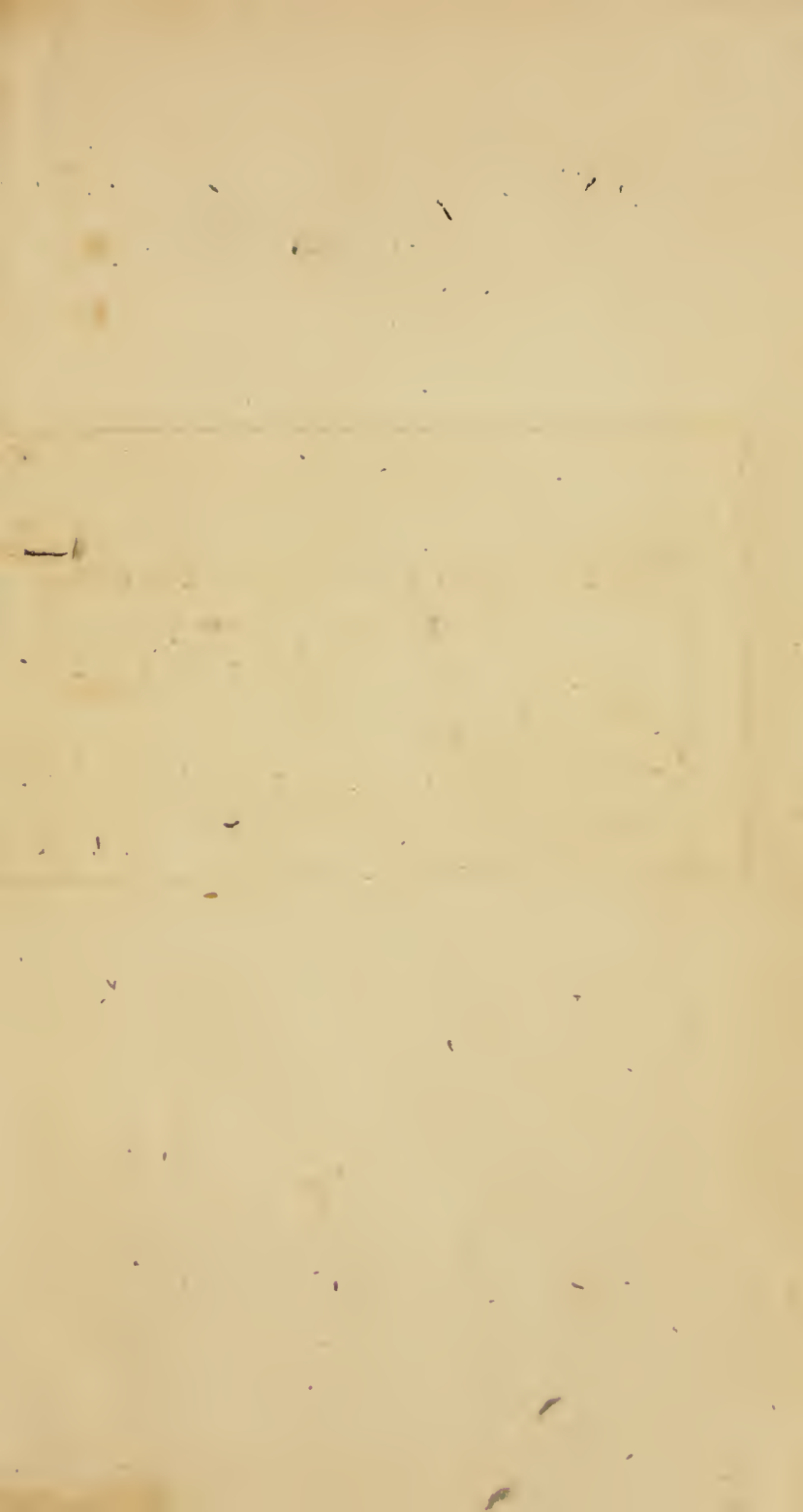


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WITH
INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS.

N^o. 38.





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REV. SAMUEL SHAW.

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EMMANUEL:

OR, A

DISCOVERY OF TRUE RELIGION,

AS IT IMPORTS A

LIVING PRINCIPLE IN THE MINDS OF MEN.

AND ON

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

BY

SAMUEL SHAW,

LATE MINISTER OF LONG-WHATTON, LEICESTERSHIRE.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY

ROBERT GORDON, D. D.

MINISTER OF THE NEW NORTH CHURCH, EDINBURGH.

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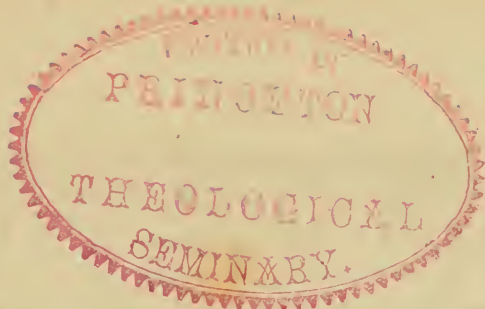
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1829.



INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

WHEN, on a certain occasion, the Pharisees demanded of our Lord, when the kingdom of God should come? he answered them and said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, lo, here! or lo, there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you;" and the same truth is stated by the Apostle Paul, when he says, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." These statements were both originally made to particular persons, and with a reference to special circumstances; the former, to correct the mistaken views of the Pharisees, who expected that the kingdom of God was to commence with some striking interposition of divine power on behalf of the Jews, and to consist in their being put in possession of great temporal prosperity;—the latter, to put an end to the dissension which had arisen between the Jewish and Gentile Christians at Rome, respecting certain external observances, which were adhered to by the one class, and disregarded by the other. But, though thus directed, in the first instance, against special

errors and misapprehensions, both statements contain a truth, which it is always of importance to bear in mind, and convey an admonition, which is but too applicable to multitudes in every age. Though none, who are in the slightest degree acquainted with the Gospel, can entertain such expectations concerning the kingdom of God, as were entertained by the Jews, it will be found that the principle in which their error originated is still a very prevalent one ; and that, although it is accompanied with a profession of faith in the Gospel, it does, nevertheless, in many cases, prevent the power of the Gospel from being felt. That principle consists in conceiving of the kingdom of God as of something external—some dispensation, in the benefits of which all participate who professedly acknowledge its authority, and outwardly conform to its institutions ; just as mankind participate in the advantages of that political constitution, under which they live.

It is possible, that many, to whom this remark is applicable, might not willingly avow such an opinion, and that they may never have formed to themselves a distinct conception of the subject : for it will be found, that vague and indistinct apprehensions of divine truth constitute the refuge in which multitudes, who are familiar with the sound of that truth, make their escape from the convictions which it might awaken. But it cannot, we fear, be disputed, that with many the idea which is attached to the kingdom of God, as presently existing among mankind, were that idea expressed in definite and precise terms, would be found, in reality, to amount to little more than what has now been stated ; that

with regard to communities, this kingdom is supposed to be established, wherever it is found that no other than the Christian system of faith is professed, and no other than Christian rites are observed ; and that in the case of individuals, every one is regarded as a subject of this kingdom, who pays to the institutions of the Gospel that measure of external deference and respect, which is required by the general sentiments of the community around him. It is, indeed, a very appalling thought, that a scheme of divine wisdom and mercy, the execution of which required that the Son of God should become incarnate, and suffer, and die ; and the design of which is to enthrone God in the love and affections of his debased and alienated creatures, should be regarded as if it had only been intended to give currency to a certain system of speculative opinions, or to construct the frame-work of certain external observances. Yet such, in reality, is the place which is assigned to it, in the estimation of those who have never distinctly conceived of the kingdom of God, as the establishment of a divine principle in the soul—the dominion of divine love over the affections ; and who do not perceive that the seat of this dominion is the heart, and the heart alone ; that wherever it is in reality set up, it is just as complete in the case of a single individual as in that of multitudes ; and that however generally the Gospel may be professed in any community, or however rigorously its ordinances may be observed, yet if there is not in that community any one individual whose heart has been so subjugated to a divine power, then the kingdom of God is not there. But, lamentable as it is to reflect,

that the subject should ever be regarded in any other light, it is nothing more than what we are taught to expect. Our Lord himself declared, not of the Jews, who openly rejected him, but of such as should professedly acknowledge him, and wear all the external badges of discipleship, that “many will hereafter say to him, Lord, Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets; but he will say to them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity.” In the revelation which he vouchsafed to make to his servant John, respecting the spiritual condition of the churches of Asia, he addressed the members of one of these churches, as men who had a name to live and were dead; and the Apostle Paul, in his writings, speaks of some who were ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth—and of others, who had a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof. But there is, perhaps, no passage that does more emphatically express the tendency of mankind to substitute the mere externals of the Gospel, for the faith of the Gospel itself, than that to which we adverted at the commencement of these remarks,—where, in writing to those whom the Apostle believed to be Christians, and of whom he had before said, that “he thanked God, through Jesus Christ, for them all, that their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world,” he thought it necessary to remind them, that “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.”

What the Apostle has thus said of the observances which had created a dissension between the Jewish and Gentile Christians, is obviously appli-

cable to every thing else which mankind may be found to substitute for what is represented in the same passage as constituting the kingdom of God; and while his statement may thus be considered as announcing the general truth, that this kingdom consists not in external things, however important these may be in their place; it does at the same time intimate, how prone mankind are to rest satisfied with these—a truth which is confirmed alike by the past history, and the present condition, of the professedly Christian world.

