not known the painful passions of nature to have so happy an influence in the kingdom of his grace. By this anguish of the conscience, by these afflictions of the spirit, God carries on his own designs of mercy; and "makes the soul partaker of his holiness," Heb. xii. 10.

Advantage V. "To employ the passions for God, is to take a most powerful engine of mischief out of the hand of sin and Satan, and to reduce it to the obedience of Christ. It is the recovery of a considerable part of human nature out of dismal captivity and bondage. The passions are the warmest and strongest powers of the soul. They are the artillery whereby man wages war either for or against heaven. The passions by nature are devoted to the service of sin, and engaged on the devil's side in his wars against the Almighty, and they are

charged with the seeds of impious fire and thunder: But when divine grace hath taken hold on them, and employed them on the side of God and religion, it is like seizing the cannon of the enemy from their old batteries, and planting them in new bulwarks, to make war upon the devil and all his army.

Fearful and impious work do the passions make when they are engaged on the side of the flesh, the world and the devil. What bold contempt of God and all that is holy! What unruly violence of love to vanity and sensual pleasure! What mad delight in sin! What impetuous desires of forbidden objects! What malice boils in the heart against our neighbor, upon every supposed injury! What wicked envy frets and rages in the soul at the welfare of others! What wrath, and indignation, and revenge, are continually ready to be in arms! And how do these hellish passions employ the tongue in slander and lies, and sometimes embrue the hands in mischief and blood? Now what a glorious victory is it to have the vicious affections entirely subdued, and the other powers of nature, which had been usurped by hell, seized and restrained, and consecrated to the God of heaven, and become instruments of holiness and peace! To have these engines of in-

iquity become happy mediums of adoration and service to God, and of hourly benefits to men ! O blessed and divine change ! O the sovereign power of converting grace !

Advantage VI. “I might add, in the next place, that when the passions are sanctified and formed to a divine temper, it gives the gospel of Christ credit and honour in the world, in that it can triumph over the strongest powers of corrupt nature, and subdue them to the service of God and religion.” With what wicked violence were the passions of Paul engaged against the cause of christianity, when, to use his own expressions, “he was exceedingly mad against the Saints, compelled them to blaspheme, and persecuted them to strange cities ?” Acts xxvi. 11. “When he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord ?” Acts ix. 1. Now to have this man changed from a lion to a lamb, from a persecutor to a preacher of the gospel ; to hear this man propagating that gospel with zeal which he so lately endeavoured to destroy with fury, what divine honours this event gave to the religion of Christ when it was but young in the world ? And as there were multitudes of such instances in those primitive days, so I hope they are not utterly wanting now.

There are, I hope, in our age, in this city, and even in this assembly, some christians that can bear sacred witness to the divine power of the gospel in this respect. One can say, "how fond was I of vanity and sensual pleasure? Regardless of God, and thoughtless of religion, with an aversion to all that was virtuous and holy? But through the grace of God, the object of my love is changed: I delight now in the things of God: I love his word, his people, himself, and his Christ, above all things in the world."

Another can say, "I was greedy of money, and ambitious of vain glory." Another confesses, "I was fretful and quarrelsome: I was malicious and envious; I was wrathful and resenting; and my ungodly passions were ever ready to rise and ferment against my fellow-creatures: but now, through the influence of grace, I find my chief ambition is to be a child of God, and to exceed others in holiness: I covet the riches of grace, and the benefits of the gospel, above all other treasures: Now I am angry at myself because of sin, and angry at sinners when they dishonour God and my Saviour: I love my Lord Jesus, who hath procured forgiveness for me; and I would love all men, and forgive them for Jesus' sake.

It is a public glory brought to the gospel of Christ, when our devout and pious passions surmount all the carnal affections of the heart; when the fear of God rises so high, and grows so strong in the soul, as to subdue and overcome all other fears: And if we fear God sincerely, we need fear nothing else. It is very honourable to Christ and his religion, when the love of God and of Jesus Christ the Saviour, flames high above all other loves, and makes us forego and forget every thing which might be dear and valuable to us before, if it stands in competition with God the supreme object of our love. When the christian can rejoice and say, "I love my father and my mother, my wife and children, with as true and tender an affection as ever I did; but I love God, and my Redeemer, with a more sublime passion." Neither father nor mother, nor dear young children, nor the wife of my bosom, shall withhold me from my duty to God; and, through the aids of divine grace, I would be ready to offer myself, with all my interest in them, as a sacrifice to the love of Christ.

It is glorious indeed, to see the devout passions so much transcend all other passions and appetites, all other fears, loves, and desires, as they that all melt away and vanish before the power of divine fear and

divine love. To see all our fondest desires, and our warmest passions for creatures languish and sink, and die under the present influences of devout affection, as the light of a candle vanishes and is lost in the midst of sunbeams, or as the noise of a shaking leaf, dies and is unheard in the midst of thunder : O happy souls, who have arrived at this sublime degree of christianity ! Thither let our hearts aspire daily, and never cease our holy labours and prayers, till we love, till we fear, till we desire God, in this glorious and intense degree.

Advantage VII. In the last place I add “ the sanctified passions render us so much the more conformable to the blessed Jesus, and fitter for his presence and enjoyments in heaven.” As the son of God put on our flesh and blood, so he assumed the various powers and properties of human nature, the appetites and passions of mankind : He endured hunger and thirst, he had fear and love, hope and joy ; nor were the more troublesome affections of anger and sorrow left out of his constitution, but they were all innocent and holy ; they were never tainted with sin as ours are ; they had no corrupt mixtures to defile his soul. Our passions are like water with mud at the bottom ; when they are moved they too frequently raise the mud, and betray their im-

purity: But the passions of Christ were ever pure: like water from the clearest fountain in a glass of crystal, which, though it be never so much agitated, is still unpolluted.

These pathetic powers of his holy soul were ever engaged in the interest of religion, and employed for pious purposes. He loved God his Father with the most perfect and intense affection; and he let the world know, that he loved the Father, John xiv. 31. He rejoiced in spirit, when he gave thanks to God, Luke x. 21, and when God hid his face from him, and forsook him, his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, Matt. xxvi. 38. He was grieved and angry with the hypocrites and the blasphemers of his day, and looked round upon them with wrath and holy indignation, Mark iii. 5. How pathetic and vehement was his zeal for his Father's honour, when "he scourged out the buyers and sellers from the temple? The zeal of the house of God consumed and wasted his spirits, as it is said," John ii. 17. "He loved his church with most astonishing fervor, for his love was stronger than death," Eph. v. 25. "And greater love hath no man than this, that one should lay down his life for another," John xv. 13. How passionately did he mourn at his own foresight of the dismal

distress of his enemies at Jerusalem? "He looked upon the bloody city with tender compassion, and wept over it with tears of grief and love," Luke xix. 41. And what divine passions were exercised in his devout retirements, what holy fervors in the wilderness and upon midnight mountains, is only known to God, and to ministering angels.

Thus it appears, that the more our affections are tinged with piety and goodness, and the warmer their engagement is in the things of God, the more nearly shall we imitate our glorious Redeemer. O divine pattern, beyond all our imitation! But blessed are those who are the nearest copyers of it.

But you will inquire, "How will this exercise of devout passion, fit us the more for the heavenly world?" Angels are not clothed with flesh and blood as we are, and the spirits of the departed saints have left this part of their nature behind them, in the grave: What efforts of passion therefore can there be among the inhabitants of heaven?

To this I answer, that though spirits departed, and angels can have no such ferments of animal nature, as go to make up those principles and powers which we call the passions, in this mortal state, yet there is something akin to them; which may be called affections in the very nature of every

intelligent creature : Spirits which have no relation to flesh can fear and hope, can love and desire, can rejoice and grieve, and that in strong and intense degrees ; otherwise there would be no hell for the separate souls of the wicked, and for the punishment of devils ; nor would there be a heaven for the reward of the spirits of just men made perfect : There cannot be a heaven without pleasure, nor a hell without grief and anguish : Since therefore there is and must be something of pure affection in separate spirits, that bears a correspondence with our passions in this mortal state, we may be well assured, that the more these passions are refined and sanctified, and the more they are engaged about divine objects in a proper manner, according to the will of God, we shall thereby acquire a greater meetness for the business and blessedness of heaven, and be better prepared for the exercise of those more spiritual affections, which belong to the saints departed, and to the happy inhabitants of the intellectual world.

The holy apostle teaches us this doctrine in that sweet period of scripture, 1 Pet. iii. 6, 8 : When we are “ begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, wherein we greatly rejoice : ” and the joy surmounts all our present heaviness, and bears us in conquest

and triumph through our manifold temptations. It gives us a transporting view of praise, honour, and glory, at the appearance of our Lord Jesus; whom having not seen we love: in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; or as it is in the original, "with unspeakable and glorified joy!" You see here that the three blessed affections of hope, love, and joy, bring the soul, to the confines of the heavenly world, set him as it were at the gates of paradise, fill the heart with those divine sensations which are near a-kin to the joys of glorified spirits. Thus by the exercise of the holy passions in a sublime degree, "we are come to the spirits of the just made perfect, and almost admitted into the glorious presence of Jesus, our adored Mediator, Heb. xii. 23, 24. Let us awake, let us arise, let us shake ourselves out of the dust of this earth, and dress our souls in these beautiful garments: Let us long and breathe after these sacred sensations of refined pleasure, to which the church itself is too much a stranger in our degenerate times. These are fair emblems and sweet foretastes of those unknown "pleasures which flow from the right hand of God without ceasing, and run like rivers, an everlasting course,

through all the ages of eternity," Psalm, xvi. 13.

MEDITATION.

“ How glad am I to find that not only my understanding and my will, but that all my passions may be made serviceable to God and religion, to my noblest designs, and my eternal interest! I am sure some of them have had an unhappy influence to lead me astray from my God and my duty, and I am greatly pleased to hear that they are capable of being reduced to the service of my Maker, and become instruments of holiness and peace. Descend, O divine Spirit, descend into my heart! Take hold of these active and sprightly powers of my nature, and bind them to thy eternal service. Awaken my fear of the majesty and the justice of God, that I may seek earnestly what I shall do to please him, and how I may obtain his favour: And let my fear be constant and restless till my feet are led into the paths of salvation, and I feel the constraining power of divine love.

“ Let my devout passions be ever awake and lively when I hear the things of God spoken, or when I read of the momentous

concerns of religion, and a life to come. Then the sacred truths and duties of christianity shall be impressed deep on my memory, and written there as with a pen of diamond, never to be blotted out. O may the warm passions, melt my soul to tenderness, and make me susceptible of every holy impression. May this heart of mine, this table of stone, be softened by devout affection, till all the necessary and important parts of religion, are written there in lasting characters! May my heart, O Lord, receive the stamp of thy gospel with all its sacred lineaments, till I am become a new creature, transformed into the image of the Son of God.

“How easy will all the duties of holiness become, and all my temptations to sin how weak and ineffectual, if the passionate powers of my nature are warmly engaged for God!

“How delightful and pleasant shall I then find even the difficult practices of religion! How hateful will every sin be in my eyes, and how painful to my heart, when divine love as a sovereign has taken possession of it, and set all the train of affections at work there in its own service! No more shall I complain of weariness, or be tired of religious worship: I shall say in my heart no more, “When will the Sabbath be

over?" Not cut short my prayers and meditations, to gratify the flesh and obey its corrupt influence. If I am winged with holy passion, I shall climb over mountains of difficulty, in my way to heaven, or remove hills of temptations that obstruct my course: Divine love, as well as faith, can remove mountains.

"O how happy shall I be when all my passions are sanctified! They have been, I mourn to speak it, they have been wretched engines of mischief in the land of sin and Satan: They have defiled my soul shamefully; they have broken the law of my God; they have abused his grace and his gospel; dishonoured my Saviour, and grieved his holy Spirit. When shall these powers of my nature be rescued from their sinful slavery, and be devoted to purposes divine and heavenly! O that my fear and my love, my anger and my desire, my grief and my joy, were all appointed to their proper objects, that they might never more break out in an unruly manner to dishonour God, or to awaken sharp anguish in my own conscience! I would watch, I would pray, I would labour, and wrestle day and night against the body of sin that dwells in me. O for the sovereign influence of almighty grace, to correct all the disorders of my soul, and to turn every passion of my nature into a principle of holiness!

“ Let the blessed gospel of Christ obtain this triumph over me : Let the gospel subdue these rebellious powers to the obedience of my Lord and Saviour : May the gospel have the glory of so divine a change !

“ Come, blessed Saviour, set thy holy example before me, in a more illustrious and transforming light : Let all the devout passions of zeal and love, which reigned in thy heart, reign also in mine : O that I might copy out the wonders of my zeal for the honour of God, and thy love to the race of man ! With what a divine vehemence were thy holy affections engaged in worship ! But alas, how cold are all my attempts to devotion ! Kindle, O Jesus, the sacred fire within me : let it melt down my heart, and mould me into thy likeness. Let my soul be made up of divine love, as a happy preparative for the joys of heaven, and the everlasting presence of God, and my Saviour.” Amen.

DISCOURSE IV.

Inferences from the usefulness of the passions.

THE last discourse has informed us, that the passions are not useless things, even in the important affairs of religion and godliness. We have seen how many and glorious are the advantages that we may derive from the right use of the affections in the christian life. Let us not suffer so momentous a theme to pass away, without drawing some inferences, or remarks from it.

Remark I. May the passions of our nature be made so serviceable to the interests of our religion? then "surely the doctrine of the Stoics is a very unreasonable opinion, for it teaches us to suppress all our passions entirely, and if possible, to root them out of our natures." It is evident from what we have heard, that our pursuit of the important things of religion, in this present state, would be very faint and cold; and feeble, if it were not animated by some of these vigorous principles, these affec-

tionate powers and sensations. And shall we abandon and destroy all these assistants to piety and goodness, which are wrought into the very frame of our beings?

It is granted, that our passions in this fallen state, have their unhappy share of the general corruption of our nature: It is granted they are sometimes made the mischievous incentives to vice, and lead us astray from the path of holiness; and, if they could never be reformed, they ought to be rooted out. But when they are once sanctified by a touch of the finger of God, and tinctured with a savor of piety, they become very pleasant and powerful springs of duty, both to God and man.

A holy fear of the great God our Creator, and a solicitous concern what shall become of us when we die, is the first and most general spring of religion: This awakens us to inquire "what we must do to please the God that made us." When we arrive at some comfortable hope of our acceptance with God, then divine love promotes our piety and virtue: Then religion works within us by nobler principles, and it is advanced to higher degrees, than a mere principle of fear could raise it: All the passions of the man are subject to the government of holy love, and are employed by it for heavenly purposes. When we love

God supremely, we shall love men also, who are made after the image of God: From a due benevolence to men, spring a thousand words and deeds of charity and pity, and godlike goodness. When our refined affections work in this manner toward God and men, we come by degrees to delight in all that is holy; we arrive at the true taste of religious pleasure, and make near approaches to the joys of the upper world, where holiness and pleasure are perfect and everlasting.

Thus it may be said that after some general foundations laid in the knowledge of God and ourselves, "Religion begins in fear, it is carried on by love, and it ends in joy." Erroneous and unhappy is that philosophy that would banish these affections from human nature, which have so powerful an influence on the religious life, and assist our preparation for death and heaven.

Remark II. "How happily has the blessed God suited his various revelations in scripture to the powers of our nature?" How well are they fitted to work upon our affections, and to engage those active powers of the soul in the interests of religion and godliness! God himself, by his own methods of address to men, from one end of scripture to the other, proves the truth of

this discourse, and the advantage of the passions in things of religion.

If God speaks of himself, how bright are the displays of his majesty and grandeur, to awaken our reverence and religious fear? He is the holy One that inhabits eternity, who created all things by his word, the Lord of lords, and the King of kings: "He speaks, and the earth trembles, and the pillars of heaven are astonished at his reproof," Job ix. 6, xxvi. 11. "He is a God fearful, or tremendous, even in his praises," Exod. xv. 11.

How surprising are the discoveries of his power and knowledge, to raise our wonder! "He ranks the stars in their order, and calls them all by their names, and not one fails to appear at his call:" Psalm cxlvii. 4. "His eye surveys all the creation, and knows the thoughts of the heart afar off;" Psalm cxxxix. 2. "He takes up the isles as a little thing," Isa. xl. 15. "He touches the mountains and they smoke," Psalm civ. 32. Who can stand before him, or lift up the hand against him and prosper?

If he manifest the riches of his mercy and goodness, how is the divine language suited to strike upon all the springs of our hope and love, and to allure our hearts to him? "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God?" Psalm xxxvi. 7. "In his favour

life, and his love is better than life," Psalm lxiii. 3. He has magnified his love towards us, and the exceeding riches of his grace, that while we were enemies and rebels, he sent his Son to die, in order to redeem us from death.