In illustration of this remark, we may refer to that system of error and superstition, which, under the name of Christianity, did, for many ages, exclude from the nations generally the light of divine truth, and which still continues to envelop many of them in spiritual darkness. The principle upon which that system was established and maintained, was to identify the kingdom of Christ with the exercise of secular power—to give to that kingdom the form and character of a temporal sovereignty—and to suspend the communication of its blessings, on the payment of the same kind of submission that earthly governments are wont to require of their subjects. And that such a system should not only succeed, but should, through many successive ages, continue steadily to advance—that, in spite of the oppression and tyranny with which it asserted its authority, and promoted its interests, it should, nevertheless, secure the ready acquiescence of a vast majority of every country into which it was introduced, and that it should ultimately acquire a strength and a stability which, humanly speaking, rendered

its overthrow altogether a hopeless thing, is a striking testimony how prone mankind are to place religion in any thing else rather than in the state of the heart, and to acknowledge the kingdom of God in any form, provided it does not assert a supremacy over the affections. It was, in fact, by availing themselves of this principle of human nature, that the abettors of the popish superstition were so successful in establishing and perpetuating their spiritual domination. The deluded votaries of that system were willing enough to acknowledge the authority of the church; because, however grievous might be the servitude which she exacted, or however painful the penances which she imposed, it was still but the servitude of an external conformity, which might at any time, by a great effort, be discharged; and it was a service, therefore, which, however burdensome in itself, was far more agreeable to the corrupt principles of human nature, than one which implied the subjugation of every unholy passion, and every unsanctified desire, to the authority of Christ. The whole system did, accordingly, proceed upon this principle. The sinner was taught to believe—and to a depraved heart, not absolutely insensible to the apprehension of a future reckoning, it was a most acceptable doctrine—that, by the endurance of some bodily penance, the sacrifice of some portion of worldly possessions, or the rigorous observance of some outward religious rites, his sins would be forgiven him; and that, if he would secure for himself a higher place in the kingdom of heaven hereafter, he had only to multiply these acts of mortification and self-denial, and exceed his fellow-men in his

zealous support of the authority, and his liberal contributions to the wealth, of what was denominated the church. It was thus that provision was made for pacifying a guilty conscience, while the convictions that were suppressed had no influence in restraining the sinner from the future commission of the same or still more atrocious offences; and hopes of heaven were awakened, while the means that were employed to do so, instead of conveying any distinct idea, or communicating any foretaste of its blessedness, went directly to render the soul still more debased, and still more incapable of spiritual enjoyment; and we have, therefore, in the system of Romish error and delusion, the testimony of a large majority of the professedly Christian world, and that through a long succession of ages, to the melancholy fact, that the sinner is ready to embrace any scheme, or betake himself to any subterfuge, whereby he may evade the demand which God makes on his heart and affections.

But testimonies to the same sad truth may be found, we fear, in abundance, without referring to the gross and palpable delusion, under which so large a portion of mankind laboured, during the period that superstition held the undisputed sway over what was called the Christian world. From the circumstances in which we have been placed, and the improvement which we have witnessed, both in the political and moral condition of mankind—an improvement which may be traced, either directly or indirectly, to the influence of the truth—we are apt to regard the state of the world, while under the domination of spiritual tyranny, as an unnatural one, and are ready

to give way to astonishment, that mankind should, for one moment, have submitted to such a domination. But, though it is no doubt true, that the extremity of oppression to which the system was carried, as it immediately affected the temporal comfort and well-being of its subjects, was calculated to revolt the common understanding and the common feelings of mankind; and, though in this respect it did no doubt awaken much secret dissatisfaction, if it did not call forth open resistance; yet the strength of the system, in so far as it was professedly of a spiritual character, lay in the depraved hearts and alienated affections of men; and it found acceptance with them, because it provided for quieting their apprehensions of the consequences of guilt, while it left them in the undisturbed possession of every indulgence, by which they were daily becoming still more guilty. And that this was really the stronghold of the delusion, is but too evident from what is daily exemplified among ourselves; for is it not true, that even in those communities, where such a system of spiritual oppression as we have just referred to, is professedly held in detestation, and where no individual would recognize another's claim to the authority of directing his conscience, or the power of deciding on his future destiny; there are, nevertheless, multitudes, who have just substituted the simple forms of worship which characterize the reformed churches, for the more laborious and diversified ritual of the church of Rome, and who are virtually assigning the same place, and attaching the same weight, to these more scriptural modes of going about religious exercises, which the others did to their system of mortification and penance?

Such, it is obvious, must be the case with every mere formalist—to many of whom the religious duties, which the practice of the community at large, the influence of early associations, or some faint and indistinct impression of the truth itself constrains them to engage in, are, in fact, little else than so many acts of penance—a penance, perhaps, which is not very painful from their being reconciled to it by habit, and which does not make a very large encroachment either on their hours of business, or seasons of pleasure; but, still, such as they would not submit to, were the comfort and the enjoyment which it yields them the only advantage that they expect to derive from it. In certain circumstances, indeed, they may not be conscious of making any effort, or submitting to any sacrifice, in attending on the public exercises of religious worship—nay, there may even be certain circumstances connected with that service, which enable them to spend the time that is devoted to it, more agreeably than they could contrive to do in any other way. But if, with all this, they are receiving no serious or permanent impression from the truths which are thus set before them; if they feel no anxiety, and make no effort to keep alive any impression that may occasionally be made on them; if they return to their worldly pursuits, satisfied with the reflection, that they have discharged a duty, though there has been nothing more in that duty than placing themselves, for a certain time, in certain circumstances; and if any interest, which they might feel while so employed, arose, not from the value or the importance of the truth to which their attention was directed, but from something altogether

unconnected with the import of that truth; then what is it but to say, that they substitute the sound of the Gospel for the Gospel itself, and the external observance of its ordinances, for a cordial acceptance of its overtures? Yet, we fear, there is no room to doubt, that such is the amount of all that is implied on the part of many, in the outward regard that is paid to public ordinances; and were their manner of engaging in the more private exercises of religion fully unfolded, it would appear still more clearly, that such exercises are more a penance than a pleasure. It is possible that the same considerations, which induce them to wait on the preaching of the Word, may constrain them to observe the form of private prayer, and reading the Scriptures; nor might they feel quite at ease, did they deliberately omit to do so, without some reason that might appear to them a valid excuse. But such excuses will not be of unfrequent occurrence; and when they do not occur, the duty will be gone about, rather as a matter of necessity which cannot be safely omitted, and to which, therefore, their own comfort requires them to be reconciled, than as a matter of choice, which it would be a sacrifice both of pleasure and of profit to neglect. Till the task is gone through, they will feel that there is something before them which it would be a comfort to have done with; when they do engage in it, there will be no solemnity of feeling, or earnestness of desire, at all corresponding to the momentous truths which they read, or the language of supplication to which they give utterance; and, when it is completed, they will betake themselves to their worldly concerns, more like

persons who have made their escape from some restraint, than like those who have received new communications of strength, wherewith to encounter the temptations, and submit to the trials of life. There are many, we fear, who, with just such a form of godliness as we have now described, contrive to live, day after day, without any doubt or misgiving about the question, whether or not they are Christians; and who even succeed, when any such misgiving is awakened, in putting it down with the reflection, that they have been most regular in the private duties of religion, and most decorous in their observance of its more public ordinances—that they have about them all that is generally esteemed by others essential to the Christian character—and that if, on some points, they have, at times, been less careful and less rigorous than they ought to have been, they are resolved, that in future they will be more regular on these points than they formerly were: and, if to these considerations, they can add the decencies of an unblemished life and reputation, they will be ready to conclude, that they have nothing to fear. Nay, there are not wanting instances, which go to prove, that reflections like these constitute, with many, the strength of their hopes in the immediate prospect of death—or if, at such times, they do manifest a more than usual anxiety about religious exercises, that it is still on the same principle on which they formerly observed them—a principle essentially the same as that on which the deluded votaries of superstition betook themselves for comfort, to the last religious rites which their system had prescribed; and what, therefore, are such facts, but just melancholy

proofs, that with many religion is still a mere system of external things, with which the heart and the affections have nothing to do.

But the truth which we are endeavouring to establish, may be exemplified in the character of some, whose condition is in many respects apparently far more hopeful, than that of the class of formalists to whom we have just referred. It is possible that an individual may be placed in such circumstances, or led to form such connexions, as may awaken in his mind some interest on the subject of Scripture truth; in the course of his inquiries, he may discover a great deal in that truth to exercise his understanding, and even in some measure to call forth his admiration; he may perceive, to a certain extent, the order and beauty of the doctrines of Scripture, as forming a connected system, and not a little too of the adaptation of the whole scheme to the condition of creatures who are in a state of guilt and alienation from God; and he may have acquired not only a facility, but a desire of making that scheme the subject of converse; or of discussion, among those with whom he is accustomed to associate. Having thus acquired a speculative acquaintance with the truths of Scripture, he may manifest a decided predilection for those exhibitions of the truth, in which it is fairly and faithfully set forth, with a corresponding dislike to every thing that would darken or perplex it—and he may even show a great deal of zeal for the advancement and ultimate triumph of those sentiments which he himself entertains. But, with all this, the truth may never have obtained a permanent place in his heart, or exercised any salutary influence on his

affections. While he perceives the harmony that subsists among the truths of Scripture, considered as a connected system, and even its adaptation to the circumstances of those for whom it is professedly designed, the satisfaction which it yields him may arise from the fitness of such a harmony, and such an adaptation to awaken admiration, just as any beautiful arrangement is calculated to please, while he is, nevertheless, blind to it, as that, on his acceptance of which his eternal well-being is suspended. In manifesting a decided preference for those works, or those discourses in which the leading truths of the Gospel are prominently exhibited, his gratification may be altogether, or in a great measure, traced to the accordance between such statements and the views which he himself entertains, while the truth itself engages but a small portion of his attention or regard. And, in like manner, with respect to the zeal which he shows in the defence of these views, and the anxiety which he feels for their advancement and final triumph, it may in reality be the same kind of zeal which he would manifest in the defence, or for the establishment, of his own favourite opinions on any other subject—and pride, therefore, may be at the foundation of all the interest which he feels about the truth, and all the efforts which he makes for its advancement. It is thus, that, with one class, the same value may be put upon a system of opinions, which, by another, is attached to certain external observances, while both are alike strangers to the operation of that divine principle, which constitutes the kingdom of God in the soul of man.