If he reveal to us Christ Jesus, his beloved Son, in what a glorious light does he place him before our eyes, to command our veneration and honour, our faith and our fervent affection? He "is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. "He was with God before the foundation of the world, for by him the worlds were created," John i. 3. He is the man "in whom dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9. He is "God manifest in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. He came down from the Father's bosom, not to condemn the world, but to expose his own life and blood for our sakes, to make his soul an offering for our sins, and to sustain unknown anguish and sorrows, in the room and stead of such rebels as we are.

If he opens heaven in the gospel, and brings life and immortality to light, what thrones of glory, what crowns of righteousness does he set before us? What mansions of paradise, what rivers of pleasure flowing from the throne of God, what rich fruits of

the tree of life, what blissful visions in the presence of God and Christ, what blessed society of angels and holy souls are described, as the enjoyments of this heaven, on purpose to draw out our strongest desires towards it, and our joyful hope, and our warmest zeal in the pursuit of it!

When he gives us a view of hell, how dreadfully are the executions of divine wrath described there? What a gnawing worm in the conscience that never dies, what a fire that is never quenched? What burning lakes of fire and brimstone, kindled by the breath of an angry God? What troops of devils and damned spirits must be our companions there, "and the smoke of their torment ascending forever and ever?" Rev. xiv. 11. How happily are these divine descriptions suited to awaken us out of security, and to excite in us the passion of fear in the highest degree, that knowing the terrors of the Lord, we may stir up all our powers to flee from the wrath to come, and seek reconciliation to God by the blood of Christ?

If sin be mentioned in scripture, in what odious colours is it set before us? It was sin that ruined our first parents, and drove them out of paradise, and spread death and misery through all this lower world: It is the unrighteousness of men

that has awakened and revealed the wrath of God, in all the terrible instances of it, from the ancient apostacy and fall of angels in heaven, to the final destruction of this world by fire, and the punishment of men and devils in hell forever: And all this that sin might appear exceeding sinful, and raise in us the highest hatred, and utmost aversion.

The great and blessed God, who formed us at first, perfectly knows our frame; he is well acquainted with all the powers and passions of human nature, and the design and use of them all: And therefore when he wrote those holy messages to us by his apostles and his prophets, he does not only reveal things to our understandings, which reason could not find out, and then leave us to make the best of them; but he warmly and powerfully addresses himself to the affectionate principles within us, in order to make the discoveries of his grace pierce deeper into our souls, that he might recover us from our guilt and misery, and persuade us to partake of his salvation.

Remark III. We may learn from this discourse, "how much it is the business of a minister of the gospel, to engage the affections of his hearers, and to bring them over to the service of God and religion." It is granted that the first work is to inform

the understanding, to teach mankind what they are to believe concerning the great God, and what duties they owe to him. To this end the preacher must not only draw his doctrines from the light of nature, but from the Word of God, and bring them down to the capacities of his hearers. It is his constant business to explain the word of God to men, to propose the naked truth with the strongest reasons to support it: He must endeavour to strike light into the mind, and convince the reason and judgment of men; he must make it appear that they are guilty before God, and that there is no way of relief or hope, but in and by Jesus, the great Mediator; and thus lead sinful and perishing men into the knowledge and faith of Christ, as an all sufficient Saviour: All this is a necessary and indispensable part of this work; but it is not the whole of it. When the understanding is enlightened, the passions must also be addressed; for God has wrought these powers into human nature, that they might be the vital and vigorous springs of action and duties.

If the judgment be never so much convinced, yet while the affections remain unmoved, the work of religion will be begun with difficulty, and will drive on but very heavily. This the prophets and the apos-

bles well knew; and the great God, who employed them, knew it too, and therefore he sent them armed with the powers of natural and divine oratory, to reach the inmost affections, to penetrate the heart, and to raise holy commotions in the very centre of the soul. What mean all the promises of the gospel, but to work upon our hope, and to raise our highest expectations? What means the dreadful language of so many severe threatenings, but to shake us out of our security, and to rouse our fears? If there had been no such principles as hope and fear, in man, I am persuaded there would scarce have been any such things as promises and threatenings in the book of God. The word of the Lord is compared to a fire and a hammer, Jer. xxiii. 29. "Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." And it ought to be delivered and pronounced by the preachers of it, in such a manner, as may break the rocky hearts of stubborn sinners, as may fright them from their beloved iniquities, by the terror of everlasting burnings.

The holy scripture is a cabinet of divine curiosities, full of admirable allurements to invite and entertain awakened minds: It should be so happily unfolded and displayed by the preachers of it, as to represent,

in a noble manner, the amazing grace and love of God, and the blessings of the gospel; and that with such a holy fervor, as to light up a divine flame of desire, hope and love, in the souls of all that hear it.

To what purpose were the fancies of the holy writers enriched from heaven with so bright and various a treasure of sacred images, but to raise the devout passions of their readers, by flashing upon their imagination with divine light? Their words are sun-beams, that not only diffuse a sacred illumination around the eye of the soul, but kindle the heart into life and zeal. To what end doth all the pomp and oratory display itself in their writings: To what end do they use all the arts of trope and figure, all the beauteous, the alluring and the terrible colours that nature can afford, and that metaphor can borrow? Is it not all with a design to strike the soul of man in its most passionate powers, and spread vital religion through the inmost recesses of the heart.

Let the ministers of the word, who are zealous for the honour of God, for the glory of Christ, and for the success of their labours, read the writings of the holy prophets, night and day, and make them their pattern, transferring the beauties of the law to the ministry of the gospel. The pro-

phets do not merely tell us in a dry and cold manner, that sin is an evil thing, but they terribly denounce the thunder of the wrath of God against it, and pour down his vengeance on the heads of guilty rebels, to work upon our fear, to affright us from sin, and hasten us to fly to the arms of divine mercy. Nor do they merely say to us, that God is merciful ; but in a most delightful and inviting manner, they display the boundless mercies of God, and the workings of his bowels of compassion, in all the pathetic language of tenderness, as though he were made of flesh and blood as we are.

When our blessed Lord himself came down on earth, to become a preacher of his Father's wrath and mercy, what eternal woes does he denounce against hypocrites and impenitent wretches ? How gently does he invite the weary and heavy-laden sinners to come to him, that they may find rest ? Matt. xi. 28. How widely does he unfold the gates of his Father's mercy, and that even to murderers, and adulterers, and thieves, and blasphemers, that sinners of the largest size may enter in and be partakers of divine salvation. How happily does St. Paul imitate his blessed Master ! " Knowing the terrors of the Lord he persuaded men, and he beseeches them in the most endearing language, in Christ's stead,

to be reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 11.—18—20. In what pathetic language doth he set before us the glorious love of God, in contriving the recovery of fallen men, and providing grace for them in Christ Jesus, before the world began; and in saving them by such a surprising method of mingled severity and mercy, as the death and agonies of his most beloved Son! And all this on purpose to melt or soften our affections into repentance, love, and gratitude! How wonderfully do the sacred writers attack the passions on all sides, if by any means they may save a soul from hell? Happy preachers, who approach this divine pattern!

Can any of us now content ourselves to bring cold and languid discourses into the pulpit, with this bible under our hands? Will not all the sacred fervors of these inspired preachers reproach us to our faces, while we read and explain their sermons? Shall we go on to affect a calm and stupid politeness of phrase, in the very face of these warm and heavenly orators? Can we be content any longer to be the cold and lifeless rehearsers of the great and glorious things of our religion? Can we go on to speak to perishing sinners, who lie drowsy and slumbering on the brink of hell, in so soft, so calm and gentle a manner, as though

we were afraid to awaken them? What shall we say to these things? Does divine love send dreaming preachers to call dead sinners to life? Preachers that are content to leave their hearers asleep on the precipice of eternal destruction? Have they no such thing as passion belonging to them? Have they no pity? Have they no fear? Have they no sense of the worth of souls? Have they no springs of affection within them? Or do they think their hearers have none? Or is passion so vile a power, that it must be all devoted to things of flesh and sense, and must never be applied to objects divine and heavenly? Who taught any of us this lazy and drowsy practice? Did God or his prophets, did Christ or his apostles instruct us in this modish art of still life, this lethargy of preaching, as it has been called by a late writer: Did the great God ever appoint statues for his ambassadors, to invite sinners to his mercy? Words of grace, written upon brass or marble, would do the work almost as well. Where the preachers become stone, no wonder if the hearers are moveless: But let the ministers of the living word, who address men upon matters of infinite concernment, show if possible, that they are infinitely concerned about them.

This leads my thoughts to the next remark.

Remark IV. "How kindly has the grace and wisdom of God dwelt with us, in appointing men of like passions with ourselves, to become his ministers, and our teachers in the things of religion! Men, who have the same natural affections, who can feel within themselves all the train of devout passions, and express it in their holy ministrations! Men, who are subject to the same sins and follies, and are capable of the same religious fear, and penitent sorrow! Men, who stand in need of the same salvation, and must be trained up to heaven by the exercise of the same faith, and love, and hope.

If angels had been made the only messengers of the gospel, angels, who have no flesh and blood, no communion in the same animal nature, no share of our fears and sorrows, no interest in the same redeeming mercy and pardon, they could not have expressed all the same passions, nor given us such an example of them in themselves. But a minister of the word, taken from among men, has been in a sinful state, and is now become a sincere christian, or he should be so. He is supposed to have his own soul filled with love to God; he has felt his own fears awakened by the terrors

of the Lord, and the threatenings of eternal misery ; he has found his trembling soul encouraged to hope by the rich promises of grace ; he has felt his own hatred rising against sin, his delight raised by the views and expectations of the favour of God, and eternal happiness in his presence. How well is such a teacher suited to set the terrors of hell, the evil of sin, and the riches of divine grace in Christ Jesus, before the eyes of sinful men, who have the same natural passions with himself ; and to turn these affectionate powers of his hearers into a religious channel, by representing these awful objects in a pathetic manner.

The preacher should be an example to the hearers, and then he preaches with most power and success. It is a well known saying, " If you would draw out my tears, you must first weep yourself." How cold and dull and unaffected with divine things, is mankind by nature ? How careless and indolent is a whole assembly, when the preacher appears like a lifeless engine, pronouncing words of law or grace ! When he speaks of divine things, in such a dry, in such a cold and formal manner, as though they had no influence on his own heart ! When the words freezes upon his lips, the hearts of his hearers are freezing also : But where we find devout affection

mingled with solid argument in the discourse, there the lips of the preacher seem to speak light and life at once, and he helps to communicate the holy passion all around him, by feeling it first himself.

And here I am sure, we, who are honoured with sacred employment, have reason to examine our hearts, to reflect on our indolence, our lifeless conduct, and our cold labours in the pulpit; and mourn to think how imperfectly, and how ineffectually we perform the awful work of the ministry. And shall our own affections still be so unraised and unmoved, while we speak of the great and momentous things of God, and Christ, and religion, of death and judgment, of heaven and hell? Shall we always preach with such a deadness of spirit, such a shameful absence of divine fervour! May the blessed God forgive your preacher, and may you forgive him; and may sovereign grace raise a warm flame of vital religion in his heart, and communicate it to all your souls!

Remark V. If the passions are so useful in the solemn affairs of religion, "there is yet further occasion to admire the wisdom and grace of God, that he has appointed several such institutions or parts of worship to belong to our holy religion, as are suited

to work upon our senses, and thereby to awaken pious passions within us?

Besides the voice of public prayer, and the affectionate speech and language of preaching the gospel, we are also taught and exhorted to sing the praises of God with holy melody. What a multitude of exhortations are found in the book of Psalms, to make a joyful noise unto the Lord, and to sing new songs before him in the kingdom of the Messiah. The advice of St. Paul in the New Testament, echoes to the harp of David, and calls upon us to speak to one another, as well as to ourselves, "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and to sing and make melody with grace in our hearts to the Lord." Eph. v. 19. and Col. iii. 16. St. James gives the same encouragement: "If any be merry or cheerful," let this passion of joy express itself in a devout manner, by singing psalms, James v. 13. How happily suited is this ordinance to give a loose to the devout soul in its pious and cheerful affections? What a variety of sanctified desires, and hopes, and joys, may exert themselves in this religious practice, may kindle the souls of christians into a holy fervour, may raise them near to the gates of heaven, and the harmony of the blessed inhabitants there? Nor are pious sorrows utterly ex-

cluded from this ordinance: There are tunes and songs of mournful melody to solace the humble penitent, and to give a sweetness to his tears.

And besides all this, there are the two glorious and sacred ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, wherein divine things are exhibited to us in a sensible manner by figures and emblems, which are designed to impress animal nature, and by the eyes to awaken the passions of the heart.

How proper an emblem is Baptism, to represent our being washed in the blood of Christ? and the pouring out of water on the face or head, how well is it suited to represent the pouring out of the Spirit of God on men, and by this means to awaken the holy affections of hope and joy?

How happily is the Lord's Supper contrived by divine wisdom, to represent the death and love of our blessed Saviour, and the benefits that we derive from his sufferings? "Jesus Christ crucified is evidently set forth before our eyes:" Gal. iii. 1. He is represented even in his bleeding and dying love, while the bread is broken, and the wine poured out before us. O how should we loose the springs of pious passion at such a season! How should our love to our Redeemer kindle and rise high at the sight of the sufferings of the Son of God, who

took our flesh and blood, that he might be capable of dying! that his flesh might be torn, and cut, and bruised, that his blood might be spilled for our sakes, that he might bear such agonies as belonged to sinful creatures, with a gracious design to deliver us from misery and everlasting death? For ever blessed be the name of Jesus, who has suffered such pangs and sorrows in our stead; and blessed be his wisdom and grace, who has appointed the continual repetition of such an ordinance, such a lively memorial of his dying love, to touch all the springs of religious affection within us.

Remark VI. Since the passions of human nature have so considerable an influence in matters of religion, then we may justly infer that youth is the proper time to set about the important work of religion, when the passions are warm, and lively, and active. After we have been well instructed in the principles of christianity, if we can but engage these sprightly powers of our natures betimes, on the side of God and godliness, we lay a happy foundation for the practice of piety all our lives. It is of admirable and unknown advantage, to have all the passions of the heart tinctured deep with heaven and religion in our early days. By this means virtue and piety will be fixed and rooted in the soul; it will stand the blasts

of violent temptation, and bring forth the divine fruits of holiness through the following years. We shall be better prepared to combat every opposition; we shall be better secured against the snares that beset our youth; we shall resist the gay allurements of the world, and the flattering vanities that attack our senses and our souls in this dangerous season of life. It is the great cunning and the design of the devil and the world to work upon the warm passions of youth, to engage them in the service of sin and folly: Happy are those who are possessed of a divine antidote against this poison! who have their passions all watchful and armed, ready to resist the assaults of hell, and to disappoint every attack that is made on virtue and religion!

Remark VII. Is there so much advantage to be expected from the passions in the practice of religion? Then "how much do we lose both of the profit and the pleasure of religion, for want of the engagement of our passions therein!" Therefore it is that virtue and godliness seem to carry with them so dull and heavy an aspect in the world; therefore they appear so little inviting, because there are so few christians, in this degenerate age, that have these affectionate powers of the soul deeply tinged with the things of God. We live at a poor,

low, cold rate, when we only talk of christianity as a matter of dispute, and practice the outward devoirs and ceremonies of it, as a matter of custom and form, while the heart and the passions of it have little share in our christianity. If our love and desire, our hope and our joy, are all laid out on the things of sense and time, and we leave only a few cold reasonings to be employed in the most awful and sublime things of God, and heaven and eternity, it is no wonder we find so little of the pleasure of godliness, and that religion gains so little reputation, and so few followers. O what blessed lives did the primitive disciples of Christ enjoy! What divine satisfaction, what heavenly glory, what convincing power attended their practice, when their whole souls, with all their affections, were devoted to God and Christ, and engaged in the affairs of the upper world! They lived on earth like the children of heaven, and brought a foretaste of the pleasures of the upper world, into these lower regions. O when shall these holy seasons return again? When shall the noble principles of the christian faith animate all the powers of nature, and make us live as becomes the followers and the worshippers of the holy Jesus.

MEDITATION.

“ Many and useful are the lessons, which I have now learned from the happy influence of the passions, in the important affairs of my salvation. Blessed be God that I was not born in heathenism, and left merely to the teachings of the philosophers. Even the Stoics, who were some of the best of them, deprive us of all the advantage of pious affections, and all the pleasurable sensations that may be derived from religion; while they teach us to root the passions, if possible, out of our natures. My soul shall mourn in secret for my sins, and be ashamed of my follies: My heart shall fear and love the Lord my God, and rejoice and hope in Jesus my Saviour: My spirit with all its warmest affections are thine, O my God, for ever and ever!