To the nature and the effects of this spiritual do-

minion, we shall have occasion immediately to advert. But, whatever these may be, it is a very obvious and a very important truth, that the kingdom of God does not consist, either in mere opinions, however sound, or in outward observances, however seriously or regularly they may be gone about; that the one may be entertained, and the other practised, while the heart remains as much estranged from God as ever it was; and that so long as this is the condition of the sinner, he must be the subject of some other kingdom, than that which the Son of God came to announce, and is exalted to establish. In carrying into effect his gracious purpose of setting up his kingdom in the world, he is pleased to employ the preaching of the truth, even the proclamation of a free remission through his blood; this truth makes a direct and a most powerful appeal to the heart of every sinner who hears it; and when, by the power of the Holy Ghost, it does make its way to the heart, and displaces the enmity against God, which formerly had its abode there, the kingdom of Christ in that individual begins to be set up. But so long as the truth produces no such effect, it is obvious that it has not done what it is its first object to accomplish; and whatever, therefore, sinners may know about the Gospel, as a subject of opinion or speculation, or whatever they may do in the way of observing its institutions, they are virtually acting as if the kingdom of God were something external—they are deceiving themselves, with a name to live, while they are spiritually dead.

Now, in opposition to all such views of the kingdom of God, as would make it to consist in external

observances, our Lord has declared that this kingdom, if it exist at all, “is within us;” and the Apostle has very clearly explained the import of this declaration when he says, that “the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” And, with regard to the term ‘righteousness,’ as here used by the Apostle, its meaning is determined by the general scope of the passage. On many occasions it is employed to express the ground of a sinner’s justification in the sight of God, even the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ; and when so used it denotes something that is not, and cannot be, inherent in the nature of believers: for though this righteousness is imputed to them, and made available for their pardon and acceptance with God, still it is something which essentially belongs to another. Such, however, cannot be its meaning in the passage referred to. The Apostle is speaking—not of the principle on which sinners are received into divine favour, made the subjects of the kingdom of God, and put in possession of its privileges and blessings—but of the nature of that kingdom itself, as actually set up in their hearts, exercising a supreme control over all the moral principles of their nature, and making itself manifest by a corresponding life and conversation. By the term ‘righteousness,’ then, we are here to understand something existing in believers themselves; and if so, it can mean nothing else than the conformity of their will to the will of God—the re-establishment in their minds of the authority of that law which requires them to love the Lord their God

with all their heart, and to love their neighbour as themselves.

The Apostle, indeed, cannot be understood as intimating, that in every case this law is at once reinstated in the believer's heart in undisputed supremacy, and takes captive the affections without reluctance or reserve; for, alas! the very occasion on which he wrote the passage referred to, does itself show that the case is far otherwise. But his declaration, that "the kingdom of God is righteousness," does assuredly imply, that where there is no turning of the heart to God, no desire to be conformed to his will, and nothing like the commencement of any such conformity, there the kingdom of God is not yet set up—that the very existence of this kingdom lies in the subordination of the will to the divine law, as holy, and reasonable, and right, and good—and that the result of its full and final establishment, will be the cheerful and unreserved acquiescence of the heart in the will of God, as in all cases, and on every point, infinitely the best. Such, it is obvious, is not the natural condition of mankind, either as it regards the state of their hearts, or as it relates to the tenor of their conduct. The slightest acquaintance with human nature, and the most superficial view of the divine law, as revealed in the Scriptures, are sufficient to show, that the one stands fearfully at variance with the other; nor can sinners themselves, as often as their attention is awakened to the subject, avoid feeling conscious that it is so. To say nothing of their proneness to forget God, and their unwillingness to entertain solemn thoughts of the claim which he has upon their love and gratitude, and which does

itself involve in it all the guilt of apostacy and rebellion, it is but too evident, that in the exercise of their affections, and desires, and intellectual faculties, there is the manifestation of an active hostility to God; that they are naturally inclined to seek happiness in pleasures and pursuits, which are not only pervaded by a principle of ungodliness, inasmuch as they have no reference to the divine glory, but are actually opposed to what he has expressly revealed as his will; that if the divine law is not absolutely disregarded and set at nought, it is at least dealt by as an unreasonable law, whose requirements, where they cannot be evaded, must be so modified and understood, as not to interfere with present enjoyments; that there is in the hearts of men such a dissatisfaction with those events which defeat their schemes, and disappoint their expectations, as amounts to a direct resistance to the execution of the divine will; and that there is thus in the unrenewed mind, a continual conflict with the divine Mind, in the way either of evading his authority, or opposing the execution of his purposes.

Nor is the state of the human heart less at variance with that commandment of the divine law, which requires mankind to love their neighbours as themselves; for, in spite of all those peculiar ties, by which individuals may be found united to one another in the bond of friendship and affection, it is undeniable, that there is in human nature a principle of selfishness, that prompts men to sacrifice the interest of others to their own; that in many cases where it does not actually appear, it wants only to be subjected to a fair trial, to be

elicited and brought into action ; and that even in those who are most highly distinguished for generosity and benevolence, its existence is but too evident from the irritation, the offences, and misapprehensions, which are so frequently occurring in the ordinary intercourse of life. And what, then, can be the result of such a state of moral disorder, but insecurity, disappointment, and vexation of spirit ? It is no doubt true, that, through the forbearance of God, mankind do not here reap to their full extent the bitter fruits of this disorder ; inasmuch, as in many, perhaps a very large majority of cases, ungodly men are permitted to succeed in their schemes of worldly profit or pleasure ; and even when they are given practically to feel the hopelessness of the controversy which they maintain with God, in having their plans defeated, and their prospects blasted, still these calamities are but an intimation of what his retributive justice will do, not a retribution itself. But, how utterly miserable should they be, and how entirely bereft of every consolation and hope, were their forgetfulness of God visited with a corresponding abandonment on his part ; and were they made to feel, at every point, where they stand opposed, in heart and life, to his will, the desperate nature of that opposition ? Were they for one hour given up to such a state of desolation and helplessness, there would be crowded into that hour more misery and wretchedness than it is possible for us to estimate or conceive of ; and they would know, as a matter of experience, that to say of intelligent creatures that their hearts are not right with God, is to say that they are necessarily unhappy. To render them

happy, therefore, it is necessary that this perversion of their moral nature be rectified; inasmuch, as without such a change of sentiment and feeling towards God, there can be nothing like the enjoyment of fellowship with him; and so far as this change has taken place, to that extent the kingdom of God has been established in the heart. This righteousness, it is true, does not constitute the ground upon which sinners are received into the divine favour, nor are we at all referring to the principle on which they are so received; for, in point of fact, there will be no approach towards an affectionate thought of God, or a cheerful submission to his will, until they have seen how their guilt may be forgiven, and have felt something of the constraining power of his love, for whose sake forgiveness is granted. But it is at the same time essential to their blessedness—nay, it does in reality constitute the perfection of their nature, to be brought into such a state of conformity to the divine will, as that they shall regard the execution of that will with complacency and satisfaction—that the very thought of its being supreme, shall impart to them a feeling of security regarding the permanency, as well as the perfection of their happiness—that they shall feel these desires and affections to be in a state of unison with all that is holy, and righteous, and beneficent, and good—and that nothing, in which they are individually concerned, shall ever awaken one suspicious or distrustful thought, regarding the wisdom, and the love, and the faithfulness of God's procedure towards them. From this state, the Christian may have to lament that he is still at a great distance. But, while his understanding can-

not fail to assent to the truth of what has now been stated, respecting the necessity of his being brought to it, he must be conscious also, from what he has actually felt, that every step he advances towards it, brings him nearer to the perfection of his happiness. He cannot but know, on the one hand, that in the submission of his will to the will of God, in a child-like acquiescence in the divine appointments, in a firm reliance on the divine faithfulness, and in the exercise of affection and good will towards his fellow-men, there is a satisfaction and an enjoyment, which no mere worldly gratification will ever impart; and he must be conscious, on the other hand, that when on any occasion he has been drawn into any thing for which his heart condemns him, as a violation of the law, which requires him so to feel and act towards God and his neighbour, the frame of his mind, in so far as it was peaceful and happy, has been disturbed—that, even though he can look to the blood of Christ, for the pardon of his offence, the consequences of that offence, in throwing his heart and affections into a state of disorder, are not immediately rectified—and that, independent of the guilt which he has contracted, an inroad has also been made upon his happiness; and the experience, therefore, of every believer, furnishes a practical illustration of the truth, that “the kingdom of God is righteousness.”

But the subject of these remarks is still farther illustrated by the Apostle’s statement, that “the kingdom of God is peace.” The term ‘peace,’ as applied to sinners, is frequently used in Scripture to denote, either their reconciliation to God, or that relief which accompanies their reconciliation, when the

conscience is no longer under a depressing sense, and a tormenting apprehension of unforgiven guilt. Thus the birth of the Saviour was announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem, as "peace on earth, and good will towards men." Christ is represented as reconciling sinners unto God, "having made peace by the blood of his cross." And it is declared of them who believe, that "being justified by faith, they have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is evident, indeed, from the whole tenor of the New Testament, that a pacified conscience is the first practical effect which accompanies the faith of the gospel; and it is equally evident, both from Scripture, and from the constitution of human nature, that till the soul that is conscious of guilt has received and relied on God's own assurance of a free and full remission, there can be no satisfaction or enjoyment in realizing the divine presence; and that peace of conscience therefore, arising from the divine testimony concerning Christ, constitutes the commencement of the believer's fellowship with God. When the Apostle declares, then, that the kingdom of God is peace, his statement necessarily implies, that wherever this kingdom has been established, there the peace of being reconciled to God has been felt, inasmuch as without this, the sinner must either be living in ignorance and forgetfulness of God, or must be a prey to the suspicion and fear which guilt awakens, and, consequently, in a state that altogether disqualifies him for finding any satisfaction and comfort in contemplating the sovereignty of the divine will, and the execution of the divine purposes. But though all this must be understood as intimated in the Apostle's

declaration, it is evident, we think, that it implies a great deal more. However valuable may be the peace which the glad tidings of a free salvation bring to the convicted and trembling sinner, and however essential to the commencement and the future progress of the divine life in his soul, there is a peace also, and that of a more elevated character, arising out of holiness itself; and it is to this especially, we conceive, that the Apostle here refers. He had already set forth the kingdom of God as consisting in righteousness—in the restoration of the soul to a state of conformity to the divine will—and the re-establishment, over the affections, of the authority of that law which requires mankind to love God with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves; and when he proceeds, therefore, further to represent this kingdom as consisting in peace, we cannot avoid concluding, that he refers to the state of mind in which all the affections are placed on their proper objects, regulated by the eternal law of rectitude and truth, and exercised with a reference to the will of Him, who is acknowledged and felt to be infinitely worthy of supreme love and regard, as contrasted with that state of distraction and disquiet in which the strength of these affections is expended on frivolous, and sinful, and debasing objects, and when the principle of selfishness is perpetually leading to disappointment and vexation of spirit, by the very means which it employs to obtain gratification. The circumstances, too, in which the Apostle wrote, go to confirm this interpretation; for though he does assuredly speak of the kingdom of God as the establishment of a divine principle in the heart, yet he is

obviously referring also to the manifestation of this principle in the intercourse and fellowship of Christians with one another; and it can require no argument to show, that, in proportion as the peace of which we are now speaking is established in the hearts of individuals, it must promote peace, and harmony, and love among Christians in their collective capacity. The Apostle in fact is just stating the practical effect of that righteousness to which he had previously referred as constituting the kingdom of God in the soul; and is virtually telling us that peace is as necessarily the effect of such a state of the heart, as distrust, and dissatisfaction, and perplexity are of the opposite state. Nor is it difficult to see, that from the very nature of things it must be so. So long as a law is felt and regarded only as a mandate of authority, however reasonable it may be in itself, or however bitter may be the consequences of offending against it, there may be no pleasure felt in yielding an external obedience to it; and it will accordingly be found, that there is often a great deal of outward respect paid to the letter of the divine commandments, while they who do so are utter strangers to solid or permanent peace of mind—nay, subject to all the insecurity, and fear, and disappointment, to which mankind, in a state of alienation from God, are every instant exposed. But the establishment of the kingdom of God in the heart consists in rendering the divine law a law of love, and in so far as it is felt to be so, it is very obvious that there will be nothing painful or constrained in the submission which is paid to it—that the more extensively the influence of this law operates, the farther is the believer removed from

all that would disturb or distract him—and that when its authority has been completely established, in the entire subjugation of every desire and affection of the soul, his peace will also be placed beyond the reach of every inroad. Nor would the consequences of such a state of things be less palpable, as it regards Christians collectively, than as it relates to the experience of individuals; for were the law of love in general and active operation in a community, where would be the dissension, the animosities, and the intemperance by which the peace even of Christian societies is often disturbed, and the advancement of truth and righteousness retarded? Such a state indeed may never yet have been exemplified, nor do we allege that it ever can be perfectly so in the present life. But in as far as there is an approach to it, either in the case of individuals, or societies, to that extent the kingdom of God has been established, but no farther; and this kingdom will be perfected, only when every individual of its subjects is brought into entire subjection to the law of love; and when it will be as impossible for them to make any inroad on the peace of one another, as it would be deliberately to surrender their own.

But there is still another principle which the Apostle sets forth as constituting the kingdom of God in the soul, namely, “joy in the Holy Ghost.” And while by this declaration he has established the truth of the general proposition, that this kingdom consists not in any system of external observances, but in the state of the heart and affections; he has directed us also to the great agency by which the transformation of the inner man, of which we have

been speaking, is in every case brought about. Though it is in virtue of the obedience, and sufferings, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, that sinners are reconciled unto God, and received into favour; and though it is thus that God manifests his righteousness in treating the ungodly as righteous; yet the whole tenor of Scripture goes to show, that this revelation of the divine character does not actually operate with any efficacious influence on sinners but through the agency of the Holy Ghost—that if the claims of the divine law, and the awful nature of its sanctions, do so convict them of guilt, and so alarm them with apprehensions of danger, as to prompt them to seek after a hiding place from the storm, and a covert from the tempest, it is because the Spirit of God has given power and efficacy to the word, whereby it has become quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword—that if the preaching of the gospel leads them to take refuge in the righteousness of the Redeemer, it is because the same divine teacher has opened their eyes to the security of that refuge, and subdued them under an overwhelming sense of the love and mercy which provided it—and that if they become partakers of everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, it is because he has made the efficacy of the Redeemer's blood, and the riches of his grace, and the faithfulness of his promises, to stand forth so clearly revealed, and so distinctly realized to their apprehension, as to furnish them with a solid ground of confidence towards God. Believers feel assured that all this is the effect of the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, because that effect is ascribed to

him in Scripture, and because their own experience bears testimony to the same truth; inasmuch as they know enough of the perverseness of their understanding and the natural enmity of their minds against God, to be convinced, that, but for the enlightening, and convincing, and converting influences of the Spirit, they should have remained for ever in a state of alienation from God—terrified, it may be, by some occasional misgivings of conscience, but altogether unaffected by the manifestation of his love, and the invitation of his mercy. Whatever, therefore, may be the peace and joy which they have experienced in believing—whatever may be the security and comfort which they have felt in approaching God, pouring out their hearts before him, and unreservedly committing their way to his direction—and whatever enlargement of heart may have been brought to them, while meditating on the unsearchable depth of the love and mercy of Christ, it is to the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit that they are indebted for it all—knowing, as they do, that but for this agency, the divine record which furnishes them matter for holy meditation, and counsel to direct them in seasons of perplexity, and exceeding great and precious promises to sustain them in times of trial and tribulation, would have been to them a sealed book. It is indeed a very solemn thought, that they are the subjects of a divine influence—that they are in immediate contact with the Spirit of all holiness, and purity, and truth—and that the wilful indulgence of every unholy affection, and the commission of every known sin, is a deliberate act of resistance to the Spirit's agency. But it is, at the same time, a very

animating thought, that they should thus be admitted to intimate fellowship with Him; and, while every step that they advance towards a conformity to the divine image, furnishes a new ground of joy and gratitude to him in whose strength they made it, the fact, that it is the Spirit's work, forbids them to set any limits to their advancement, short of the full maturity of holiness, and the full measures of blessedness, of which their nature is capable. As often as they betake themselves to prayer, meditation, hearing the word, or any other spiritual exercise, they are encouraged to hope and believe that then they will be admitted to immediate fellowship with the Holy Ghost—it is held out to them as a most powerful motive to engage in such exercises, that he will be ready to help their infirmities, to quicken their desires after God, and to lead them into all the truth—and as often as they find in these exercises, the consolation and refreshment which they sought for, it is just an intimation to them that His gracious influence was present; and thus, every new accession which is made to the light, and life, and spiritual comfort of believers, is a practical illustration of the truth, that the kingdom of God is joy in the Holy Ghost.

We are aware, that in these remarks we have only hinted at the import of the language employed by the Apostle; and have exhibited, therefore, but a very imperfect view of what it is that constitutes the kingdom of God. But, for a very full and clear exposition of the subject, we refer to the following Treatise, which none, we think, can peruse with attention without receiving from it very serious and

salutary impressions, and without being convinced that the kingdom of God is a very different thing indeed from a mere assent to certain matters of opinion, and an outward conformity to certain appointed ordinances. We know few treatises, indeed, better fitted than SHAW'S EMMANUEL, to awaken solemn reflection, and lead to deep heart-searching, and self-examination. The formalist will find it difficult to make his escape from the scrutiny to which it subjects him, without being convinced that all is not right with him; and the believer will hardly fail to discover from it, how far he still stands from that perfection after which he is taught to aspire. And if the kingdom of God be any thing like what is set forth in this Treatise, then how far are those persons from that kingdom, with whom it has never been a question of deep and serious concernment how their hearts stand affected towards him; who have never conceived of that kingdom as of something within them—a power which subjugates all the desires and affections, and faculties of the soul; and who have not been made to understand, that instead of providing for their well-being without interfering with their natural propensities, the happiness which it bestows on its subjects consists, in detaching them from their dearest gratifications, and qualifying them for the enjoyment of what to the natural man is utterly distasteful. While such is the delusion under which sinners are labouring, it is, we fear, but too evident, that they have never conceived aright either of the sinfulness or the misery of their condition; and have never been persuaded to betake themselves to Him, whose blood alone can

wash them from their guilt. But to say nothing of the solemn consideration, that this guilt still stands against them unforgiven, we would entreat them to reflect, what kind of happiness it is that they expect hereafter to enjoy. The respect which they show for the letter of the law which God has revealed, and the form of those religious ordinances which he has appointed, is virtually a declaration on their part that they cannot be altogether indifferent to his displeasure ; while, in resting contented, and at ease, with this form of godliness, they do in reality express their hope, that this displeasure is, or will be, turned away from them. Without inquiring, then, into the foundation of this hope, and even admitting that it is well founded, we would ask them, what it is that they hope for ? Of righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, as constituting the kingdom of God, they are practically ignorant ; and they must be conscious, that so far from longing to be in possession of these, a state of mind so spiritual and so holy, as the prevalence of such principles would imply, stands directly opposed to all their natural inclinations and desires, and is in reality altogether offensive to them. And what, then, do they understand by being admitted into the kingdom of heaven ? or what is it that they expect to enjoy there, if they are admitted ? Even on the supposition that they are ultimately put in possession of it, though in this life they remain experimentally strangers to its nature, still that kingdom, as it will hereafter exist, must be what the Apostle has represented ; and can they really allege, that they hope then to be, what they are now most unwilling to become ? It is im-

possible to express the infatuation which such an idea implies; but, supposing that they do avow such a hope, and allege that they shall undergo such a change as will qualify them for the enjoyment of what they hope for, they cannot surely believe, that this change will be effected without any consent or concurrence of theirs, or that they will be compelled to love, what in reality they dislike. The whole tenor of Scripture goes distinctly to show, that wherever this change takes place, it is by the manifestation of the truth to the conscience—even the precious truth, that God spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up to the death for sinners; if to this truth they remain insensible, there is no other consideration by which they can ever be brought to entertain affectionate thoughts of God, or to long for the enjoyment of his fellowship; and their hope, therefore, express it as they will, does still involve the strange contradiction, of professedly hoping for what they cannot think of but with aversion and dislike. It is indeed a miserable delusion to suppose, that the happiness of heaven hereafter may be possessed and enjoyed without any such change taking place here in the state of the heart and affections as may adapt them to the nature of that happiness; or that it consists in any thing else than the full and uninterrupted enjoyment of that communion with God, which commences at the moment of the sinner's conversion, and which it is the great object of all the discipline of God's providence, the methods of his grace, and the influences of his Spirit, to sustain and perfect. Of this truth the Christian cannot be ignorant, but he may require

to be put in remembrance of it ; and we would, therefore, remind him, that the kingdom of God here is essentially the same that it will be hereafter ; that it began to be established in his heart from the moment that he experienced the constraining influence of the love of Christ ; and that it approaches nearer to its full establishment, just as he continues more and more to abound in “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

R. G.

EDINBURGH, *January*, 1829.