“ Let all the sects of philosophy hide their heads, and lie silent: give me the bible, where God himself speaks to me by his prophets and apostles: How divinely excellent are their writings! With what sovereign influence do they address my fear and my hope, by the discoveries of a hell and a heaven! How powerfully do they awaken my repentance for past sins, and melt my soul into holy sorrow! In

what an illustrious light do they set the majesty of the blessed God, and command my humble adoration! How do they display the wonders of his wisdom, and the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus, to attract all my powers of desire and love! What a blessed foundation have the scriptures laid for an infinite variety of devout inferences and pathetic meditations, suited to my own case? There I find the divine truths that can relieve my soul under every distress; and there I learn the affectionate and devout method of applying them. In every needful hour I will go to the book of God: God and his holy book are my life, and my exceeding joy: Let my soul abide and live upon the divine or awful variety and transporting objects, which are set before me in those sacred pages. Let me be taught with sacred skill to spread abroad my thoughts on the right-hand and on the left, and to expatiate on these holy and heavenly themes: They are fountains of life, and every stream flows with holiness and consolation. O may all my affections be under the command and influence of these sacred writings; and while they give me intense delight, let them animate me to uncommon zeal in the practice of every duty!

“And why should not our ministers in all their labours of the sanctuary, imitate their

inspired predecessors, the apostles and the prophets, in rising the pious passions of all that hear them? Why should they not talk to men in such warm and pathetic language as God himself uses! Doth not the great God, the author of our nature, know what methods are most effectual to fill our hearts with divine sentiments, to draw us near to himself, and prepare us for heaven? Has he condescended to give us so many glorious patterns of preaching in his word, and shall not all that are employed in the divine work copy out the spirit and fervor, the life and power of these inspired examples? O may this dull and heavy heart of mine, ever enjoy the happiness of a fervent and lively ministry, that may not only enlighten my understanding, but warm my heart!

“And since God has ordained that I should be instructed in divine things by men of like passions with myself, may those whom providence has appointed to instruct me, be also examples of pious affection; that while I see their hearts filled with religious fear and holy love, and joy in the Lord, I may also be smitten with the same religious passions, may catch the holy fire, and find all the train of sprightly and devout sensations conveyed to the very centre of my soul!

“Blessed be the wisdom and grace of my God, that has added sensible signs and em-

blems to the articles of the christian faith. Let me remember, that I was washed with water, the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit ; and let me be ever jealous, lest I defile myself again : And when I attend the sacred institution of the supper, let all the springs of pious passion be let loose, while I view the Son of God, suffering for my sins : Let me feel the meltings of holy sorrow and the highest and strongest efforts of gratitude and love, to that gracious and divine person, who gave himself to death for me.

“ Have I heard that youth is a proper season for lively religion, because the passions of nature are then vigorous ; Lord, seize all my affectionate powers in this season of youth, and sanctify them to thyself. Prevent the influence of the wicked world by the early impressions of thy grace, that I may resist the vain allurements of flesh and sense, by having those sprightly powers of nature engaged first on the side of religion.

“ Or if my years of youth have enjoyed this rich and divine favour, I would remember the early loving-kindness of my God, and praise his name in my advanced years with joy and thankfulness.

“ Grant, O Lord, that I may never lose the pleasure, of religion, by suffering my affections to grow cold and languid. Quicken

this lifeless spirit of mine by daily influences from above: Shine upon my soul, O sun of righteousness: awaken my drowsy powers to active piety and zeal, and let all my passions conspire with my reasoning faculties to promote the interests of religion in my own heart and life, and to diffuse the favour of godliness all around me." Amen.

DISCOURSE V.

The abuse of the passions in religion.

IN the two last discourses, we learned the use of the passions in matters of religion, and what advantages may be expected from them, in the christian life: We proceed now to the fourth general; and that is, to inquire into the abuse of the passions in religious concerns, or when the exercise of our affections in the things of God may be pronounced irregular, and in what manner they should be limited and restrained, and put under better conduct.

Abuse I. Then are the passions irregularly exercised, "when we suffer them to influence our opinions in religion, and to determine our judgment in any points of faith or practice." The passions were made to be servants to reason, to be governed by the judgment, and to be influenced by truth; but they were never given us to decide controversies, and to determine what is truth, and what is error. Even the best

affections, and those that seem to have a strong tendency toward piety, are not always safe guides in this respect; yet they are too often indulged to sway the mind in its search after truth or duty, as I shall make it appear in several instances.

1. Suppose a person should be exceedingly affected with the unlimited goodness and abounding grace of God: if, by this pious affection towards God and his goodness, he is persuaded to think that God has no such severe vengeance for sinful and rebel-creatures, and that he will not destroy such multitudes of mankind in hell as the scripture asserts; or that their punishment shall not be so long and so terrible as God has expressly declared; here the passion of love and esteem for the divine goodness, acts in an irregular manner, for it takes off the eyes of the soul from his awful holiness and his strict justice; and the unknown evil that is in sin. It prevents the mind from giving due attention to God's express words, and to those perfections of the divine nature, and his wise and righteous government, which may demand such dreadful and eternal punishment, for the rebellion of a creature, against the infinite dignity of its creator and governor.

2. Suppose a christian has most powerful impressions made on the passions of fear

by the tremendous ideas of God's majesty, and his punishing justice, and thence he concludes that the Great God will pardon no wilful sins, that he will forgive no repeated iniquities, no sins after Baptism and the Lord's Supper, or after vows or solemn engagements; that he will have no mercy upon apostates, even though they turn to him by repentance: This is yielding up truth to the passion of fear, and abuse of our religious dread of the majesty of God; for such an opinion runs counter to the great design of the gospel, which assures us that "Christ came to save the chief of sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15: to remove the guilt of wilful and repeated sins, and to provide forgiveness for some of the most profligate rebels, even for all that renounce their rebellion.

3. Some pious persons have had such an affectionate zeal to honour God, that they have been led by this passion to contrive various forms of service and ceremony, gay and costly rites, with long and painful exercises of devotion, which God never appointed, and have introduced a number of them into his worship. A childish fondness to please the great God with bodily services, has tempted them to forget his own divine prerogative to prescribe how men should worship him. They have been blinded with this sort of fondness for cere-

mony, in such a degree, as to lead them far astray from the divine simplicity of worship, which the New Testament has appointed.

4. Some persons, out of a passionate desire to honour Christ, and ascribe the whole train of their blessings and salvation to him, have been tempted to think that they are to do nothing towards their own salvation, but to lie still and be saved without any labour or care of their own; so that they have sought no more after sanctification, and holiness in themselves, than they have sought to make atonement for their own sins. But this zeal has much darkness in it, and betrays them into a gross mistake, as though they could not ascribe their salvation sufficiently to Christ, unless they fancied that he came to save them in their sins, rather than to save them from sin.

5. It is possible that a person may have so high an esteem and so excessive a love for some near relation, some christian friend, some wise and pious minister of the gospel, that he sees no fault in them: He imitates all their practice, as though they were perfect patterns; he receives all their opinions for certain and divine truths, and believes every thing which they teach, as though they were infallible, without com-

paring it with the Bible, which is the only test of truth in matters of revealed religion. This affection of love to ministers or christians is certainly irregular, when it tempts us to set up their judgments, their practices and their dictates, in the room of the words of God.

6. Again, it is the same culpable indulgence of our passions, to sway our judgment, and bias our understanding, when our souls are warmed with the holy fire of love and devotion under a particular sermon, and we cry out, "This is the best sermon that ever was preached, or the finest that ever was composed." Or, perhaps, your devout affections flag and languish under a sermon; you sit indolent and unmoved, and then the sermon goes for a poor dry discourse, and the man that delivered it for a dull and heavy preacher. Each of these hasty and irregular judgments, built on the passions, is very common to christians, and ought to be corrected.

7. I might add another instance a-kin to the last; and that is, when our devout affections of fear and hope, of holy love and heavenly delight, are raised in a place of public worship, whether at the established church or among the several denominations of the protestant dissenters, and immediately we conclude, "This is the right way of worship, this is most agreeable to the gos-

pel, and these people are the only true church of Christ." How weak is this reasoning! And yet how many are there, who have been determined both in their opinion and practice for or against such a particular community of christians, or mode of worship; and that for their whole life-time, merely by the effects that one or two attendances at such a particular place of worship have had on their affections?

These arguments drawn from the passions, have been often employed to support idolatry and transubstantiation, and all the wild inventions of men in the worship of God. What sighs, and tears, what warm affections of sorrow and joy have been sometimes produced by some ingenious orators in the Roman church, in their sermons at Lent, when they have held up a crucifix before the face of the people in the midst of their discourse! While they set forth the sufferings of our Saviour in most pathetic language, the preachers have fallen down on their knees, and embraced and adored the wooden image: The natural affections of the hearers have been awakened in a very sensible manner, and being mingled with some thoughts of Christ and religion, they have fallen down and worshipped the idol, and have imagined all this to be pure devotion and piety towards God and his

Son Jesus : and after all, they have made their lively passions a sufficient argument that God approved of all their fooleries, though, in his own word he hath expressly forbidden the worship of images.

I have read of another instance ; when a poor devout creature hath come to the sacrament of the mass of the Romish church, and her passions being raised to a rapturous degree, as she thought, by the presence of Christ there, under the form of the consecrated wafer, she hath boldly declared, " should all the men on earth, and all the angels in heaven, join together to assure me that God himself was not there, I would not believe them, for I have seen him, and felt his divine presence." What a wretched and mischievous abuse of passion is this, when persons shall suffer it to lead them to such unwarranted and sinful modes of worship, and persuade them to believe such strange doctrines, as are not only contrary to the express word of God, but a perfect contradiction to nature, sense, and reason !

Instances of this kind might be still multiplied. I have mentioned these few only to make it appear how unreasonable a thing it is to form our opinions in religion by the influence of the passions.

Abuse II. Then must the affections in matters of religion be pronounced irregular,

“when they run before the understanding, or when they rise higher toward any particular object than the judgment directs.” As in the foregoing particular, I told you that the passions were not designed to be directing powers of the soul, in the search of truth or duty; so neither are they made to rule all within us; but they are to be governed by reason and understanding: And in whatsoever instances they assume a superiority over the understanding, or run before it, they are excessive and irregular. Let us enter into a few particulars.

1. Some persons, as soon as they begin to find farther light dawning upon their minds, and are let into the knowledge of some doctrine or sentiment which they knew not before, immediately set their zeal to work: Their zeal is all on a flame to propagate and promote this new lesson of truth, before their own hearts are well established in it upon solid reasonings, and before they have considered whether it be a doctrine of great importance, and whether it merit such a degree of zeal. How common a case is it among christians, and too often found among ministers of the gospel, to give a loose to their affections at the first glimpse of some pleasing opinion, or some fresh discovery of what they call truth? They help out the weakness of the proof by

the strength of their passions, and by the pleasure they take in the opinion they have embraced. This confirms their assent too soon, and they grow deaf to the arguments that are brought to oppose it. They construe every text in the scripture to support this doctrine, they bring in the prophets and apostles to maintain it. They fancy they see in it a thousand verses of their Bibles, and they pronounce all men heretics that dare maintain the contrary opinions. Their conduct in this matter is so vehement, as though every gleam of light were sufficient to determine their faith, because it happens to fire their affections; they grow so warm about it, as though every opinion in religion were fundamental; and so fiery is their zeal, as though every mistake deserved the severest censures.

Nor is this the case of the christians only, with relation to the new opinions they receive: There are too many who take up most of their articles of faith at first without due examination, and without sufficient argument: Their veneration for great names, or their affection to a particular party, has determined their opinions long ago: Their passions and other prejudices have formed their schemes of doctrines, with the neglect or abuse of their understandings and yet they pronounce as posi-

tively upon truth and error, as though they were infallible. Happy are those whose faith is built on better foundations!

2. Again, there are some persons, when they begin to be convinced that such a particular practice is culpable or unlawful, their indignation is too soon awakened, and rises too high; immediately they condemn it, as inconsistent with salvation: Their hatred of it grows as violent as if it were blasphemy or idolatry: They are ready to break out into hard speeches and railing accusations against all that practice it, and pronounce them apostates and sinners of the first rank. The sudden rise and warmth of their passions does not suffer them to consider that there are some faults and follies that a good christian may be guilty of, through ignorance or inadvertence; there are some sins that do not carry in them such malignity and poison as to destroy all our christianity.

3. There have been some weak christians, when they have heard a sermon, or read a discourse full of sublime language and mysterious darkness, and especially, if the style and manner has been very pathetic, who have been raptured and transported, as though it contained the deepest sense, the noblest truths of religion, and the highest discoveries of grace and the gospel:

Whereas, perhaps, there may be scarce any thing in it which has a just agreement with reason or scripture; but when well examined, it proves to be a mere jargon of words, a mixture of unintelligible and unmeaning sounds, with some affectionate airs among them, whereby their passions were fired, and that without knowledge, and beyond all reason; And it is well, if after these flashes of affection and violent transports, they are not deluded into shameful iniquities. This has been the case of some high pretenders in elder and later days. They have spoken great swelling words of vanity, they are murmurers and complainers against the common rank of christians, but they "walk after their own ungodly lusts; they turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and they allure others into lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness; and while they promise liberty, they are the servants of corruption," 1 Pet. ii. 18, 19; and Judge 4, 16, 18.

4. This irregular exercise of the affections running before reason, is eminently exemplified also or another weak sort of people, who are very sincere in the main, but if they read an awful and terrible threatening, or if they hear it pronounced or the pulpit with a just degree of authority and proper accent, their fears are raised in an

excessive manner, and their soul is filled with long sorrows and doubtings: Or, if they happen to read or hear a sentence of comfort, they are transported with sudden joy, and raise almost to assurance of the love of God: They give themselves up to the sudden efforts of passion, before they suffer themselves to inquire, according to scriptural grounds, whether this text of threatenings, or whether the other sentences of comfort, do really belong to them or no.

There are many other cases, wherein it is evident, that the affections in the things of religion get the start of the understanding, and run far before it. But I proceed.

Abuse III. It is a very gross abuse of the affections, "when we encourage them to rise high, and grow very warm about the lesser things of religion, and yet are content to be cold and indifferent in matters of the highest importance." There are too many christians whose warmest zeal is employed about the mint, the annise, and the cummin of christianity, Mat. xxiii. 23. and have few passions awakened or engaged in the weighty things of the law or the gospel. They are furiously intent upon speculative notions, and some peculiar opinions, that distinguish the little parties of christendom, and crumble the church to pieces:

Their fears, their hopes, their wishes, their desires, their grief and joy, are all employed in party-quarrels and in a strife of words: But they are thoughtless and indolent about the momentous duties of love to God and Christ, of justice to men, of charity to fellow creatures and fellow christians. So a sickly fancy is fond of trifles, and careless of solid treasures: So children have their little souls wrapped up in painted toys, while the matters of manly life and necessary business awaken no desire, no delight in them.

Suppose a man mourns to see the church of England lose ground in the nation, or to see the assemblies of Protestant dissenters grow thin and decrease, and yet he finds not his soul grieved, and his heart mourning over the atheism and profaneness of the land, the drunkenness and lewdness, the growing heathenism and infidelity of the age: Or suppose a christian triumphs to see the controversy about Baptism well managed, and his joys arise, according as his own opinion is bravely supported, while at the same time he takes little pleasure to hear of the conversion of a sinner, or that a wicked family is grown religious. What shall we think of such a person? Is not his religion in a childish and sickly state? Are not his passions, even about religious ob-

jects, managed in a very irregular manner, and worthy of a just and severe reproof?

Abuse IV. There is also another evil conduct of the affections, in the matters of religion: and that is, “when they express themselves in an improper or indecent manner, and especially in such a way as is unnatural and uninstituted, foolish and ridiculous, savage and barbarous, contrary to the dictates of reason and human nature, or the word of God.”

Take for instance some of the persecutors and idolators, the bigots and enthusiasts of the church of Rome. And I wish such persecution and bigotry, enthusiasm and idolatry, were never found among any other sects of christians.

1. With what furious and burning barbarity do Popish persecutors express their zeal for their religion! They arm their tongues and their pens with bitter reproaches and gall against those who divide from their communion, and would reform their gross corruptions; and they still profess it is out of love to Christ, and to the souls of men, that they imprison, cut, burn, torment, and destroy their fellow-christians. O my soul, come not into their secrets, nor learn such unrighteous and bloody zeal!