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EMMANUEL.

P R E F A C E.

AMONGST the many stupendous spectacles that are wont to surprise and amuse inquisitive minds, there seems to be nothing in the world sadder and more astonishing, than the small progress of the Christian religion. This I call a sad observation, because religion is a matter of the most weighty and necessary importance, without which it is not possible for an immortal soul to be perfected and made happy: I call it astonishing, because the Christian religion hath in itself such advantages of recommending itself to the minds of men, and contains such mighty engines to work them into a hearty compliance with it, and to captivate their reason to itself, as no other religion in the world can with any face pretend to. I do earnestly, and I suppose rationally and scripturally, hope that this great truth, those sacred oracles, will yet more prevail; and that the Founder of this most excellent religion, who was lifted up upon the cross, and is now exalted to his throne, will yet draw more men unto himself: and this, perhaps, is all the millennium that we can warrantably look for. But, in the mean time, it is too too evident, that the

kingdom of Satan doth more obtain in the world, than the gospel of Christ, either in the letter, or power of it. As to the former, if we will receive the probable conjecture of learned inquirers, we shall not find above one sixth part of the known world yet Christianized, or giving so much as an external adoration to the crucified Jesus. As to the latter, I will not be so bold as to make any arithmetical conjectures, but judge it more becoming a charitable and Christian spirit, to sit down in secret, and weep over that sad but true account given in the gospel, "Few are chosen;" and again, "Few there be that find it;" being grieved, after the example of my compassionate Redeemer, "for the hardness of their hearts," and praying with Joab, in another case, "The Lord make his people an hundred times so many more as they be!" It is not my present purpose, to inquire into the immediate causes of the non-propagation of the gospel in the former sense; only it is easy to guess, that few will enter in by the way of the tree of life, when it is guarded with a flaming sword! And it were reasonable to hope, that if the minds of Christians were more purged from a selfish bitterness, fierce animosity, and arbitrary sourness, and possessed with a more free, generous, benign, compassionate, condescending, candid, charitable, and Christ-like spirit, which would be indulgent toward such as are, for the present, under a less perfect dispensation, as our Saviour's was, would not impose any thing harsh or unnecessary upon the sacred and inviolable conscience of men, but would allow that liberty to men, which is just and natural to them in matters of

religion, and no way forfeited by them; then, I say, it might be reasonable to hope, that the innate power and virtue of the gospel would prove most victorious; Judaism, Mahomedanism, and Paganism, would melt away under its powerful influences, and Satan himself fall down as lightning before it, as naturally as the eyelids of the morning, do chase away the blackness of the night, when once they are lifted upon the earth. But my design is chiefly to examine the true and proper cause of the non-progress of the gospel, as to the power of it, and its inefficaciousness upon the hearts and consciences of those that do profess it. And now, in finding out the cause hereof, I shall content myself to be wise on this side heaven, leaving that prying course of searching the decrees of God, and rifling into the hidden rolls of eternity, to those who can digest the uncomfortable notion of a self-willed, arbitrary, and imperious deity; which, I fear, is the most vulgar apprehension of God, men measuring him most grossly and unhappily by a self-standard. And as I dare not soar so high, so neither will I adventure to stoop so low, as to dive into particulars; which are differently assigned, according to the different humours and interests of those that do assign them; each party in the world being so exceedingly favourable to itself, as to be ready to say, with David, “The earth and all the inhabitants of it, are dissolved; I bear up the pillars of it;” ready to think that the very interest of religion in the world is involved in them and their persuasions and dogmas, and that the whole church is undone, if but a hair fall from their heads, if they be in the least injured

or abridged; which is a piece of very great fondness, and indeed the more unpardonable, in as much as it destroys the design of the gospel, in confining and limiting the Holy One of Israel, and making God as topical, as he was, when he dwelt no where upon earth, but at the temple in Jerusalem.

Waiving these extremes, therefore, I conceive the true cause, in general, of the so little prevalence of true religion in the hearts and lives of men, is, the false notion that men have of it, placing it where indeed it is not, nor doth consist. That this must needs be a cause of the not prevailing of the gospel wherever it is found, I suppose every body will grant; and that it is almost every where to be found, will, I doubt, too evidently appear by that description of the true Christian religion, which the most sacred author of it, the Lord Jesus Christ, made to the poor Samaritaness; which I have endeavoured briefly to explain, according to the tenor of the gospel, in this small Treatise; which I first framed for private use, in a season when it was most necessary for me to understand the utmost secrets of my own soul, and do the utmost service I was able towards the salvation of those that were under my roof; expecting every day to render up my own or their souls into the arms of our most merciful Redeemer, and to be fully swallowed up into that eternal life, into which true religion daily springs up, and will, at length, infallibly conduct the Christian soul. This work, thus undertaken, and in a great measure then carried on, I have since perfected, and do here present to the perusal of my dear country, having made it public for no private end;

but if it might serve the interest of God's glory in the world; which I do verily reckon that I shall do, if, by his blessing, I may be instrumental to undeceive any soul, mistaken in so high and important a matter as religion is, or any way to awaken and quicken any religious soul not sufficiently ravished with the unspeakable glory, nor cheerfully enough springing up into the full fruition of eternal life.

What a certain and undefeatable tendency true religion hath towards the eternal happiness and salvation of men's souls, will, I hope, evidently appear from this small Treatise: but that is not all (though indeed that were enough to commend it to any rational soul, that is any whit free and ingenuous, and is not so perfectly debauched, as to apostatize utterly from right reason;) for it is also the sincerest policy imaginable, and the most unerring expedient in the world, for the uniting and establishing of a divided and tottering kingdom: to demonstrate which was the very design of this preface. It is well known, O that it were but as well and effectually believed! that "godliness is profitable to all things," and that it hath the promises and blessings of the "life that now is, and of that which is to come;" that the right seeking of the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, hath no less than all things annexed to it. How immeasurable is that blessedness, to which all the comforts of this life are to be as an appendix to a volume! But men are apt to shuffle off generals; therefore I will descend to instances, and show, in a few particulars, what a mighty influence religion, in the power of it, would certainly have, on the political happiness and flourish-

ing state of a nation. Wherein I hope to make appear, that not religion, as some slanderously report, but the want of it, is the immediate troubler of every nation, and individual society; yea, and soul too; according to that golden saying of the holy Apostle, “From whence come wars and fightings? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” Here let me desire one thing of the reader, and that is, to bear in his mind all along, where he finds the word Religion, that I have principally a respect to the description given of it in the text, and that I mean thereby “a divine principle implanted in the soul, springing up into everlasting life.”

And now I should briefly touch those faults, both in governors towards their subjects, subjects towards their governors, and towards each other, which destroy the peaceful state, and the sound and happy constitution of a body-politic: and indeed I fear it will produce some inconvenience, if not confusion, to waive this method. But out of a pure desire to avoid whatever may be interpretable to ill-will, curiosity, presumption, or any other bad disposition, and that it may appear to any ingenuous eye, that I am more desirous to unite us, than to rake into sores, I will expressly show how religion would heal the distempers of any nation, without taking any more than an implicit notice of the distempers themselves.

First, then, It is undoubtedly true, that religion, deeply radicated in the nature of princes and governors, would most effectually qualify them for the most happy way of reigning. Every body knows

well enough what an excellent *euchrasy*, and lovely constitution, the Jewish polity was in, under the influences of holy David, wise Solomon, devout Hezekiah, zealous Josiah, and others of the same spirit; so that I need not spend myself in that inquiry; and so, consequently, not upon that argument. Now, there are many ways, by which it is easy to conceive that religion would rectify and well-temper the spirits of princes.

This principle will verily constitute the most noble, heroical, and royal soul, in as much as it will not suffer men to find any unhallowed satisfaction in a divine authority, but will be springing up into a God-like nature, as their greatest and most perfect glory. It will certainly correct and limit the over-eager affectation of unwieldy greatness and unbounded dominion, by teaching them that the most honourable victory in the world is self-conquest, and that the propagation of the image and kingdom of God in their own souls is infinitely preferable to the advancement or enlargement of any temporal jurisdiction.

The same holy principle, being the most genuine offspring of divine love and benignity, will also polish their rough and over-severe natures, instruct them in the most sweet and obliging methods of government; by assimilating them to the nature of God, who is infinitely abhorrent to all appearance of oppression, and hath most admirably provided that his servants should not be slaves, by making his service perfect freedom.

The pure and impartial nature of God cannot endure superstitious flatterers, or hypocritical profes-

sors : and the princes of the earth, that are regenerate into his image, will also estimate men according to God ; I mean, according to his example, who loves nothing but the communications of himself, and according to their participation of his image, which is only amiable in the world. What God rejected in his fire-offerings, religion will teach princes to despise in the devotions, as they call them, of their courtiers ; I mean, not only the leaven of superstitious pride and dogged morosity, but also the honey of mercenary prostrations and fawning adulations.

In a word, This religious principle, which makes God its pattern and end, springs from him, and is always springing up into him, would sovereignly heal the distempers of ruling by humour, self-interest, and arbitrariness, and teach men to seek the good of the public before self-gratifications. For so God rules the world ; who, however some men slander him, I dare say, hath made nothing the duty of his creature, but what is really the good of it : neither doth he give his people laws, on purpose that he might show his sovereignty in making them, or his justice in punishing the breach of them ; much less doth he give them any such statutes, as himself would as willingly they broke as kept, so he might but exact the penalty.

What I have briefly said concerning political governors, the judicious reader may view over again, and apply to the ecclesiastical. For I do verily reckon, that if the hearts of these men were in that right religious temper and holy order which I have been speaking of, it would plentifully contribute to-

wards the happy and blissful state of any kingdom. I will speak freely, let it light where it will, that principle that springs up into popular applause, secular greatness, worldly pomp and bravery, flesh-pleasing, or any kind of self-exaltation, is really contradistinct from that divine principle, that religious nature that springs up into everlasting life. And certainly, notwithstanding all the recriminations and self-justifications which are, on all hands, used to shuffle off the guilt, these governors must lay aside their sullen pride, as well as the people their proud sullenness, before the church of God be healed in its breaches, purged of Antichristianism, or can probably arrive at any sound constitution, or perfect stature.

But I suppose religion will not have its full and desirable effect upon a nation, by healing the sickly, and heads of it; except it be like the holy oil poured upon the sacrificer's head, which ran down also upon the skirts of his garments. Therefore,

Secondly, It is indispensably requisite, for the thorough healing, and right constituting of any political body, that the subjects therein be thus divinely principled. This will not fail to dispose them rightly towards their governors, and towards one another.

1. Towards their governors. There are many evil and perverse dispositions in subjects towards their rulers; all which religion is the most excellent expedient to rectify.

The first and fundamental distemper here, seems to be a want of due reverence towards these vicegerents of God upon earth; which easily grows up

into something positive, and becomes a secret wishing of evil to them. This fault, as light as some esteem it, was severely punished in queen Michal, who despised her lord, king David, in her heart, and her barren womb went down to its sister the grave, under great reproach. And if an ordinary hatred be so foully interpreted by the holy Apostle, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer;" surely disloyal and malignant dispositions towards governors must needs have a fouler nature; and we may say, by a parity of reason, "Whosoever hateth his prince is a rebel and a regicide." Now, this distemper, as fundamental and epidemical as it is, the spirit of true religion, and I think I may say that only, will heal; for I know nothing in the world that hath, nay, I know that nothing in the world hath that sovereignty and dominion over the dispositions, and affections of the soul, as this principle, thoroughly ingrafted in the soul, doth challenge to itself. This alone can frame the heart of man into that beautiful temper and complexion of love and loyalty, that he will not curse the king, no, not in his conscience; no, not though he were well assured that there were no winged messenger to tell the matter.

Another distemper in subjects, in respect to their governors, is impatience of bearing a yoke; which is an evil so natural to the proud and imperious spirit of man, that I believe it were safe to affirm, that every irreligious subject could be well content to be a prince; however there be many, who, utterly despairing of such an event, may, with the fox in the fable, profess they care not for it. From this principle of pride and impatience of subjection, I sus-

pect it is that the rigid Chiliasts do so scornfully declaim against, and so loudly decry, the carnal ordinances of magistracy and ministry : not that they do verily seek the advancement of Christ's kingdom, (which indeed every disorderly, tumultuous, proud, impatient soul doth, *ipso facto*, deny and destroy,) but of themselves. To whom one might justly apply the censure which Pharaoh injuriously passes upon the children of Israel, with a little alteration, "Ye are proud, therefore ye say, let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord." This distemper the power of religion would excellently heal, by mortifying ambitious inclinations, and quieting the impatient turbulencies of the fretful and envious soul, by fashioning the heart to a right humble frame, and cheerful submission to every ordination of God. You will see, in this treatise, that a right religious soul, powerfully springing up into everlasting life, hath no desire nor leisure to attend to such poor attainments, as the lording it over other men; being feelingly acquainted with a life far more excellent than the most princely, and being overpowered with a supreme and sovereign good, which charms all its inordinate ragings, and, laying hold upon all its faculties, draws them forth, by a pleasing violence, unto a most zealous pursuit of itself. A principle of humility makes men good subjects; and they that are indeed probationers for another world, may very well behave themselves with a noble disdain towards all the glories and preferments of this.

The last distemper that I shall name in subjects toward their governors, is discontents about conceived misgovernment and mal-administration; which com-

monly spring from an evil and sinister interpretation of the rulers' actions, and are attended with an evil and tumultuous zeal for relaxation. Now this distemper, as great as it is, and destructive to the well-being of a body politic, true religion would heal both root and branch. Were that noble part and branch of the Christian religion, universal charity, rightly seated in the soul, it would not suffer the son of the bond-woman to inherit with it; it would cast out those jealousies, sour suspicions, harsh surmises, and embittered thoughts, which lodge in unhallowed minds, and display itself in a most amicable sweetness and gentleness of disposition, in fair glosses upon doubtful actions, friendly censures, or none at all, kind extenuations of greater faults, and covering of lesser; for this is the proper genius of this divine principle, to be very unbelieving of evil, or easily entertaining of good reports, gladly interpreting all things to a good meaning that will possibly admit of such construction; or if you will, in the Apostle's phrase, "Charity is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."

And as charity doth cut up this root of discontents, so will faith allay and destroy these discontents themselves, which are about misgovernment, and ill-administration. This noble principle administers ease and satisfaction to the soul, if she happen to be provoked: for it will not suffer her long to stand gazing upon second causes; but carries her up in a seasonable contemplation to the Supreme Cause, without whom no disorder could ever befall the world; and there commands her to repose herself, in the bosom of infinite wisdom and grace, waiting for a comfort-

able issue. He may well be vexed indeed, that has so much reason, as to observe the many monstrous disorders which are in the world, and not so much faith as to eye the inscrutable providence of a benign and all-wise God, who permitteth the same with respect to the most beautiful end and blessed order imaginable. Though faith abhors the blasphemy of laying blame upon God, yet it so fixes the soul upon him, and causes her so to eye his hand and end in all mal-administrations of men, that she hath no leisure to fall out with men, or quarrel with instruments.

These discontents, I said, were frequently attended with an evil and seditious zeal for relaxation, discovering itself in secret treacherous conspiracies, and many times in boisterous and daring attempts. These are, at the first sight, so directly contrary to the character given of religious men, viz. “the quiet of the land,” and the genius of religion, which is wholly made up of “love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance, mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, forbearance, forgiveness, charity, thankfulness, wisdom,” that it is easy to conceive that religion, in the power of it, would certainly heal this evil disease also. There are many pretenders to religion, whose complaint is still concerning oppression and persecution, their cry is all for liberty and deliverance: but, to make it the more passable and plausible, they style it the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. This pretence is so fair, but withal so deceitful, that I count it worth my while to speak a little more liberally to it. And here I do, from the very bottom of my soul, protest, that I account the advance-

ment of the glory of God, and the kingdom of Christ, to be the most desirable thing in the world ; and that it is highly becoming the greatest spirits upon earth to employ the very utmost zeal and diligence to assist the accomplishment thereof ; yea, so utterly do I abhor irreligion and atheism, that, as the Apostle speaks, in somewhat a like case, I do verily rejoice that Christ is professed, though it be but pretended, and that truth is owned, though it be not owned in truth. I will further add, that the oppressing and obstructing of the external progress and propagation of the gospel is hated of Christ, and to be lamented of all true Christians. Yea, I will further allow men a due sensibility of their personal oppressions and injuries, and a natural warrantable desire to be redeemed from them. And now, having thus purged myself, I entreat the Christian reader patiently, and without prejudice, to suffer me to speak somewhat closely to this matter : yea, I do verily assure myself, that I shall be accepted, or at least indulged by all free and ingenuous spirits, who are rightly acquainted with the genius of the Christian religion, and do prefer truth before interest.

And, first, for the chief complaint, concerning oppression and persecution : certainly if religion did rightly prevail in our hearts, it would very much heal this distemper, if not by a perfect silencing of these complaints, yet surely by putting them into another temper. I reckon that religion quite silences these complaints, when it engages the soul so entirely in serving the end of God in afflictions, and in a right improvement of them for religious purposes, that she desires not to spend herself in fruitless

murmurings and unchristian indignations. As fire seizeth upon every thing that is combustible, and makes it fuel for itself; and a predominant humour in the body converts into its own substance whatever is convertible, and makes it nourishment to itself; so, doubtless, this divine principle, if it were rightly predominant in the soul, would nourish itself by all things that lie in its way, though they seem ever so heterogeneous and hard to be digested; and rather than want meat, it would, with Samson, fetch it out of the very eater himself. But if religion should not utterly silence these complainings, by rendering the soul thus forgetful of the body, and regardless of its smart, in comparison of the happy advantage that may be made of it; yet, methinks, it should draw the main stream of these tears into another channel, and put these complaints into another tune. It is very natural to the religious soul to make God all things unto itself, to lay to heart the interest of truth and holiness more than any particular interest of its own; and to bewail the disservice done to God more than any self-inconvenience. Must not he needs be a good subject to his prince, who can more heartily mourn that God's laws are not kept, than that he himself is kept under? that can be more grieved that men are cruel, than that they kill him; that can be more troubled because there are oppressions in the world, than because he himself is oppressed? Such subjects religion alone can make.