2. Survey Popish idolators. They imagine they can never show their affectionate

devotion to Christ sufficiently, without making images of a crucified man, and placing them continually in their sight, in order to pay their worship to Christ by those unappointed mediums. Sometimes they wear these little idols in their bosom, near their heart, and then they think they manifest how much their heart loves him. They kiss these wooden baubles, or their silver figures, with a strange childish fondness, and sometimes bedew them with their tears, to show their inward affection to Jesus their Saviour. There may be much animal passion, much commotion of nature and the flesh in these practices, with very little spiritual love. Sometimes they made pictures even of God the Father, and then perform their devotions toward them with forbidden ceremonies, and break God's second commandment to express their love to him. Strange and preposterous expressions of love, to practise what he forbids so often in his word, and that upon severe penalties!

3. Turn your eyes now to the Romish enthusiasts. God forbid that I should so condemn all that are educated in that church, as though there was no sincere devotion among them, though the church itself is abominably corrupt: but it is well known, that when some of these devotees have fancied themselves possessed with such a sub-

lime love to God, that they have thrown themselves into odd postures and strange disorders of body, and appeared more like distracted persons than sober christians, as though it must be something not human that must express their divine affections. Others have imagined they could never do nor suffer enough to manifest the inward fire of that love to God which dwelt in their heart, and they have contrived what torments they should inflict upon themselves, as they used to express it, for the love of God.

Others, to show their sorrow for having eyes that offended him, have not only worn sackcloth upon their skin, but they have scourged themselves, till they have been covered with blood; they have bound themselves with vows to travel barefoot, and to make long and tedious pilgrimages to distant lands. Some have sent themselves to death by voluntary starving; others have tortured and destroyed themselves with excessive thirst; and either made their bodies miserable, or put an end to life to show their love to God. These are wild and frantic superstitions indeed, extravagant methods of expressing any devout passion, and most of them utterly unlawful. Let us remember that the religion which God teaches, has nothing in it contrary to the light of na-

ture; nor must our inward piety break in upon the rules of reason and decency, when we would express it by any outward signs.

There are some religious affections, which are very properly expressed and manifested in the common way, whereby nature usually expresses those inward sensations of the soul. Godly sorrow naturally vents itself in groans and tears, Psalm vi. 6. Holy joy sometimes by a smile of the countenance, and often by the voice of sacred melody: And this not only appears in the example of the royal Psalmist, but in the precepts of the New Testament, Eph. v. 19. James v. 13. "If any be merry, let him sing psalms." Pious and earnest desires of the presence of God and of his favour, are signified by stretching of the arm towards him, or lifting up the eyes and hands to him, Psalm lxxviii. 31. and xxviii. 2. and cxxi. 1, 2. Repentance and shame are naturally signified by downcast eyes or blushing, Luke xviii. 13. Ezra ix. 6.

Some of the stronger outward appearances, and vehement tokens of inward holy passion, are indeed rather to be indulged in private than in public worship: But in all our behaviour in this respect, let us take heed that the inward affection is sincere, and is the real spring of all the outward signs and expressions. Let us see to it, that we indulge not that practice which our

Saviour so much condemns in the hypocrites of his day, Matt. vi. 16. Let us make no sad faces, nor put on dismal airs, nor smite the breast with the hand, and disfigure our countenances, merely to make the world believe that we are penitents. Nor let us make ourselves remarkable in public and mixed company, by turning up our eyes to heaven, to tell the world how often we pray in the midst of our secular affairs; though secret prayer may and ought to be sometimes rising to God, and we may lift an eye to him, while we are among men: Nor in public worship should we use frequent and loud groanings, to persuade our neighbours that we are more deeply affected with divine things than they; though devout affection will sometimes vent a groan or a sigh.

But above all, let us take heed lest we make use of these outward colours and forms of passion, to cover the want of inward devotion and piety. We should always make our religion appear to the world with a natural and becoming aspect; and in a decent dress to invite, and not forbid those who behold us. Let us take care that we do not disguise our holy christianity, nor make it look like an irrational thing, by unmanly or unbecoming sounds or gestures; lest we thereby expose ourselves to the

charge of hypocrisy, and give up our holy profession to the ridicule and contempt of the profane world.

Abuse V. It is an irregular management in the affairs of religion, or an abuse of devout passions, when we content ourselves with the exercise of these inward and affectionate sensations of the mind, while they have no influence on the holiness of our conversation. Consider, my friends what were the passions made for? Not merely for the sensible pleasure of human nature, but to give it vigour and power for useful actions. I have but a poor pretence to be a sincere lover of Christ, if I rejoice to hear his name repeated often in a sermon, and say never so many affectionate things of him, in the language of the book of Canticles, and yet take no care to keep his commandments: Whereas this is the appointed way wherein Christ has required his disciples to manifest their love to him: John xiv. 15. "If ye love me, keep my commandments;" chap. xv. 14. "Then are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." In vain do I pretend to pious sorrows, in vain do I mourn for some great and grievous sin, in my secret retirements, or in public worship, if my life be spent among the gay follies and vanities of the world; if I run into new temptations when-

soever the world beckons to me, and follow every son of mirth that waves the hand of invitation.

True christianity, where it reigns in the heart, will make itself appear in the purity of life. We should always suspect those flatteries of affection, those sudden inward sensations of sorrow or delight, which have no power to produce the fruits of holiness in our daily conversation. The fruits of the Spirit, are found in the life and the heart together, as they are described, Gal. v. 22. "Love to God and man, joy in holy things, peace of conscience, and peace with all men, as far as possible, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, that is faithfulness, meekness, temperance, and particularly a crucifixion of all sinful affections." Let us never content ourselves with any exercise of lively devotion, unless we feel our corrupt affections in some measure subdued thereby.

O how shameful a sight is it, and what a reproach to the profession of the gospel, to see a christian just come from church and holy ordinances, where his devout affections have been raised and moved, and immediately to find him breaking out into vain, earthly merriment, and carried away with idle and sensual discourse? What a scandal is it to our religion, to see some zealous

professors coming down from their closet, where they fancy they have been favoured with holy raptures, and enjoyed much converse with God; where they think they have exercised repentance and love, and holy desires, and yet immediately fall into a fit of rage against their servants or children, for mere trifles, and express their wrath in very unchristian language and indecent behaviour! This is an open contradiction to their profession; and the shop and the parlour, or perhaps the kitchen, give the lie to the pretences of the closet. O glorious evidence of a disciple of Christ, where all the pious passions join to resist every temptation! Where divine love keeps warm at the heart, where it purifies the whole behaviour, and exalts the life of men near to the life of angels!

Abuse VI. That must certainly be a culpable conduct, with regard to our religious affections, when they are suffered to entrench upon other duties either to God or man, and withhold us from the proper business of our place and station in the world. Though devout passions should be indulged at proper seasons, yet they should not so far govern all the powers of nature, and engross the moments of life, as to make us neglect any necessary work, to which the providence of God hath called us.

This is the case, when persons find so much sweetness in their religious retirements, that they dwell there too many hours of the day, and neglect the care of their families, the conduct of their children and servants, and other necessary duties of life, and let all things run at random in their household, under the excuse of religion and converse with God : Though I must confess this is so uncommon a fault in our godless and irreligious age, that it may almost pass without censure.

It is the same culpable conduct, when christians experience a sacred and affectionate relish of public ordinances, and they are tempted to run from sermon to sermon, from lecture to lecture, in order to maintain their spiritual pleasures, with a slight and careless performance of relative duties. It is yet more criminal in persons of low circumstances in the world, who would spend all their time in hearing or reading good things, or at some religious assemblies or conferences, while they, grossly and grievously, neglect their common duties of providing for themselves and their children. They are ready to expect, that the rich should maintain them, while they make their devout affections an excuse for their shameful idleness and sloth. Let us remember there is a time

for working, as well as a time for praying, or hearing: "Every thing is beautiful in its season," Eccles. iii. 11.

This sort of excessive and irregular affection appears also eminently, when, out of pity to the poor, or love to the public worship of God, dying persons leave vast legacies to the building of churches and hospitals, and endow alms-houses liberally, while their near kindred, and perhaps their own descendants, are in a starving condition, or want the conveniencies of life. He that takes no care of his nearest relations living or dying, is in that respect worse than an infidel. God does not love robbery for burnt-offering, nor does he permit us to abandon our natural affection to our fellow-creatures, to show our love or zeal for our Creator in such instances as these.

Abuse VII. Religious passion is then certainly exercised in a very irregular and criminal manner, when we suffer it to degenerate into carnal and vicious affections, and, as the apostle expresses it in another place, when we begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh, Gal. iii. 3. Examples of this kind are too common in the present age of christians.

1. Zeal may turn into wrath and fury. A high veneration for the glorious truths of the gospel, and a warm zeal for the defence

of them, has too often degenerated into malice and indignation, against those who differ from us in religious sentiments; and that too in matters which are of small importance to practical godliness. Pious zeal against dangerous errors is a just and laudable thing, when it carries moderation and good temper with it, and does not break out into wrath and malignity against the persons of those who are unhappily betrayed into those mistakes: but, it becomes a guilty passion, and hateful in the eyes of God our Saviour, when it breaks all the bonds of charity and christian love. The flaming bigot and the persecutor, come in naturally, at every turn for their share of this caution and reproof, as abusers of the passions in the things of God and religion.

When we come sometimes into worshipping assemblies, where a man of burning zeal leads the worship, we find the wild-fire of his own passions spreading through the whole congregation. Is it not a shameful thing to hear the preacher railing against his brethren, because they differ a little from him, and will not use some unscriptural modes of expression, or will not admit some favourite explications of a verse of scripture, or will not consent to practise some lesser forms and rites of worship? And it is a matter of equal shame to see

many persons, who imagine themselves to be christians of the first rank, take a malicious pleasure to hear such scurrilous reproaches, and public railing against their fellow-christians, and curses denounced against them, because they differ in ceremonies and phrases. And the crime is certainly the greater, if these opinions and forms, wherein they disagree, are but of small importance. This is a wretched abuse of passion in the things of God: and yet so deceitful is the heart of man, and so given up to self-flattery, that perhaps both the preacher and the hearers vainly presume they are expressing a sacred love for divine truth, and paying sublime service to God and their Saviour. What madness is mixed with mistaken zeal!

2. There is another instance of the abuse of the passions, which is very near akin to this, and may stand next in rank; and that is, when we behold the vices of men, with holy aversion and hatred, and immediately transfer this hatred to their persons, whereas we ought to pity and pray for them: Or when we see a fellow christian fall into sin, and because we hate the sin, we hate the sinner too, and suffer our hatred to grow into disdain and irreconcilable enmity, and that even though the offender has given signs of sincere repentance. This is not

christian zeal, but human corruption ; and such criminal indulgence of the passions, which ought to be mortified, if ever we would be imitators of the Holy Jesus : He hated even the least sin, but loved and saved the greatest of sinners, and delighted to receive penitents to his love.

3. It is a culpable exercise of the passions, when holy emulation degenerates into envy. At first we admire the virtues of others, we respect their persons highly, we imitate their conduct, and aspire after the same degrees of piety and goodness ; we have a holy ambition to equal them in every grace, and in every virtue, and if possible to exceed them : all this is right and worthy of praise ; but when I fall short of the attainments of my neighbour, and envy him on the account of his superior character ; when I feel an inward displeasure against my brother, because his gifts or graces shine brighter than mine, then the holy affection degenerates, and becomes a lust of the flesh, instead of a fruit of the Spirit.

4. I might give another instance also of this kind ; and that is, when love to fellow-christians begins on a spiritual account, between persons of different sexes, and there is a mutual delight in each other's company and pious conversation ; but without great

watchfulness, this christian love may be in danger of degenerating into vicious desires and corrupt passions.

5. It may be worth our notice also, that there is another danger of the degeneracy of a devout passion, when persons of a pious and cheerful spirit have taken great delight in singing the praises of God, and meet together at the stated seasons for this purpose; but in time, this has insensibly sunk into the pleasure of the ear, into a mere natural relish of harmony, and delight of sounds well connected. This may have easily happened, when fine instruments of church-music have been used to assist psalmody, or when persons pride themselves in too nice and delicate a skill in singing, in too exquisite a taste in harmony, even though the words which they sing may be holy and religious.

To guard against these dangers, let christians frequently enter into their own hearts, and endeavour, as far as possible, to examine their spirit and conscience, to distinguish between their inward workings of piety, and the mere exercises of animal nature, or the working of corrupt affection, and set a constant guard upon their hearts in this respect.

Abuse VIII. The last thing I shall mention, wherein some christians are guilty of

an irregular conduct with regard to their affections in matters of religion, is this, "when they live entirely by their devout passions, and make these the only rules of self-inquiry concerning their temper, their habitual state of soul, and their present frame of spirit, and concerning every thing that belongs to their christianity." Such persons have little regard to the growth of their knowledge, the improvement of their understanding in the things of God, the steady and fixed bent of their will toward religion, and the constant regular course of a holy conversation. They seem to make all their religion consist in a few warm and pious affections. There are two sorts of persons subject to this mistake.

1. Awakened sinners, who feel their passions of fear and desire excited by some convincing sermon, or awful providence, and the rich doctrines of grace suited to their case and state, raise in them some hopes of heaven, and sensitive commotions of joy. This may continue for many months, and incline them to infer that they are converted from sin to God; and being also in a great measure reformed in their lives, they imagine they are new creatures, and all is safe for eternity: whereas they never had a heart fixed in the love of God, and in the hatred of every sin: they never

became hearty and resolved christians : and, in a little time, their devout passions die, and all their religion vanishes, for it had no root.

2. There are also some real converts, who are but weak, and live too much by their passions. If their hope and desire and delight, are but engaged and raised high in their secret retirement, or in public worship, then they are good christians indeed in a heavenly state, and they think exceeding well of themselves : but if, at any time, there is a damp upon their passions, through the indisposition of their animal nature, when they feel not a great degree of animal fervour powerfully assisting their pious exercises, they are ready to pronounce against themselves ; they sink into great despondencies, and imagine they have no true grace.

Such christians as these live very much by sudden fits and starts of devotion, without that uniform and steady spring of faith and holiness, which would render their religion more even and uniform, more honourable to God, and comfortable to themselves. They are always high on the wing, or else lying moveless on the ground : they are ever in the heights or the depths, travelling on bright mountains with the songs of heaven on their lips, or groaning and la-

bouring through the dark vallies, and never walking onward as on an evil plain toward heaven.

There is much danger, lest such sort of professors as these two, which I have mentioned, should deceive themselves, if not in judging of the truth of their graces, yet at least in their opinion of the strength or weakness of them, for they judge merely by their affections. Let us watch against this danger, and remember that though the passions are of excellent use in religion, yet they were never designed to stand in the place of reason and judgment, or to supply the room of an enlightened understanding, a sanctified will, and a conversation attended with all the fruits of holiness.

Thus I have finished what I designed to say concerning the abuse of the passions in religion.

The remarks which I shall make on this head of discourse are these three.

Remark I. "Those christians are best prepared for the useful and pious exercises of their passions in religion, who have laid the foundation of it in a regular knowledge of the things of God." Let your understanding therefore be fully persuaded of the necessity and excellency of religion, of the duties you owe to God, as your maker and governor; let all your reasoning powers be

convinced of the evil of sin, of the holiness and justice of God, of the danger of eternal death, of the relief and hope that is held forth in the gospel of Christ, of the necessity of faith and holiness, in order to eternal happiness; and amidst all the workings of devout affections, maintain a constant exercise of your reason and judgment. The scripture itself was not given us to make the use of our reason needless, but to assist its operations, and to render it more successful in our inquiries into the things of our everlasting welfare. Knowledge and affection should go hand in hand, in all the affairs of religion: the more we know of God, and the things of the upper world, we shall have the stronger spring for our holy passions, and a more secure guard against any excesses and irregularities in the exercise of them.

Remark II. "As it is the business of a preacher to assist the devout passions, so it is part of his work to guard his hearers against the abuse of them."

We have granted and maintained that it is the business of every sacred orator, to raise the affections of men toward the things of God; let him therefore manage his divine arguments in such a manner, as to awaken the fears, the hopes, the desires, the penitent sorrows, and the pious joys of

the whole assembly, in a sublime degree ; but, in order to secure them from excesses and irregularities of every kind, let him lay the foundations of their religion in clear ideas of divine things, and in a just and proper explication of the holy scriptures.