As for the cry that is made for liberty and deliverance; I confess I do not easily apprehend what is greater, or more naturally desirable than true

liberty: yea, I believe there are many devout and religious souls, that, from a right, noble, and generous principle, and out of a sincere respect to the Author and end of their creation, are almost intemperately studious of it, do prefer it above all preferments, or any thing that may be properly called sensual, and would purchase it with any thing that they can possibly part with. But yet, that I may a little moderate, if not quite stifle this cry, I must freely profess, that I do apprehend too much of sensuality generally in it; because this liberty is commonly abstracted from the proper end of it, and desired merely as a naturally convenient good, and not under a right religious consideration. Self-love is the very heart and centre of the animal life; and, doubtless, this natural principle is as truly covetous of self-preservation and freedom from all inconveniences, grievances, and confinements, as any religious principle can be. And, therefore, I may well allude to our Saviour's words, and say, "If you love and desire deliverance," only under the notion of a natural good, "what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans the same?" But were this divine principle rightly exercising its sovereignty in the soul, it would value all things, and all estates and conditions, only as they have a tendency to the advancement and nourishment of itself. With what an ordinary, not to say disdainful eye, would the religious soul look upon the fairest self-accommodations in the world; and be ready to say within itself, What is a mere abstract deliverance from afflictions worth? wherein is a naked freedom from afflictions to be accounted of? will this make me a blessed

man? was not profane and impudent Ham delivered from the deluge of water, as well as his brethren? were not the filthy, shameless daughters of Lot delivered from the deluge of fire, as well as their father? And yet we are so far from rising up and calling these people blessed, that the heart of every chaste and modest Christian is ready to rise against the very mention of their names, when he remembers how both the one and the other, though in a different sense, discovered their father's nakedness. If we did really value ourselves by our souls, and our souls themselves by what they possess of the image of God, if we did rightly prefer the advancement of the divine life before the gratification of the animal, it is easy to conceive how we should prefer patience before prosperity, faith in God before the favour of men, spiritual purity before temporal pleasures or preferments, humility before honour, the denial of ourselves before the approbation of others, the advancement of God's image before the advancement of our own names, an opportunity of exercising gracious dispositions before the exercising of any temporal power or secular authority; and, in a word, the displaying of the beauty, glory, and perfections of God before health, wealth, liberty, livelihood, and life itself. We should certainly be more indifferently affected towards any condition, whether prosperity or adversity, and not to be so fond of the one, nor weary of the other, if we did verily value them only by the tendency that they had to further religion, and advance the life of Christ in our souls. This would certainly make men more sincerely studious to read God's end in afflicting them, and long less to see the end of their afflictions.

And, as for treacheries, plottings, invasions, usurpations, rebellions, and that tumultuous zeal for relaxation, which this impatience of oppression, and fondness of deliverance, do so often grow up into, I dare say, there is nothing like religion, in the power of it, for the effectual healing of them. The true spirit of religion is not so weary of oppression, though it be by sinful men, as it is abhorrent from deliverance, if it be by sinful means. May I not be allowed to allude to the Apostle, and say, whereas there is amongst you this zeal, contention, and faction, “Are you not carnal, and walk as men?” Is not this the same which a mere natural man would do, strive, and struggle, by right and by wrong, to redeem himself from whatsoever is grievous and galling to the interest of the flesh? Might it not be reasonably supposed, that if religion did but display itself aright in the powerful actings of faith, hope, and humility, it would quench the hot zeal, and calm these tempestuous motions of the soul, and make men rather content to be delivered up to the adversary, though the flesh should by him be destroyed, so be the spirit might be saved, and the divine life advanced in the way of the Lord. Oh, how dear and precious are the possession and practice of faith, patience, humility, and self-denial, to a godly soul, in comparison of all the joys, and toys, treasures, pleasures, ease, and honour of the world, the safety and liberty of the flesh! How much more, then, when these must be accomplished by wicked means, and purchased at the rate of God’s displeasure! And because the kingdom of Christ is so often alleged to defend and patronise these strange fervours and

frenzies, let me here briefly record to all that shall read these lines, the way and method of Christ himself in propagating his own kingdom. It will not be denied, but that Christ was infinitely studious to promote his own kingdom, in the best and most proper sense: but I no where read that he ever attempted it by force or fraud, by violent opposition, or crafty insinuation. Nay, he reckoned that his kingdom was truly promoted, when these tumultuous, impatient, imperious, proud lusts of men, were mortified. Nothing had been more easy with him, considering his miraculous power, infallible wisdom, and the mighty interest and party which he could, by these, have made for himself in the world, than to have raised his own kingdom upon the ruins of the Roman, and to have quite shuffled Cesar out of the world: but, indeed, nothing more impossible, considering the perfect innocency, and infinite sacredness of his temper, nor any thing more contradictory, considering the proper notion of his kingdom, which he professes not to be secular, and so not to be maintained by fighting. But, if you would know in what sense he was a king, he himself seems to intimate it in his answer to Pilate, “Thou sayest that I am a king; to this end was I born, that I should bear witness unto the truth.” So then, it seems, wherever there is truth and holiness predominant, there is Christ really enthroned, and actually triumphant. Where religion doth vitally inform, animate, and actuate men’s souls, it doth make them rightly to understand, that the kingdom of Christ is not the thriving of parties, the strengthening of factions, the advancement of any particular interest, though it seem to

be of ever so evangelical a complexion; no, nor yet the proselyting of the world to the profession of Christianity, or of the Christian world to the purer and more reformed profession of it, though these latter would be a great external honour to the person of Christ: but that it is most properly and happily propagated in the spirits of men; and that wherever there is faith, patience, humility, self-denial, contempt of this world, and pregnant hopes of a better, pure obedience to God, and sincere benignity to men, here and there is the kingdom of God, Christ reigning, and the gospel in the power and triumph of it. And may not these things be, and be most conspicuously, in a persecuted condition of the church? That certainly was a high instance of the mighty power of the divine life in our blessed Saviour, which the Apostle Peter records of him, who, “when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” The same divine principle, dwelling plentifully in our souls, would instruct us in the same behaviour, according to the precept given by the same Apostle: “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing.” How vainly do men dream that they serve the interest, and advance the kingdom of Christ, by fierce and raging endeavours to cast off every yoke that galls them, and kicking against every thorn that pricks them, when indeed they serve the interest of the flesh, and do, under a fine cloak, gratify the mere animal life, and sacrifice to self-love, which is as covetous of freedom from all retrenchments and confinements as religion itself can be. It is said, in-

deed, that when the churches had rest, they were edified and multiplied; but when they suffer according to the will of God, they are then glorified; for “the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them:” as the Apostle Paul professes of himself in that most noble and heroical passage of his to the Corinthians, “Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

Secondly, Religion will not fail rightly to dispose the hearts of subjects towards one another; and that whether they be of the same way and judgment with themselves, or different. I dare not assert that it would make them all of the same way and mind; neither do I believe it would: yet I am confident it would do more towards this catholic union, than all the laws and severities in the world can. Mutual forbearance and forgiveness, Christian kindness, and discreet condescensions, are the most warrantable, and most effectual method for introducing uniformity, and unanimity too, which is much better, into the church of Christ. But, however, religion would certainly give a right disposition, and teach men a right behaviour in respect to each other, whether friends or dissenters.

This principle would teach men to love their friends and accomplices only in the Lord, as his members, not as their own partizans. Are not they strangely devoted to interest, that will vindicate any thing in a partizan, which they will declaim against in a dissenter? And yet, how is the sacred name of Christian friendship reproached every where by reason of this partiality! How much better did true religion instruct the great Apostle, “to know no man after the flesh,” no, not Christ himself.

The same principle would not fail to cure the distempers of men with respect to those that are of a different way and judgment from themselves; whether of Protestants towards Protestants, or Protestants and Papists one towards another. It would heal the distempered affections and behaviours of Protestants towards Protestants. Were men thoroughly baptized into the spirit of love and wisdom, which are so lively portrayed by the apostles St. Paul and St. James, that one might well be enamoured of the very description, how certainly would all oppressions, lawsuits, disputations about unprofitable and indeterminable points, either be suppressed or sanctified, either not be, or not be vexatious. Not to speak of the oppressions done by overreaching, stealing, lying, false witness-bearing, slanderous detractions, envious suggestions, and malignant dissemination of doubtful suspicions, by which commonly poor men oppress the rich; all which true religion abhors. There is a great oppression that goes uncontrolled in the world, which is, by the cruel engrossings, and covetous, insatiable tradings of richer men. What these are intentionally, I will not say; but that they are, really and eventually, as great oppressions as those inhuman depopulations, and squeezing exactions, which are so much inveighed against, I doubt not. But be they what they will, or be they excused how they will, I am confident that this divine principle, that powerfully springs up into everlasting life, would mightily relieve the world in this respect: in that it would moderate men's desires of corruptible riches, forbid them to seek the things of this world any more, or any otherwise, than in

consistency with, and subserviency to, their primary and most diligent seeking of the kingdom of God; it would make men seek the wealth of others even as their own, and make private advantages stoop to the public good. I do verily believe, that if there were none but good men in England, there would be no poor men there. Civil laws may provide for the maintenance of the poor; but the law of divine love, a principle of religion, if it were universally obeyed, would make men so nobly regardless of earthly accommodations, that there would soon be room enough for all men to grow into a sufficient stature; and then, being so grown, they would covet no more.

In lawsuits, if there were any, men would seek the advancement of truth, and not of their own cause and interest distinct from it.

And O how excellently would it still the noise of axes and hammers about the temple of God! It would take men off from vain speculations, and much eagerness about unnecessary opinions, by employing them in more substantial and important studies. The very being of religion in the soul would indeed decide a world of controversies, which the schools have long laboured in vain to determine. For I reckon that these scholastical wars, fitly called Polemics, like those civil dissensions spoken of by the apostle James, do, for the most part, spring from "men's lusts, that war in their members;" such as pride, curiosity, lasciviency of wit, disobedience, and unsubduedness of understanding, and the like. I have observed, with great grief, how the spirits of many men, I had almost said sects of men, run out wholly into disputes about ceremonies, *pro* and *con*,

about church-government, about what is orthodox, and what is heterodox, about the true and the false church, (which commonly they judge by something external, and indeed separable from the essence of a true church); and upon this is their zeal, their conference, and their very prayers themselves, mostly bestowed. Who can doubt but that religion, in the power of it, would find men something else to do? yea, and if it could not perfectly determine these niceties, yet it would much heal our dissensions about them, and bring tears to quench the strange and unnatural heats that are amongst us, and cause such dreadful inflammations in our bowels.