When he has a mind to lead his hearers into any particular religious sentiments, which he firmly believes to be true, and which he supposes useful to their edification, let him not begin with their passions, and address himself to them in the first place : he must not artfully practise upon their warm and animal powers, before he has set these doctrines or sentiments of his, in a fair and convincing light, before the eye of their understanding, and their reasoning faculties : the affections are neither the guides to truth, nor the judges of it, nor must the preacher set them to their sprightly and fervent work, till he has informed the mind by clear explication and sincere argument. The sun in the heavens gives us a fair document in this case : his light comes before his heat : the dawn of the morning grows up by degrees, and introduces the fervours of noon. So let the preacher diffuse his light over the assembly, before he kindles their warm affections. Let him convince their reason and judgment of the truth of every article of religion, which he

persuades them to believe; let him show the duty and the necessity of every part of holiness, which he prescribes for their practise. Let him imitate that noble pattern of divine oratory, Apollos at Ephesus, who was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures; he was fervent in spirit, and could raise the passions of those that heard him, yet he was willing to kindle the flame of his own oratory by the light of his own understanding, and when he himself "had learned the way of God, more perfectly, he mightily convinced the Jews by divine argument, and showed them by the scriptures, that Jesus was the Christ," Acts xviii. 24—28. Then there was a proper way made for his following zeal and fervour to display themselves.

Remark III. If the passions are of such eminent service in religion, and yet they are in danger of unruly excesses, "how much need have we to beg earnestly at the throne of grace, that they may be all sanctified?" It is only the sanctifying influence of the blessed Spirit, that can excite them in a due degree, and can give them proper limits and regulations. It is nothing but divine grace can raise them to due height on all just occasions, and yet preserve them from any irregular conduct and unhappy effects.

In this sinful state of corrupt nature, we are averse to the things of God: our passions are violent towards sensible objects, but are hardly moved by the most important discoveries in religion. It is God alone who can correct and change their corrupt bias, and give them a divine tendency. They are so ready to take a wrong turn, and sometimes to make wide mischief, even in the matters of religion, that God alone can keep them constant in their right situation and course. They are living wheels of strong and powerful movement in human nature, but they make wretched work if they are not put in motion by a regular and happy spring. They are glorious and noble instruments of religion when under good conduct, but they are ungovernable and mischievous powers, when they go astray: and they are also too prone to wander from their proper place and duty. Let it, therefore, be the matter of our daily prayer, that we may be "sanctified throughout in body, soul and spirit," 1 Thess. v. 23. and that every faculty of our nature may lend its proper aid to the kingdom of grace within us, till we are trained up by the piety of this present state, and made fit for the unknowing exercises of a sublimer sort of devotion in the kingdom of glory.

MEDITATION.

WHAT a wide and unhappy ruin has the fall of man spread over all the powers of the soul! Our understanding is darkened, our will grown perverse, and our passions corrupt and irregular in their exercises; and even when they are engaged about the things of God, their conduct is not always wise and holy. We have seen what glorious instruments they are, when managed by the hands of divine grace, to promote piety and goodness: but if they are left to themselves, they will sometimes make wild mischief, even in the sacred concerns of religion.

Guard and secure me, O my God, against those false lights which my affections may cast upon the objects I converse with, and so delude my judgment. Suffer me not to be imposed on by the false colours, in which my passions may happen to dress up error, and make it look like truth. Let my judgment be always directed steadily by the reason of things and the discoveries of thy word, and not by the delusive flatteries of the passions. Let me remember that these were not given for my guides in the search of duty or truth; they were not made to teach me what is false and what is true, but

to awaken me with the greater zeal to pursue truth, and to practise whatever I learn to be my duty.

May I be so happy as always to lay solid reason and scripture for the foundation, whence my devout affections may take their rise, and ascend high toward God: let them never flutter in the dark, nor break away from the government of my understanding: that if at any time, my conscience calls me to account for the warmest and boldest flights of my pious affections, I may be able to support and justify them all upon the foot of reason, and by the divine examples and encouragements of the word of God.

If at any time, my zeal has been too fervent about the lesser matters of christianity, while it has been cold and listless in the things of the highest importance, I would take shame to myself in the sight of God and men. Blessed Jesus, never suffer my anxieties, my fears, my desires, and my joys to rise, but in due proportion to the worth and importance of their objects. Let my name never be numbered among those men of irregular zeal, "who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel," Matt. xxiii. 24. When I read or hear of the idolators and bigots of the church of Rome, in what a strange childish manner, and with what ridiculous fopperies they express their love,

to God and Christ, and to saints departed ; when I read how they scourge their bodies to show their sorrow for sin, and put their flesh to torments which God never appointed nor required : when I have been told how they cut and burn and destroy their fellow-christians, animated by a supposed zeal for God and his church ; I bless God that I have been taught better methods of expressing my devout affections. “ Come not, O my soul, into their secrets, to their assemblies be thou not united.” Gen. xlix.

5. Nor let my religion make me sour and unsociable ; nor let me indulge awkward gestures, or put on a distorted countenance, nor appear with any unmanly or unbecoming airs, to express the inward workings of my heart. I am afraid of all those outward forms which would turn piety into contempt before an ungodly world, who take all the occasions to ridicule things sacred.

I would remember that religion does not consist in a warm flash of affection, or in sudden efforts of devout joy, where holiness has no settled root in the heart, nor any visible fruits in the conversation. Let me be all of a piece, and if my christianity raises my pious passions in the church, or in the closet, may the same christian spirit be found in all my daily behaviour : may it

regulate my words and adorn my actions, that God, angels, and men, may see the golden thread of religion running through my heart and life, in an uniform manner, in all times, places, and stations.

Never let my devotions break in upon any part of other necessary duties which I owe to God or man: the great God does not permit sacrifice to stand in the room of works of mercy, nor will he allow of robbery for burnt offering. Remember this, O my soul!

Help me, O my God, to keep up my pious affections to their own character, and let them not degenerate into a vicious or criminal temper of mind. Suffer not my zeal against error, to turn into fury against a mistaken brother. Teach me to pity the man, while I endeavour to cure his unhappy mistakes by the only methods which Christ has appointed, by gentle reasoning, by arguments drawn from scripture, by the winning arts of love and goodness, and by earnest prayer for his recovery from the error of his way. Let me watch against every instance wherein holy affections may be corrupted and turned into vice or folly.

Though I desire to have my passions deeply tinged by the things of God, yet I would not live entirely by the efforts of devout passion, nor judge of my state and

frame merely by these sorts of emotion. It is possible that sudden flashes of affection may sometimes deceive our judgment, and make us determine suddenly and unjustly concerning ourselves and our state Godward. Let my religion and love to God be deeply rooted in the mind, and in the principles of solid knowledge; let my will be strongly and unchangeably inclined towards God and things heavenly: and let my love and hope, my desire, my sorrow, and my joy, be all awake and engaged in proper seasons, to promote the divine work within me, and make blessed advances daily toward the world of perfection. Amen.

DISCOURSE VI.

The affectionate Christian vindicated, and the sincere soul comforted under his complaints of deadness, &c.

We have seen what are the various advantages that may be derived from the exercise of the passions, in the concerns of religion? and we have taken notice of the irregularities to which they are liable, and have endeavoured to guard against the abuse of them.

We proceed now to the fifth general head of discourse which was proposed, and this is to vindicate the affectionate christian from the unjust reproaches of men, in his warmest exercises of love to God and devotion. Surely one would think there appears sufficient reason for pious souls to indulge their most lively affections in worship, and that without any abuse of their reason, or abasement of their religion. These inward sensations of holy delight, these secret joys which a stranger intermeddles not with,

these experimental parts of godliness, may be set in a rational light, and be justified to the understanding of men. What is there in all this account of a christian's love to God, and the regulated exercise of pious passions, that is not agreeable to solid reason, and to the natural notions that we have of God and our duty, as well as to the brighter discoveries we have by divine revelation? What is there in all these workings of a holy soul, but what is the just and proper result of the nature of man, as an inferior spirit in the present circumstances of flesh and blood meditating on God the infinite and supreme Spirit, with a lively hope of his favour, and acceptance?

Will the deist and the infidel tell me, that "this is all mechanical religion, the mere effect of animal nature, the visionary scenes of fancy, and the boilings of a warm imagination?" Will they laugh at all this account, and say, "there is nothing in it but the passionate ferment of flesh and blood, which we mistake for a reasonable religion and worship?" I would enter the lists with them, even upon the foot of reason, and justify these sensations of experimental christianity, by a few plain and gradual steps of argument.

1. Is not the great God, the creator and supreme governor of all things? Is he not

the most glorious and most excellent Spirit? Is he not a being of infinite majesty, of holiness and of mercy? Is he not a God of awful sovereignty, a wise ruler, and a righteous judge? Is he not kind and compassionate toward his humble and obedient creatures? Is he not a fountain of eternal blessedness, and an all sufficient and everlasting good to those that seek and serve him: Is he not a God that hath terrors to vindicate his government, and to punish those that break his law? Is not this the God that the wiser and better sort of heathens acknowledged, and do acknowledge as well as the christians?

2. Is not the mind of man made capable in some measure of knowing this God? And are we not bound to acquaint ourselves with him? Is not man therefore bound to get these notions and ideas of the attributes of God, his maker, represented to his mind, in the truest, the fairest, and the strongest light? Or, are the faintest and the feeblest notions of our Creator the best? Are we not under an obligation sometimes to recollect these ideas of God, when we come to converse humbly with him? Should we not endeavour to bring them fresh and strong into our memory, and to make his majesty and his mercy, as it were, present to our souls, by the full-

est and brightest conceptions we can form, when we come to worship before him, when we address him with prayer for any blessing that we want, or when we praise him for any mercies we have received from him?

3. Ought not this knowledge, this holy remembrance of God, to influence the other powers of our nature? Doth not conscience itself tell the deist, that his own sentiments of so glorious a being, demand his highest honour, and his humblest worship? Do not his own thoughts require of him a behaviour agreeable to all those high conceptions which he hath of the perfections of the divine nature? Are not our minds bound to think of him with the highest esteem? Are not our wills bound to resolve upon obedience to this wise and holy governor, and to submit with patience to all his providences? Are not our eyes made to contemplate his works, and ought we not to give him the honour of his wisdom and power, that formed this world of wonders which our eyes behold? And are not our tongues obliged to speak honourably of him, and to render him a just revenue of praise? Is it not our duty to offer the tribute of our lips, in thankfulness for a thousand blessings we receive from his bounty and beneficence?

4. Are not our passions or affections a particular power of human nature that owes God some honour, as well as the understanding and will, the eyes and the tongue? Were not these affectionate powers made to be excited by thought of the mind, and to be exercised agreeably to the judgment and conscience? Or are the passions the only powers of our nature that owe no homage to the God that made them, and must not be employed in his service?

Many of the affections are pleasing to nature in their various exercises, and can they not have leave to be employed in piety? Must religion be made so dry and tasteless and melancholy a thing as to forbid all pleasure? Have we not permission to love God, the most amiable spirit, whose perfections and glories surpass all created things? Must we never take delight in God, the author of our nature, and the source of eternal blessedness? Is religion the only thing whence all pleasing affection must be forever banished and excluded? And must I withhold all these pleasant and powerful sensations of nature from intermingling with the things of God? Hath my wise and merciful Creator given me such a faculty as admiration, and may I admire the heavens and the earth, the fishes, the beasts, and the birds, and not admire that all-wise and

almighty being that made me and them? May I lay out my wonder on any thing, or on every thing besides the great God, who created all these wonders? Hath he formed my soul to delight and love, and hath he confined these sweet and pleasurable capacities only to be employed about creatures, when the Creator himself is infinite and supreme in loveliness? Will not this most amiable of beings expect that I should love himself, and give me leave to make him my delight? Is it lawful for me to fear a lion or an adder, a whirlwind or a flash of lightning, and may I not indulge a holy and solemn dread of that glorious being that made lightnings and whirlwinds, adders and lions, and has unknown thunders in reserve for profane sinners? Doth he give me leave to mourn and weep for the loss of my ease, or my health, or my friends, and may I never indulge my sorrow to arise for all my multiplied offences against his law, my former rebellions against his government, and my refusals of his grace?

Thus far I have begged leave for the passions to assist religion, and I think reason gives an ample permission. But I may rise to bolder language here, and pronounce my argument with stronger force, if I should resume the first part of this head of reasoning, and make all these inquiries

turn upon the point of obligation and duty. Since I know this God to be infinite in goodness, and the author of all my comforts, am I not bound to love him with all my strength, and with all my soul? If he is a being of sovereign power, holiness, and justice, ought I not always to fear before him, and to grieve heartily that I have offended against his holy laws? Is it not my duty to mourn for sin, and to be ashamed of my unnatural and unreasonable conduct? And doth not God require, that I should rejoice before him with thankfulness, when I have some hope that he hath accepted my submission, pardoned my sin, and holds me in his favour and love?

.But let me proceed yet further in this argument, and say, have not my passions themselves been too often engaged in folly and sin? And must they do nothing for the interests of religion and virtue? Hath not the great and blessed God been affronted and dishonoured by these warm and active powers of my nature? And may not he make some reprisals on them by leading them captive by his grace, and devoting them to his own service? Must the passions, which have been defiled with so much iniquity, and which have helped to defile the soul, never be refined? Never be sanctified? Never attempt to restore that

tribute of honour and obedience to the great God, of which they have long defrauded him? Have I loved vanity? Have I delighted in sin? Has my desire, my hope, my joy, been heretofore employed on criminal objects? And must these affections of desire and hope, of love and delight, be forbid to pursue objects divine and heavenly, and be for ever excluded from all pious employment? Have I grieved for the loss of a sinful pleasure, or been angry with my brother, and hated him without a cause? And ought I not to turn the stream of my wrath and hatred against my sins, and to give a loose to the passion of grief, and pious sorrow, for my guilty behaviour toward God and man? Are these faculties of my nature capable of sinning only, and incapable of practising virtue and goodness? Or is it not lawful to attempt to employ them in the service of religion?

Let the deists, and the men of cold philosophy tell me, that virtue and piety, and goodness, consist only in sublime ideas of God, and in a will devoted to him; and that it is only the pure affections of the mind or spirit, that are to be exercised toward God and religion; but the motions of flesh and blood must have nothing to do here, nor passions of the animal have any part or share in the religion of the man.

To such objectors I would reply thus :

5. Is it possible that the purest affections can be exerted in any vigorous efforts in our present state of mortality, but flesh and blood will feel and follow them a little? Can these sublime ideas of the blessed God, and these pure and spiritual affections be raised to a high degree, but the powers and passions of animal nature will be suitably touched and moved, at least in some degrees, according to the natural temper? All persons are not equally capable of warm affection, and vigorous ferments of blood: But there is not a son or daughter of Adam, without some degree of these natural emotions. They have been felt by wise and holy men, that have lived in all ages of the world; and it must be so, in some measure, while we are such a composition of flesh and spirit.

I grant, indeed, that some such cold and indifferent worshippers as can make this objection, whose religion consists only in a philosophical thought of the great God, and a devout wish perhaps once in a week or two, may not feel any of these sensible effects in animal nature. Those also may be excepted who^r are brought up in a mere round of forms, and never say their prayers, but at the sound of a bell, and a public hour; I except all those popish devo-

tees, who mutter over their Latin service, "their pater-nosters" and "ave maria's" by tale, and drop their beads, to count their prayers right, and to secure themselves from mistaking the number. All these sorts of worshippers may join in the same opinion, and renounce their affections in their religion; and that for this reason, because they have not religion enough to employ them. But where a constant and supreme love to God is the real spring that moves us to our duties, the rest of the natural passions will have some correspondent share in the work. And it is a very false way of judging, for these kinds of people, to compare all men with themselves, and make their cold indifference and their lazy practice the standing model of the religion of all mankind.

Let us suppose for once, that we were confined to the mere religion of nature: hath it not been sufficiently proved, that reason and the light of nature provide for the passions some share of employment, even in natural religion? And it is to be feared, that it is not merely the unbelief of christianity, but the want of serious inward religion of any kind, that inclines the infidels of our age to oppose and ridicule the exercise of devout affections. Is not the book of Psalms a noble and sublime collec-

tion of lyric poesy? Are not several parts of these sacred odes confined to such notions and practices in religion, as the light of nature and reason dictates? Now if these persons had true piety at heart, one would think they should rejoice in these sprightly and pious composures, and use them as a help to raise their souls to God their Creator, in love and praise. Will they make this excuse, that the language is too warm, too much animated and pathetic; that there is too much of the beauty of metaphor; too many bright images that strike powerfully upon the passions; whereas the religion of nature, in their opinion, is a more calm and sedate thing? Surely it is much to be feared and suspected, that their prayers and their praises, and all their pretences to piety, will go but a little way to raise their souls to heaven, when their modes of worship cannot bear the language of such devout affections, and admit of no elevations above calm ideas and sedate indolence.

But I return to my vindication of the affectionate christian, in his warmest exercises of devout passion.

I might proceed much farther on this point, and say, when the affections are impressed and awakened to a powerful exercise, by divine truths, will not these lively

powers have a farther and a reflexive influence on the mind and the will? Do they not sensibly impress the ideas of divine things with much stronger force on the mind? Do they not set all the affairs of religion in a more lovely and attractive light? Do they not confirm the will in all its holy resolutions for God and heaven? Have they not often been found to stamp divine things on the memory and conscience with more lasting efficacy? Do not the devout passions awaken the latent images of fancy, and dress all the chambers of the soul, with divine ideas and ornaments? And have they not by this means assisted the soul to maintain its constant converse with heaven? Is it not in the power of the sacred passions to raise and brighten the language of the tongue, as well as command the tears of the eye lids, and the smiles of the countenance? Are not our hope and our fear given us to be living spurs to duty, and wakeful guards against temptation and disobedience; and do they not often employ the hands and the feet, direct the eyes, and awaken the voice? Will not holy love and joy give a lively and pleasing motion to the blood and spirits? And the hope of having sin forgiven, and our souls made for ever happy, excite a thousand pleasures in human nature? Will it not fill the soul

with overflowings of gratitude, and make the lips abound in expressions of joy and praise? And will not these be attended with a peaceful and pleasing aspect, and establish a sweet serenity in the heart and eyes? And all concur to maintain religion in the power and the joy of it?

Christians, be not afraid of professing the pleasures of religion. These men of pretended reason, are vanquished at their own weapons, when they dare deride your converse with God, and fight against the inward power of your devotions. Be ye convinced therefore, and be established in this truth, that it is not the warmest exercise of our affections, that can be ridiculous in religion, when they are excited by a just apprehension of divine things: But then it is the passions are justly censured when they are indulged to raptures in the confusion and darkness of the mind; when they flutter and make a tumult in the twilight of the understanding, or when they are raised high by mere enthusiasm and the visions of fancy, without the solid foundation of knowledge and judgment to support them; as I have shown in a foregoing discourse.

Give diligence therefore, O my friends to improve in the knowledge of God the Father, and in the gospel of our Lord Je-

sus Christ! Maintain your humble converse with heaven, labour and strive in meditation and prayer till you get near the seat of God, and find sweet access to his throne through the blood of Christ, and the aids of the blessed Spirit: Awaken all the springs of holy love and divine joy. These sacred pleasures will animate you to every duty; will be a guard to your souls against temptation, and give you courage to stand the ridicule of an unbelieving age: these divine refreshments, like the heavenly manna, will support your spirits through all the wilderness, and make your travels easy and delightful: these will lead you on with joy to the promised land, and prepare you to dwell for ever with that God, with whom you have here enjoyed so long and blessed a correspondence.

We proceed now to the sixth general.

Since it appears to be a matter of such importance to have the affections engaged in the affairs of religion, some humble and sincere souls may be ready to pronounce hard things concerning themselves, and conclude they have no true religion, because they feel their affections but little moved: We proposed therefore, that

The sixth general head of discourse should offer "some consolations to such honest and humble christians, who endea-

your to love and serve the Lord their God with all their powers, but find very little of this exercise of the pious passions in comparison with what others feel." Let me address such persons as these in the following manner.

I. Since you doubt whether you love God with all your heart, that is, with your warmest affections, "search and inquire with holy fear, and with the greater diligence, whether you love him with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Do you love him with all your mind? Have you the highest esteem of him in your judgment, as the most excellent and best of beings, and as your only sufficient good? Do you love him with all your soul? Have you chosen him for your eternal portion, both in this world and that which is to come? Is your will firmly resolved for God and religion? Are you sincerely willing to forsake every sin, and to return to God; to give up yourself to him as your Lord and ruler, and receive him as your God and reconciled Father, according to the discoveries of his grace in Christ Jesus? Do you love him with all your strength? Do you desire to obey and serve him all your days? Do you worship him with holy diligence and promote his

honour in the world, according to the utmost of your capacity.

If you find these things wrought in you and done by you, you have abundant reason to take comfort in this evidence of your christianity. Where the mind and will are sincerely engaged on the side of God and religion in this manner, the love of the heart is not utterly wanting; the affections must be in some measure sanctified, though perhaps you may not feel so frequent, so powerful, and so lively an exercise of them as other christians may enjoy. These things are a better proof of true faith and real piety than a sudden flash of affection can be, where these more steady operations of the mind and will are wanting.

II. Though all the sons and daughters of Adam have some degrees of passion in their very frame and nature, yet remember that the temper of all men is not equally affectionate. Consider now and inquire, whether your temper has so much of these affectionate principles wrought in it, as some of your neighbours may possess: There are some of a much calmer and more sedate constitution; their passions of desire and joy, of fear and hope, of sorrow and anger, are seldom moved about earthly things; and then it is no wonder

that they are not so sensibly impressed with things heavenly. God requires no more than he gives ; where he has wrought these pathetic principles in the constitution, he requires the exercise of them in the things of religion : but where persons are of a more dispassionate and a calmer frame, there God will require less of the sensible exercises of affection in the christian life, 2 Cor. viii. 12. “ If there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not.”

I confess, if you have warm and lively passions for all other things, and none at all for God and religion, and heavenly objects ; if your fear, joy, sorrow, and desire, are vigorous in their emotions, and are immediately raised by the affairs and occurrences of this life, and yet lie always asleep with regard to divine things, it is a very bad sign indeed, and has a very unfavourable aspect on the case of your soul : For “ where much is given, much shall be required,” Luke xiv. 48.

III. “ Consider what is your present stage of life : are you in the flower of youth, when all the powers of nature are active, when the passions are warm and lively ? Or are you in the decay of nature, and on the verge of life ? Is old age coming

upon you, or is it already come, when the animal powers are weakened, when the operations of flesh and blood are more languid." An old man cannot have those lively passions and appetites with regard to sensible things, as belong to the years of youth and the vigour of nature. Old Barzillai could not feel his desires awakened and tempted to dwell at court, by all the dishes of a royal table, or the sprightly music, or the rich entertainments there, 2 Sam. xix. 35. And therefore it is no wonder if the devout passions be then more languid and unmoved. An aged christian may have the most fixed resolution for God, and the firmest principles of piety rooted in his soul; he may do much service for God, and in this sense "may flourish and bring forth fruit in old age," Psalm xcii. 14. he may have great advancements in real godliness, though there may be few such sensible evidences of it, given to himself or to his neighbours, in the lively motion of his pathetic powers.

But on the other hand, it is a very sad and melancholy symptom, if the evil passions of covetousness, of anger, of revenge, of envy, reign and exert themselves with violence in old age, while there is little or nothing of warm affection exercised in the things of religion.

IV. " Let humble and sincere christians remember also, for their encouragement, that though spiritual things may be the chief object of our hope and desire, yet our passions may not always be so powerfully impressed by them as they are by sensible and carnal things ; and the reason is because they are spiritual and invisible.

The passions which are wrought into our present frame, belong partly to animal nature, as well as to the mind ; and therefore, the things of sense are nearer a-kin to them : they touch and strike our passions sooner, and awaken them to more vivacity, and engage them with more vehemence than things which are unseen. The passions are certain principles in man which depend much on flesh and blood ; and therefore, they are more naturally impressed by things that strike our eyes and our ears, and by them find a way to their hearts. It is possible that God and heaven may be really more beloved than men and this earth, though the animal powers of joy, hope, fear, and desire, may not be so sensible and vehement in their operations toward spiritual, absent and future objects, as toward things present and sensible. There is not therefore sufficient ground to conclude that we do not love God above the creatures, because we sometimes feel

the more passionate exercises and commotions of flesh and blood about creatures, than we do about God himself: and indeed were it not for this reasonable salve, this spring of consolation, a multitude of christians would be ready to give themselves up to despair: and I doubt there would be very few of us who would not have reason to suspect the truth and power of our inward religion.

Yet I cannot conclude without this observation.

In the last place, that “what comfortable evidences soever of our love to God may be derived from the high esteem of him in our minds, and the attachment of our wills to him, yet these evidences and comforts will be greatly brightened and increased by feeling the affectionate love of God in the heart.” To love the Lord our God, with all the mind, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, becomes more glorious when it influences the affectionate powers of the heart to join in the practice of religion.

It is granted that the mere flashes of sudden passion in a devout moment, without a settled supreme esteem of God in the mind, without a firm attachment of the will to him, and careful obedience to his commands, will yield, but small and feeble con-

solation in a time of trial and inquiry: the hearers who "received the word like seed in stony ground, are said to receive it with joy," but their religion was but a flash; it "endured but for a short season. It sprung up on a sudden and quickly withered, because it had no root" in the understanding and the will, Matt. xiii. 20, 21. Yet it is better, infinitely better to find and feel that we love God with all our powers: we should therefore use all proper methods to stir up our drowsy affections, and engage them in divine things, that we may live in the pleasure of godliness as well as in the power of it, and have our hopes rising high and approaching to the joys of heaven, while we dwell here on earth. What these proper methods are, whereby the devout passions may be raised, will be the subject of our next inquiry.

MEDITATION.

It is strange that any person should cavil against the exercise of the warmest affections of man in the things that relate to the great God and in matters of our immortal interest. It is strange to hear any dispute arise against the engagement of our

strongest and most sprightly powers in the service of the best of beings, and our eternal friend. O may I know him, and love him, and fear him, and delight in him, as becomes a creature to fear and to love a God, that is, in a supreme degree. In vain shall the world assault me with their keenest reproaches, in vain shall a bantering and godless age attempt to laugh me out of countenance for indulging the divine sensations of religion. Let them tell me, "It is mere animal nature and the caprices of flesh and blood," let them charge me with enthusiastical folly and feverish heats of religion, I dare pronounce boldly in the face of ridicule and scandal, that the prudent affectionate christian, in his devoutest hours does nothing beneath the dignity of reason, nor unbecoming the character of the wisest of men. I have David and the prophets, I have Christ and his apostles engaged on this side of the question by their own practice, and I shall count it my honour to be a humble imitator of such blessed patterns.

O may I find the secret joys of religious retirement, joys which a stranger intermeddles not with! May I feel some pious affection animating me to all the duties of the christian life! May I see myself rising high above earthly things, with holy con-

tempt mounting, as on eagle's wings, toward heaven; and then I shall not be frightened nor discouraged at all the arrows of reproach that are shot against me. The affectionate christian has much more reason on his side than all those indolent worshippers, those dry and joyless creatures, those cold pretenders to religion, who have renounced their affections in the things of God, and creep on at a low and grovelling rate, feeding only on some natural truths and speculations without life, power, or pleasure.

But if I find my natural temper has very little of the pathetic composition in it, and that my affections by nature are not so vigorous as those of my neighbour; If I feel the more vehement efforts of love and fear of holy sorrow, and pious pleasure sink and decline, through the decay of nature or growing age, I will comfort myself with this, that it is the desire of my soul to have all its powers and passions engaged for God in their most vital and active exercises.

If at any time I am so unhappy as to feel my affections exert themselves, in a more vigorous manner towards the objects of flesh and sense which are present, than they do toward things absent, divine and heavenly, I would mourn over the frailty

of human nature in this present state, where we are so much attached to the things of this body. I will endeavour through divine grace "to love the Lord my God with all my mind, and with all my soul," to raise him higher in the esteem of my judgment, to cleave to him more firmly by a resolute bent of my will, to abide daily with him, and live upon him, as my all-sufficient and everlasting good, that I may attain some comfortable establishment in the hope of his love: and when my flesh and heart and all my animal powers shall fail me, I may still rejoice in having God for my God, who will be the strength of my heart, and the life of my spirit, and my portion for ever." Psalm lxxiii. 26. Amen.

DISCOURSE VII.

Means of exciting the devout Affections.

WE are now come to the last thing designed in these discourses, and that is to propose a "few proper methods, whereby the affections of nature may be awakened and employed in the christian life." Take them in the following order.

I. See to it that the leading and ruling faculties of the soul, viz. the understanding and the will, be deeply and firmly engaged in religion. Let the mind be well furnished with divine knowledge, and the will be as resolutely bent for God and heaven.

Where the understanding has but a poor and scanty furniture of the things of God, the pious affections will have the fewer springs to raise them: and if our ideas of divine things are obscure and confused, our passions are in great danger of running wildly astray, and of being led away by every delusion. Seek therefore not only a

large and plenteous acquaintance with the things of God, but endeavour, as far as possible, to get clear and distinct conceptions of them, that the pious passions may have solid ground whence to take their rise.

And then let your will be steadily set for God without weakness or wavering. If the resolves and purposes of the heart be feeble and doubtful, the affections will never rise to any high degree in a regular or lasting manner.

But I have said so much on these points that I shall not enlarge here. If the mind and will are sanctified, it is certain, according to the very frame of our natures, that the passions will in some degree follow the influence of these governing faculties. Why is it our passions are suddenly alarmed and so warmly influenced by the things of this world? It is because our minds have too high a value for them, our wills are too much attached to them, we place our happiness too much in them. Matt. vi. 21. "Where the treasure is, the heart will be also:" The heart with all its passions. Why are our desires, our longings, our fears, and hopes, our sorrows, joys, and resentments so keen, and so intense about the things of life? It is because these things are too much esteemed as our treasure, our portion, our inheritance. If God be our

portion, Christ our life, and heaven our inheritance and our home, then our "affections will be set on the things that are above, where Christ is at the right hand of God," Col. iii. 1, 2.

II. Engage the most powerful and governing passion for God, that is, the passion of love: all the train of affections will obey its ruling power and influence, they will all follow its motions and sovereign dictates, as was made evident in the second discourse on this subject. And we have shown you before, that in order to excite divine love in our hearts, we must meditate frequently on these things, viz: what the great and blessed God is in himself, what he has done for us, what he daily does for us, and what he has promised to do, both in this life and the life to come.

Never be easy or at rest, therefore, if you find your love to God, flag and languish; for then the other affections will grow cold and lifeless in religion. Take all opportunities to warm your heart with this sacred passion, and to rekindle the fire of divine love within you, when at any time you find it declining.

III. "Watch carefully against the too strong attachment of your affections to creatures:" Remember that this world is at enmity with God, James iv. 4. "If any

man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. Where the love of the world is habitually prevalent, the love of God is not found; for God is the supreme good, and the most lovely of beings, and he counts that love as nothing which is not supreme. "No man can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon," Matt. vi. 25. That is, the true God, and the god of riches: and we may say by the same rule, you cannot love the true God, and the god of honour and ambition, or the god of sensuality and carnal pleasure. A God carries a supreme idea, and demands all the soul.

Not only unlawful objects, and sinful pleasures, but even sensible delights, possessions, and enjoyments, which are lawful, take too fast hold on the heart, and draw it away from God. Remember that the creatures around you have this advantage, that while God is a spirit, an unseen being, the creatures are ever striking upon our eyes or ears; they are ever making their court to our senses and appetites, and have a thousand ways to insinuate themselves into the heart. The world, and the flattering enjoyments of it, are suited to work upon flesh and blood, and to draw off the soul from God, its centre and its rest: they are ever near at hand on all occasions, and they

are ready sometimes to say, "Where is your God?" Keep your God therefore always near you, and watch against the pleasing flattery of alluring creatures, lest your heart cleave too fast to them, and be thereby divided from your God.

Amidst all the endearing relations and engaging businesses of life, single yourselves, as much as possible for God, and let not many things dwell too near your soul, lest you lose the sight of your heavenly Father, and the pleasing sensations of his love. Where the love of sensible things prevails, it draws with it all the long train of hopes and fears, of desires, joys, and sorrows; of painful heart-aches, and fond wishes, and keen resentments. Thus the affectionate powers of nature are carnalized, and tintured deep with the things of earth, and become too much estranged from God and heaven.

Whensoever you find a tempting creature taking too fast hold of your passions, set a guard of sacred jealousy upon it; keep your heart at a holy distance from that creature, lest it twine about your inmost powers, and draw them off from their allegiance and duty to God your Creator. The love of God is a flower of divine original, and of the growth of paradise: if the holy Spirit has planted it in your heart, let not any other

love be planted too near it, nor too much nourished, lest it draw away the vital moisture, and cause the love of God to languish and wither.

IV. Be not slight and careless in secret religion. Let private devotion, reading, meditation, prayer, have a proper share of your time allotted them. In pious retirements you may indulge all the holy passions with much greater freedom: you may there give a loose to all the devout affections of the soul in their warmest exercises and expressions: you may say a thousand things to God in secret, which are not proper for public worship: you may pour out your souls before him in the strongest and most pathetic sentiments of holy desire and divine joy! You may tell him all the inward pains of your conscience, the secret anguish and shame of your heart, because of your past offences: you may sigh deeply, and blush before him, and dissolve your eyes into tears: you may tell him in secret how intense your desires are to taste and be assured of his love, and to be formed after his image: you may rejoice in his sight with pious exultation and triumph, in hope of his eternal presence in the upper world. Such exercises as these will keep all the passions in an habitual practice of religion,

and maintain inward piety in the life and power of it.

V. Converse much with those parts of our holy religion, and with those books of scripture which are suited to awaken your warmest affections.

Let your thoughts take occasion from the various occurrences in nature and providence, to meditate on the glorious perfections of God, the wonders of his wisdom in contriving the several parts of the creation, so happily fitted to answer his great designs. Think on his amazing power, that could form all things by his word, and bring a whole world into being at his will. Awaken your souls to admire the wide-spreading influence of his sovereignty and government, who manages the immense affairs of the upper and the lower worlds, the nations of men and the armies of angels: and yet extends his care to every one of us in particular, and even to the meaner figures of flies and worms. Think on the infinite extent of his knowledge, that he is acquainted not only with every creature he has made, but with every thought that passes through our hearts, with all our most secret actions and purposes. This will awaken in you a holy fear of his majesty, and you will dread the thoughts of sinning against him, since it never can be

concealed from his notice; and while you think on his omnipresence, you may rejoice in him as your guardian and defence, through all times and places where or whensoever it is possible for danger to attend you. Meditate on his boundless goodness: our God is love, and all nature is filled with the blessings of his bounty. He has overspread the skies with light, and covered the earth with food for man and beast. Of what a vast and surprizing extent is the whole family of creatures which are maintained out of the stores of God! What a transcendent veneration should we have of that goodness, which satisfies the craving appetites of millions daily and hourly!

Besides these general effects of the divine goodness, it is proper to have the memory furnished with particular instances of protections, deliverances, escapes from dangers, rich and unmerited blessings, which we ourselves have enjoyed, that we may awaken our gratitude, re-kindle our dying love, and exalt our hearts and our voices in praise.

Nor is it less useful to meditate sometimes on the^m sins and follies of mankind, that we may admire the patience of a God so affronted and so abused: nor is it less needful to recollect our own follies, and our

guilt, that we may keep holy repentance in its lively exercises ; for the spring of godly sorrow should never be dried up while we dwell in these regions of sin and defilement.

Then the astonishing designs of divine mercy towards guilty creatures, call for a due share of our meditations: designs of mercy in the heart of God, counsels of peace transacted with his Son Jesus Christ before the world began, in order to rescue mankind from the ruins of nature, and to raise up a chosen seed for his own glory out of the rebellious race of Adam.

Here the thoughts of a christian should spread themselves abroad, and give a loose to holy contemplation and wonder. Let us run back to ancient ages, and view Jesus the Son of God, "the brightness of his Father's glory, in his pre-existent state of light and happiness, before he visited us in flesh," Heb. i. 3. There he dwelt in the bosom of the Father, before he made our world, or appeared in it: we should trace his various appearances to the patriarchs, and his conduct of the church through many ages, under the name of the angel of God's presence, under the character of the king of Israel: we should meditate on his wonderful condescensions to become incarnate, to dwell in such feeble flesh and blood as ours is, to be compassed about with infirmities,

to sustain perpetual labours and sorrows, fatigues and reproaches, through the course of a mortal life ; to bear those unknown agonies in the garden, and on the cross, which were the price of our pardon, and the means of his atonement for our guilt. What amazing love is this ! How divine ! How unsearchable ! “ It has heights, and lengths, and breadths, and depths in it, that pass all our knowledge,” Eph. iii. 18, 19. and demand our devoutest praises. Trace him then from the cross to the tomb, follow him through the regions of the dead, behold him in the power and glory of his resurrection ; see him ascending on a bright cloud to heaven, attended “ with the chariots of God, which are twenty thousand, even unnumbered thousands of angels ;” Psalm lxviii. 18. viewing him sitting on the right hand of God, making intercession there for sinners, rebels, enemies, that they may be divinely transformed into saints, children, friends. Survey him at the head of all principalities and powers, ruling all things according to his Father’s decrees, for the glory of his Father, and for his own glory, as well as for the eternal welfare of his church. What bright and vigorous contemplations, what entertaining ideas, what efforts of pious passion may be raised by a

sanctified mind travelling such a spacious round of divine wonders !

Enter into yourselves, think what once you were, corrupt, abominable, unclean, unholy : Remember the distinguishing grace of God, whereby you were awakened to a sense of your sin and danger, and were taught to fly for refuge to Jesus, your all-sufficient hope : think on your iniquities all pardoned ; think of your garments and soul washed white in the blood of the Lamb : think on the powerful influences of the Spirit, that hath changed your vile nature, and made it holy, that has guarded you from a thousand temptations, and is training you up to everlasting blessedness. Which of the passions is there, that would lie cold and silent, under the lively sentiments of such a various and important scene of things ?

But I proceed to the second part of this fifth direction ; and that is, “ we may have our devout passions quickened by converse with those parts of the holy Bible which contain the most affecting subjects, and express them in the most pathetic manner.” Read some of the wonders of mercy and love, in the transactions of God with his ancient people, how he rescued them from the midst of barbarous nations and hostile armies ; how he brought them out of bond-

age and brick-kilns, by a mighty and miraculous effort of power and grace; how he led them through seas dry-shod, and commanded rivers to cleave-asunder, and leave a path for their march; how he visited them after by missionary angels, and sometimes in his own royal person; for they saw the God of Israel, Exod. xxiv. 20. Read and meditate on the vengeance, and the terrible destruction executed on the old world that was drowned in the flood; the deluge of wrath that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah, which perished by divine lightning; for "the Lord rained down fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven upon them," Gen. xix. 24. Read the ten plagues of Egypt, and the desolations that were sometimes spread over rebellious Israel, and sometimes over the heathen nations, by an angry God, in the writings of Moses, and the book of Judges. Read the soft and melting language of divine mercy, inviting sinners to return to God by Isaiah, the evangelic prophet. Survey the promises that are big with blessings, that contain pardon, and righteousness, and grace, and life, and salvation, and glory in them; and let the pious affections of hope and love break out and diffuse themselves with sweet delight. Read the history of the life and death of our blessed Lord, which is made

up of love and wonders, and look into some of the more affectionate paragraphs of St. Paul, and the pathetic parts of all the sacred epistles.

But above all, for this purpose, I must recommend the specimens of divine meditation, and divine worship, the complaints, the supplications, and the songs of praise which are offered to God by holy men in the Old Testament and in the New. You find some of these in the books of Moses, Ezra, Job, Daniel, and other prophets; especially the Psalms of David; a rich and heavenly treasure is this. A repository, or an altar of sacred fire. The people of God, in all succeeding ages, have had recourse to it, both as an example and a spring of most lively and exalted devotions. Choose a Psalm suited to your own case and frame and temper; compare your hearts with the Psalmist, and your circumstances with his; lift up your souls to God in the words of David, or imitate his language, where his words do not so perfectly express your case. Enter into his spirit, form and model your pious affections by that illustrious pattern; and be sure to bring Christ and the sweet discoveries of grace, and the blessings of the gospel into this sort of devotion. David himself under the influence of the holy Spirit, practised this; though in a

more obscure manner, and in the style of prophecy: and if in the midst of such a dark dispensation, surrounded with types and shadows, we find surprising efforts of fear and love, of joy and wonder, of desire and hope, of faith and adoration and praise, how unspeakably glorious and entertaining would it be to us, if we had a book of such holy melody, such harmonious worship, written by divine influence in the language of Christ and his gospel, interlined with the blood of the Son of God, adorned and enlivened with the grace and glory of a rising and reigning Saviour, and animated and enriched with the holy Spirit, and the blessings of the New Testament? Perhaps this is too sublime a privilege, too high a favour for the church to expect or enjoy in this corrupted and degenerate state: perhaps we must wait for such a seraphic volume, till we are raised to join the songs and the harps of the heavenly Jerusalem; or at least till the happy time of the restitution of all things, when a new heaven and a new earth shall introduce such a state of things among men, as shall be near akin to the glory of the upper world.

But it is time now to go on to the next particular.

VI. "When you find a devout passion arising in your heart, indulge and cherish it,

if there be a convenient season." Take heed that you do not banish the holy thought, or suppress the sacred affection. Do not immediately plunge yourself, without necessity, into the businesses of life, or any vain amusements, lest you damp the wing of your holy desires, which would bear you upward to God; quench not those seeds of divine and heavenly fire which God has kindled in your souls. When the quickening Spirit takes hold of your heart, take care that you do not refuse to follow him; resist not the motions of the blessed Spirit, lest he retire grieved, and it may be long ere he return. 1 Thess. v. 19. Eph. iv. 30. When the blessed God does as it were take you by the hand, and lead you aside from the world, to converse with himself; when your blessed Saviour doth, if I may so express it, touch the springs of devotion within you, and as it were invite and beckon you to holy fellowship with him, have a care that you do not turn rudely away from him, and renounce his invitations.

Let such sacred seasons, such heavenly moments, be duly valued and improved. Let pious affections be indulged and promoted, unless plain and necessary business call you away, at that time, to other engagements.

But if it should happen, that the providence of God and your duty demand your thoughts and your hands to be employed in secular affairs, when you feel a devout passion arising, you may in some measure remedy this inconvenience, by the following advice.

VII. " Endeavour to keep up a constant favour of religion, in the midst of the businesses and cares of this life." While you are travelling through the wilderness of this world, walk always with God: do every thing in the name of God, as under the influence of his command, and with a design for his glory: and let your soul go forth often towards him in short and holy exercises: this will keep the devout affections awake and active.

If you have found God in the closet, or in the church, carry him with you into the things of the world, into the shop and the family, so far as a proper attention to your daily business will permit. Suffer no longer intermissions of your heavenly work, lest your pious affections grow cold. Let your thoughts in short intervals of worship go out towards God. Never let an hour pass, if possible, without some devout aspirations towards heaven. In the evening watches, at midnight, and at the dawn of the morning, the holy Psalmist sent up his thoughts

to God: and he was often breathing out his soul towards him amidst the affairs of the day, Psalm lxiii. 6. "I will meditate on thee in the night-watches." Psalm xxv. 5. "Thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day." O blessed souls, who imitate the practice of that sublime saint, the man after God's own heart!

VIII. "Confine not your religion always to your thoughts." Sometimes, perhaps, while you are musing, the fire will burn, as David found it, Psalm xxxix. 3. Then speak with your tongue to God, or to man, as David did, who was most exquisitely skilled in all the holy methods of a devout life, and was the noblest pattern of sacred fervour.

Gain some acquaintance with lively christians: mutual conversation shall raise the divine flame higher, like united torches, which increase each other's blaze. Sharpen your desires, and kindle your hopes and joys, by mutual and holy discourse. Borrow a coal from the altar of the sanctuary, from the ordinances of public worship, and warm your own hearts, by endeavouring to warm the heart of your neighbour. Speak to one another of the heavenly world, till each of you find your wings stretched for the flight, and you long for the divine summons. Mix your flames of celestial love,

as angels do, and let them spire upward, and point toward Jesus your beloved. Man is a social creature, and his passions were made to be raised by converse. Break therefore through the reproach and shame of a degenerate age, and aspire to the life and discourse, and joy of angels.

IX. "Seek earnestly the influences of the quickening Spirit." Without him you can do nothing. It is the Spirit of God, who raised dead sinners at first into a divine life, and he puts all the languid springs of life into new motion. Those vigorous and active powers of the soul, which have so strong an influence to promote the vivacity and beauty of true religion, are under his government, and they want a divine touch from his finger, to quicken and accelerate their motions. It is he who awakens our fear, who excites our hopes, who kindles our love and desire to things holy and heavenly: and it is he who exalts our spiritual joys. How often does the pious Psalmist cry out for quickening grace in the 119th Psalm, and for the continued influences of the holy Spirit, in other parts of his devotional writings? The whole Church prays for the same quickening operations, Psalm lxxx. 11. "Quicken us, O Lord, so will we call upon thee." Let this be the

matter of our daily and importunate requests to heaven.

And let us remember too, that, under the gospel, Christ is the spring of our life; he is appointed by the Father to bestow his Spirit: he himself is called our life, Coloss. iii. 3. He himself is a quickening Spirit, 1 Cor. xv. 45. All the principles of our holiness must be derived from him, as our head of vital influence.

X. The last thing I shall propose, in order to keep the devout passions awake and lively in religion, is to live much in the face of unseen things, and to die daily. Set yourselves continually as on the borders of the grave, and the invisible world: this was St. Paul's practice, 1 Cor. xv. 31. I protest by* our rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily: and his daily living in the views of death, had a happy influence to maintain his rejoicing in Christ.

If you constantly look on yourselves as dying creatures, and place yourselves on the borders of eternity, you will then take leave daily of sensible things, and live by

* Most of the Greek copies, as well as our own translation, read it "your rejoicing;" but it is hard to make sense of it, without changing the word "your," into "our" which in the Greek is but the small change of one letter: and one or more manuscript copies have the word "our," and support this alteration.

the faith of things invisible. You will then behold God as ever near you, God, the judge of all, the everlasting hope, and the portion of his saints: you will be very unwilling to have your heart absent from God, while you look at death as just at hand.

Then the blessed Jesus, both as a Saviour and a Judge, will be much in your thoughts. "Am I ready to appear before my judge? Have I any strong and secure evidences that Jesus is my Saviour?"

Then the gates of heaven will be ever as it were open before you, and the glories of it always within your view; you will think much of the heavenly world, with all its holy inhabitants, with its divine enjoyments, with its everlasting freedom from temptation and sin and sorrow, with its delightful business, and its unknown pleasures.

Then this world will be as a dead thing in your eyes; it will have very little power to work on your passions, and to draw you aside from God: he will be your love, and your all. The strength of faith, and the views of death, will command your fears, and hopes, and desires, and confine them to the things of religion.

Then you will be ever solicitous to brighten your evidences for heaven, to keep your hopes firm and unshaken, by often reviewing the grounds and foundations of

them : and your spirit will be solicitous to be found ready at all hours for the call and summons into the upper world. Every power of nature, and every passion will be kept in its right frame and posture under the influence of such an expectation. You will hate every sin, and abhor the thoughts of it, lest your souls be defiled afresh, when they are just called to depart : you will keep your desires of God always warm, and set a guard on your love, lest it suffer any decay : you will raise your thoughts to a continual delightful converse with heavenly things, and enter into the spirit of joy and praise. O blessed souls, who daily practise this sort of departure from the body, and anticipate the pleasures of the heavenly state ! Who love the blessed God, and delight in him here on earth, as far as mortality will admit, and are breathing after the more consummate holiness and joy of paradise ! This was the frame and temper, this the devout language of Armelle Nicolas, a poor servant maid, who had spent more than thirty years of her life in the constant exercises of divine love. “ God has not sent me, says she, into this world, but to love himself, and through his great mercy, I have loved him so much, that I cannot love him more, after the manner of

mortals : I must go to him, that I may love him after the manner of the blessed.”

MEDITATION.

I HAVE learned so much of religion, as to know that it does not consist in vehement commotions of animal nature, in sublime raptures and extacies : we may be sincere christians in the exercise of repentance and faith, and in the practice of holy obedience, without any overwhelming sorrows, or transporting joys. Yet since the various affections of fear and hope, love and sorrow, desire and delight, belong to my nature, I am sure they ought to be all engaged in some measure in the service of God and religion : and I have been taught in this discourse, by what methods it may be obtained. Let me now recollect these advices briefly in order to practice.

And, first, I will endeavour that the ruling powers of my soul, the understanding and the will, be employed in these affairs of everlasting importance. O may my memory be richly furnished with the treasures of divine knowledge ! may I be fully convinced of the necessity and worth of true religion ! may I have the most exalted esteem of God and things heavenly ! may these be the objects of my dearest choice !

May my will be firmly determined to fix on these as my highest portion, and my everlasting all!

And can I go thus far, without making God the supreme object of my love? Can I choose him with all his excellencies, his graces, and his glories, as my all-sufficient happiness, and live upon him as such, and yet not love him? I think this is impossible. Let me then cherish and improve this divine principle of love; and divine love will govern all the other passions of nature, will employ them in their proper work, and distribute to them their several offices in the religious life. Love is the sovereign and commanding passion.

But what shall I do, O Lord, to love thee more? How shall I kindle this divine flame? How shall I nourish it and raise it high? I meditate on the wonders of thy nature, the extent of thy goodness, and the riches of thy mercy, and yet how little do I love thee? I review the sweet variety of blessings that I have received from thy hand in this life, and the surprizing transactions of thy condescending grace, which relate to the life to come, and yet how little do I love thee? I behold Jesus thy Son sent out of thy own bosom to take flesh and blood, and to dwell among sinners, even Jesus, the Son of thy highest love, sent

down to earth to be made a sacrifice, and to die for the sake of such guilty wretches as I am, an amazing instance of thy love to us, "and yet how little do I love thee?" I read in thy word, what thou hast done for me in ancient times and ages, long before I was born; and what thou wilt do for me in worlds and ages beyond death and time, and yet I am ashamed to think how little I love thee. My thoughts run from one eternity to another, and trace the various and transcendent wonders of thy love in the several periods of time: glorious and astonishing instances of the compassion of a God to a worthless creature, to a worm; to dust, an atom of being, yea worse, to a sinner, a rebel that deserves thy immortal hatred, and "yet how little do I love thee?" I wander in meditation through the various fields of nature and grace, and methinks I see my God in all of them, diffusing the unbounded riches of his wisdom and love through them all: I endeavour to take my warmest passions with me, while I rove among the unknown scenes of thy power and goodness; and yet, O my God, after all, I am forced to confess, "how exceeding little it is that I love thee!" Lord, it is thy own work to turn a heart of stone into flesh, to make it feel all the tender impressions of divine

love, and to kindle the celestial principle of life and love within me. Come down from on high, thou Sovereign of all nature; come down into my heart, take possession of it for thyself, and let it ever burn and breathe towards thee, and send up the perpetual incense of holy desire and love.

I will set a watch upon my eyes and my ears, and all the avenues of sense and appetite, that the creatures may not enter in too far, and dwell too near my heart, which I have given up to God. I would place a sacred guard upon it, to keep off every rival. I know the danger that arises from the flattering objects of flesh and sense: If they but once gain admittance into the heart, they are ever busy to take too fast hold there. Many of the weeds of this wilderness have gay and flattering blossoms, and if once they are permitted to creep into the soul, they twine about every passion, and root themselves there, to the certain prejudice of divine love: alas, for that holy plant! That flower of heavenly original! How the noxious weeds of this world choke its growth, and cause it to decay and languish!

O may all the tempting trifles and vain delights of this life stand aloof from my heart, for I have devoted it to God for a habitation. Keep your distance, ye dan-

gerous creatures, from the gates of this temple where my God dwells. There let him dwell alone, and reign over all my powers for ever.

I would seek after my God in his public ordinances, I would seek after him daily in my secret retirements: I would give my pious passions a greater loose where no eye beholds me, where no ear can take notice of me. O may these retiring hours be the special season for the lively exercise and the increase of my devout affections! There I can tell my God all my heart in private groans and private rejoicings. He shall know what my sighs mean, what are my fears and my painful sorrows: there I can blush before him for my secret sins, and open the floods of holy mourning: there I can pour out into his ear my bitter complaints of the rising corruptions of my heart; I can lament over the vanity of my thoughts, and spread my unknown temptations before his eyes. I can lay myself low at his feet in the dust, and tell him with humble confusion of face and soul, how much I have received from him, how much I have done against him, and how little I have loved him.

In the secret chambers of retirement I may join the exercises of an active faith and a cheerful hope, with the sighs and

tears of penitence : there I can breathe out my most vehement desires after the presence of my God, and after the sweeter sensations of his love. “My flesh and my heart may pant and cry out after God, the living God, and say, when shall I come and appear before him?” Psalm xlii. 1, 2. When shall I be made more entirely like him? When shall these days of sin and temptation, these tedious seasons of absence and distance from God, come to a final period, never, never to return again.

The lonely and retired devotions of a christian, may lead him near the walls of paradise, and the seats of the blessed, almost within the sound of their songs and praises. In a solitary cell, in a field remote from cities and men, or in a grove such as Abraham planted, we may “call upon the name of the Lord, the everlasting God,” Gen xxi. 33. There we may send up our souls toward heaven in most pathetic breathings of love and joy : the heart and the tongue may rejoice together in God our Saviour, while none but the trees and the skies bear witness to the hidden pleasures of our religion, and the sweet sensations of a conscience at peace with God : the trees in all their lovely bloom and verdure, and the skies in a cloudless and serene season, are happy emblems of such a con-

science, serene, and blooming with life and glory.

When the sun and day-light are withdrawn, we may talk over our hopes, and our holy joys, to the silence of the moon and the midnight stars: silent are they, and secure witnesses of those divine delights, to which the noisy and the busy world are too much strangers, and which the public must not know. There we may make our boast aloud in the name of Jesus, as our Saviour, and our beloved: we may reckon up before him, who sees all things, our fairest evidences of an interest in his love, and may glory in the hope of his salvation; surely when all the pleasing passions of nature are excited into such a just and lively exercise on divine objects, the power and the pleasure of religion within us will acquire thereby a lasting strength.

In order to carry on this happy work, I am directed to converse much with those parts of christianity, which are suited to raise the most sprightly affections. I have done it, O Lord, and yet I feel my heart too little warmed and raised! but I would repeat the holy work; it is all duty, and it should be all delight: I would repeat it, till I find the sacred fire kindle and glow within. I would run over again that vast and extensive field of wonders: again, let

me survey the sublime glories of thy majesty, thy power, thy wisdom, thy goodness, all unsearchable and all infinite. I would dwell upon them till I am lost in this boundless ocean of godhead, and swallowed up in adoration and wonder. Then would I recal my past days of life, and bring past years back to my remembrance. With a sacred solemnity would I revolve in my heart the multitude of my transgressions, and the multitude of divine mercies, till my soul be melted into repentance and love: there is an unknown pleasure in the tears of pious love and holy mourning. I would read the astonishing history of the love of Christ, and trace the divine path of it down from the Father's bosom to his state of infancy, to the manger, and stable at Bethlehem: I would follow this golden track of love through the weaknesses, the fatigues, and sorrows of a life of poverty and reproach: I would trace it on the midnight mountains of prayer, and through the solitary wilderness, the stage of his sore temptations: I follow the shining thread of his unwearied love, till it brought him to sustain unknown agonies in the garden, and nailed him to the cursed tree: I behold him there groaning and expiring under the weight of my sins: amazing spectacle! What will awaken devout pas-

sion, if such varied scenes of divine love and divine sorrow cannot do it?

Let me borrow those blessed patterns of warm and living devotion which David has left us, and tune the songs of Zion to the name of Jesus: the sweetest songs and the sweetest name will happily unite and increase the divine harmony. O when shall I feel the ardent desires, the penitent sorrows, the holy wishes, and pious elevated joys of the ancient Psalmist; O for the return of the same Spirit, that gave the soul and the harp of David these sacred and immortal elevations.

When I find a divine influence reaching my heart, and raising a devout passion there, I would hold fast and cherish the heavenly sunbeam, till I feel the holy warmth diffused through all my powers: nor would I willingly suffer the tides of business or care in this world to quench the spark which was kindled from above.

I would keep up the favour of divine things among the common affairs of this life. A present God in the midst of the labours of this world will sweeten and sanctify them all, and bring heaven down to earth.

Suffer me not, O my God, to bury all my religion within me. Let my tongue communicate some of the wonders of thy

mercy, and be a lively instrument of thy praise: Give courage and wisdom, that I may know when and how to divert vain discourse, and may dare to speak for God. O when shall the time be that "they which fear the Lord, shall speak often one to another," Mal. iii. 16. and warm each others hearts with heavenly conversation? When shall the blessed Spirit revisit the forsaken churches, and dwell again in the degenerate families of christians? While we feel our hearts heavy, and our affections cold and languid in the things of God, we toil and heave in vain without his Spirit. We flutter upon the ground, and make attempts to rise heaven-ward; but alas, we grovel and groan under our impotence, till the Spirit gives us an eagle's wing, to mount us up toward the heavenly world. With all our pious endeavours, let us join our efforts of importunate request for the return of the quickening Spirit, and his vital influences.

O that I might live much in the faith of unseen things, and set myself continually as on the borders of death. Turn aside, the veil, O blessed Jesus, that I may look into the unseen world! Or give the eyes of my faith vigour enough to pierce through the veil, and see my God and my Saviour. And may this blessed sight make a divine

impression upon all the powers of my nature, such as may awaken every vigorous and pleasing passion of the heart, such as may engage me to keep my hopes always awake, my evidences for heaven unspotted, and my desires ever breathing toward thy presence, my Saviour and my God! If my pious passions were in their warmest exercise, I should be ever ready to obey the divine order for my removal hence: I should receive the messenger death with a smile on my countenance, and follow the angel with a cheerful step, while he leads me away from a world of sin, sorrow, and darkness, to the regions of life and joy.

O happy country, where sorrow and sin have no place, where my spirit in its inmost powers shall feel an eternal spring! While we dwell in this world, it is all winter with us; we behold the sun as afar off, and receive but feeble influences. But in the world on high, all things around us are full of life and love: there are no gloomy hours, no chilling blasts, no cold and cloudy seasons. There no damp shall hang upon the wing of my devout affections, no water shall ever quench the fervour of them. There I shall be for ever ascending nearer to God, the centre of my soul, and all my motions will be swifter too. Every power

within me shall feel stronger influences of his love, when I am got so far within the divine attraction. Then I shall complain no longer of absence and distance, nor feel any more eclipse of the face of my God; but I shall be perpetually receiving a full efflux of light and love from the eternal sun of grace and glory. I shall spend the ages of my endless existence in a rich variety of sublime duties and sublime delights; such delights and such duties as are, and must be unknown, till we put off these coarse and cumberous garments of flesh and blood, these veils that enwrap our souls in darkness.

Happy shall I be indeed, when all the troublesome and disquieting influences of flesh and blood shall cease: all my painful and uneasy passions shall be for ever banished: Grief, and fear, and anger, shall vex my spirit no more. Animal nature must be buried in the dust, and all the ferments and emotions of it shall cease for ever.

But must I then loose all these kindly ferments of nature too, all those pleasing emotions, which in this present state, add fresh vigour and delight to the soul, in the exercise of its best affections, love and joy? If all these must be lost, who can inform

me what shall come in the room of them? Surely love and joy are immortal things; they were made for heaven, and cannot die, nor shall their vigour be diminished in a world that was built for happiness. What strange unknown powers then shall be given to separate spirits, whereby these divine affections shall be invigorated, and raised to nobler degrees of exercise? Or shall my separate spirit when it is divested of every clog, and exulting in complete liberty, use all its own affectionate powers in a nobler and more perfect manner, when I shall see the divine objects of them face to face? Surely the holy souls that are dismissed from flesh, shall be richly furnished with all necessary faculties for their own felicity. Every saint in glory shall find full satisfaction, and intense delight, when all its best affections are united and employed on the most lovely and desirable objects; when they are all fixed on God the supreme good, and on Jesus the most perfect, and most divine image of the Father.

Jesus, together with the Father, shall be the object of our contemplation and love. And at the same time his holy soul, with all its pure affections, rejoicing in its own nearness to God, shall be the pattern of our heavenly joy. "I in them, (says our

blessed Lord) and thou in me, that they all may be made perfect in one." John xvii. 23. And we are told.—"We shall be like him for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2.

These are the sweet notices of our future felicity, that he has given us to cheer our hearts in the present state of faith and labour: these are the bright but distant glimpses of those entertainments which are prepared for us in our Father's house. These are little prospects of those rivers of pleasure that run between the hills of paradise, and make glad the new Jerusalem, the city of our God: such joys as these await us on high. Do we not feel our hearts pant, and point upward? These are the joys of divine love? the very faith and hope of this blessedness, the slight glimpse and foretastes of it here on earth, have something in them unspeakable and full of glory: but the complete relish and fruition of it is reserved for heaven, and for heavenly inhabitants to know and enjoy. There, and there only, are such immediate and rich profusions of divine love, as the heart of man in this mortal state is neither pure enough to partake of, nor large enough to conceive. We must die, we must die out of this world, to learn perfectly what those

pleasures are ; nor can we know them but by enjoyment. Missionary angels could not make us understand them, nor a visit from departed saints. Earthly languages were not made to express the fulness of these celestial sensations : the ideas of paradise demand unutterable words ; nor are spirits dwelling in flesh either fit or able to hear them. We must die then, to learn how these blessed ones love God, and how God loves the blessed. O when will the happy day arrive ? When will the hour shine out upon us, and the bright moment appear ? It is coming, it is coming, as fast as time can roll away, and the sun and moon can finish their appointed periods.

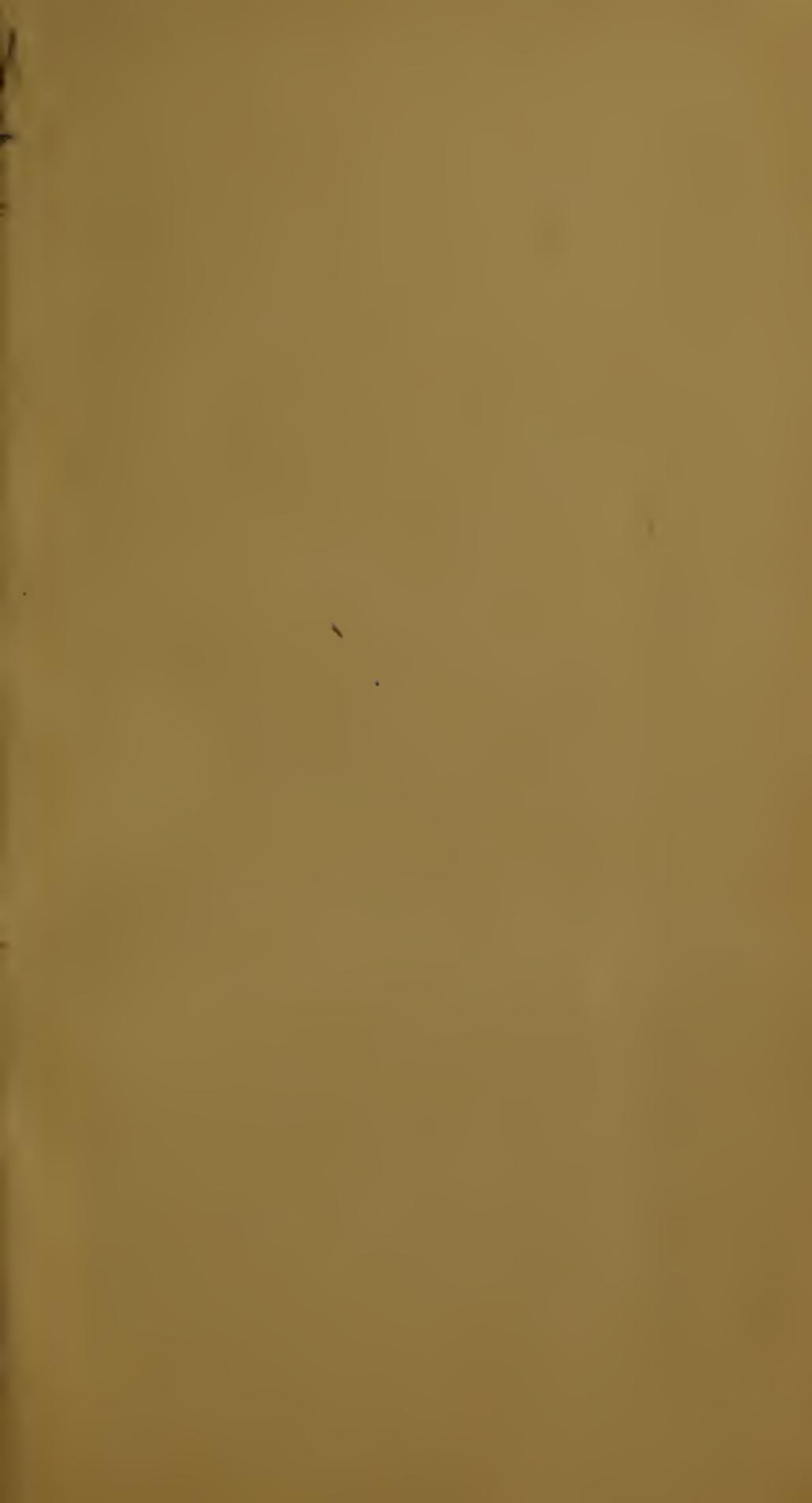
Come, my soul, rouse thyself from thy dull and lethargic temper ; shake off the dust of this earth, that hangs heavy upon thy better powers. Hast thou not been long weary of such cold and frozen devotion, as is practised in this earthly state ? Hast thou not long complained of loving thy God so little, and of tasting so little of his love ? Come, raise thyself above these dull and despicable scenes of flesh and sense, above all that is not immortal. Lift up thy head with cheerfulness and eager hope : look out with longing eyes beyond the shadowy region of death, and salute

the dawning of thy eternal day : stretch out thy arms of intense desire, and send a flight of devout wishes across the dark valley, to meet the approaching joys of immortality.

↑ THE END.

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