But it may seem that there is such a fatal enmity and irreconcilable feud betwixt Papists and Protestants, that nothing, no, not religion itself, can heal it. And truly, if we suppose that it is religion that engages both parties in this enmity, I think it will prove incurable; but God forbid that this pure offspring of heaven should be so blasphemed! It is not religion, but indeed the want of it, that begets this implacable animosity, whatever is pretended. Cruel religion, bloody religion, selfish religion, envious and revengeful religion! Who can choose but cry out of the blasphemy of this contradiction at the very first hearing? Nay, I dare affirm it, without hesitation, that the more religious any Protestant or Papist is, the more abhorrent he is of brutish savageness, wicked revenge, and devilish hatred. The church of Rome judges the reformed heretics are not fit to live; and why? Not because they live not well, but because they cannot think and believe as they do. And is this the genuine product

of true religion? Nothing less so. For a desire of ruling over men's consciences, and of subjecting the faith of others to themselves, is certainly compatible to a mere natural man, nay, to the devil himself, who is as lordly, cruel, and imperious as any other. The reformed churches, on the other hand, are, I fear, generally more offended at the Papists for their persecutions of them, than for the real persecuting and crucifying Christ afresh by their sins; and so, consequently, do rather write and fight against them, than either pity or pray for them. I hope there are as many well-spirited Christians in England, at least proportionably, as in any church upon earth; and yet I fear there are far more that could wish the Papists out of this world, than that earnestly desire that they may be fitted for, and so counted worthy of, a better. And doth this spring from a religious or a selfish principle, think ye? Doth it not agree well to the animal life, and natural self, to be tender of its own interest and concerns, to wish well to its own safety, to defend itself from violence? May I not allude to our Saviour's words, and say, "If ye hate them that hate you, how can that be accounted religious? Do not even the publicans the same?" I doubt we know not sufficiently what spirit we should be of. The power of religion, rightly prevailing in the soul, would mould us into another kind of temper; it would teach us as well to love, and pity, and pray for Papists, as to hate Popery. I know the prophecy, indeed, that the beast and the false prophet shall be cast alive into the lake burning with brimstone, and the remnant shall be slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse: but, in as much

as that sword is said to proceed “out of his mouth,” I would gladly interpret it of the “word of God,” which kills men unto salvation. However, let the interpretation of that text, and others of the like importance, be what it will, I reckon it very unsafe to turn all the prophecies and threatenings of God into prayers, lest haply we should be found to contribute to the damning of men’s souls. Yea, when all is said concerning the reprobating decrees of God, and his essential, inflexible, punitive justice, and all those texts that seem to speak of God’s revenging himself with delight, are interpreted to the utmost harshness of meaning that the cruel wit of man can invent; yet it remains a sealed, and to me a sweet truth, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God:” and again, “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” Wherefore, to waive all those dreadful glosses, (that do rather describe the bitter and revengeful ingenuity of man that makes them, than interpret the pure and perfect nature of God, upon whom they are made,) let us attend to that beautiful character that is every where given of religion, which is our highest concern, in the person of Moses, of Paul, and of Christ Jesus himself, the Author and Exemplar of it; who, by his incarnation, life, and death, abundantly demonstrated the infinite benignity, and compassionate ardours of his soul towards us, when we were worse than Papists, as being out of a possibility of salvation without him: and “let that mind be in us, which was in him also.” Though it be not directly our Saviour’s meaning in my text, yet I believe it may be deduced, that this pure and

divine principle, religion, springs up into everlasting life, not only our own, but other men's also. But however religion is described, sure I am, it is most unnatural to the religious soul, that is regenerated into the pure spirit of piety, pity, and universal charity, to be of a cruel, fierce, revengeful, damning disposition. And therefore, whatever are the ranting and wrathful strains of some men's devotions, I beseech the reader to endeavour with me, that charity towards men's souls may go along in conjunction with zeal and piety towards God, when we present ourselves before the throne of his grace: and so, I am confident, it will, if we pray sincerely to this purpose, namely, "That God would cause the wickedness of the wicked to come to an end, that he would consume the Antichrist, but convert Papists, and make the wonderers after the beast to become followers of the Lamb!" I doubt there are many that think they can never be too liberal in wishing ill to the Papists, nay, they count it a notable argument of a good Protestant, I had almost said, an evidence of grace, to be very raging and invective against them. Alas! how miserably do we bewray ourselves in so doing, to be nothing less than what we pretend to by doing it! For are not we ourselves herein Antichristian, whilst we complain of their cruelties, our own souls, in the very act, boiling over with revengeful and burning affections? If we do indeed abhor their cruelty, because it is contrary to the holy precepts of the gospel, and the true kingdom of Christ, we ought to be as jealous, at the same time, lest any thing like unto it should be found in ourselves; otherwise, are we not carnal? For mere

nature, as I have often said, will abhor any thing that is contrary to itself, and will not willingly suffer its delicate interest to be touched. The Apostle tells us, “that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Christ accursed;” but I doubt it is common to curse Antichrist, and yet by a spirit that is Antichristian, I mean carnal, selfish, cruel, and uncharitable. For there is a spiritual Antichrist, or, if you will, in the Apostle’s phrase, a “spirit of Antichrist,” as well as a political Antichrist; and I doubt the former prevails most in the world, though it be the least discerned and abjured. Men do by Antichrist as they do by the devil—defy him in words, but entertain him in their hearts; run away from the appearance of him, and, in the mean time, can be well enough content to be all that, in very deed, which the devil and Antichrist is. All this evidently appears to be for want of the true power and spirit of religion, which I commend for so great a healer, even, as the Greek signifies, of our distempers.

Perhaps no Papist will find in his heart to read this epistle written by a heretic; yet possibly, too, some one or other may: therefore I will adventure briefly to prescribe this same medicinal divinity to them also; though perhaps I might be excused upon another account, all that which I have hitherto said to distempered Protestants being rightly enough, *mutatis mutandis*, applicable to them. But moreover, whereas they value their church, and the truth and rightness of it, by its universality and prosperity; the power of religion would make men to value themselves, and their adherents, only by the divine impressions of piety and purity, and to account such

only worthy of the glorious title of apostolical and children of God, who are sincere followers of the apostles, wherein they were followers of Christ, namely, in true holiness and righteousness. Are they industrious and zealous for the proselyting of the world, and spreading of their interest far and near? And are not all wicked men, yea, and the devil himself so too? The fairest and most flourishing state of the church is nothing to God, and so, consequently, not to a godly soul, in comparison of those excellent divine beauties, wherewith religion adorneth the world. But whereas the greatest complaint, and the most dreadful charge, which the Protestants bring against the Papists, is their fierceness and most unchristian cruelty, exercised against all whom they can but make a shift to esteem heretics; and they, on the other hand, allege, that the interest of religion, and the catholic faith, doth require it, and that they do not so properly murder men, as sacrifice them to the honour of God: it will be proper to spend a little time, at least, to clear religion of this blame; that as wisdom is, at all times, justified of her children, so she may be sometimes justified by them, especially when the aspersions are so monstrously foul. And indeed she hath sufficiently instructed us how to justify her from all such imputations; having so fairly portrayed herself by the pen of the Apostle James, both negatively and affirmatively. She is void of "strife, envyings, bitterness, and every evil work;" but she is "pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." This is the proper description of heavenly wisdom,

or pure religion : and O that all Christians would estimate themselves to be wise according to their conformity thereunto ! Then I would easily believe, that none would be Papists in practice, whatever they might be in opinion. What, Sirs, is the God of the Christians become like unto a devil, that he should delight in cruelty, and drink the blood of men ? Is the butchering of reasonable creatures that reasonable service which he requires ? Is the living sacrifice of your own bodies turned into the dead sacrifice of other men's ? It was wont to be said, " What communion hath Christ with Belial ? " And is the Prince of Peace now become very Satan, the author of enmity, malignity, confusion, and every evil work ? Did he shed his blood for his enemies, to teach us that goodly lesson of shedding the blood of others ? Did he come " to seek and to save that which was lost ; " to set us an example, that we might seek to destroy, and that only to repair our own losses ? Be it so, that the Protestant churches have apostatized from you : this, I hope, is not a greater crime than the apostacy of mankind from God, which yet he expiated, not with the blood of the apostates, but with his own. Religion was formerly a principle springing up into eternal life : how is the world changed, that it should now be a principle springing up into massacres and temporal death ! or is religion now become a principle springing up into secular power, worldly dominion, temporal greatness, and all manner of fleshly accommodations ? This was of old the description of sensuality, and a heathenish genius, " For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. " Are there so many mighty engines in the

gospel to engage the hearts of men to believe, profess, and obey it, and must they all now give place to fire and sword? Are these the only gospel methods of winning men to the catholic faith? What! are we wiser than Christ, or more zealous than he himself was? Did he forbid fire from heaven, and will you fetch it even from hell to consume dissenters? Did he sheath his sword that was drawn in his own defence, and set a dreadful seal upon it too, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword:" and will you adventure to draw it in a way of revenge and persecution, and count it meritorious too, as if you should therefore never perish because you take it? Is it not written in your Bibles, as well as ours, that "no murderer shall enter into the kingdom of God?" And do you think by murders to propagate this kingdom upon earth, and have a more abundant entrance into it yourselves hereafter? Can hell dwell with heaven? Shall bloody cruelty ever come to lodge in the bosom, or lie down in the sacred arms of eternal love? Be not deceived, Sirs, with a false heaven; but take this for an indubitable and self-evidencing aphorism of truth, No soul of man hath any more of heaven, no nor ever shall have, than he hath of God, and of his pure, placable, patient, benign, and gracious nature. And this is that everlasting life which a religious principle is always springing up into; so that it hereby appears plainly, that religion, in the power of it, would heal these feverish distempers also, and so restore a most excellent constitution, both personal and political.

It may possibly seem that I have toiled too much

in these discoveries; and haply my pains may prove ungrateful to many. But may it please Almighty God that they may prove vindicative of religion, restorative of the sickly and lapsed ecclesiastical or political state, yea, or medicinal and profitable to any single soul of man, I shall venture to estimate it against an age of pains. And if it should prove that by all this toil I have "caught nothing," as the weary disciples complained of old, nevertheless being well assured, that I have a word of God for my encouragement, I will let down the net once again, and so finish these epistolary pains with an earnest hortatory address to all that shall peruse them.

Let nothing satisfy your souls, Christians, let nothing administer rest or settlement to your hearts, that is common to the natural man, or compatible to the mere animal life. There are a great many high strains of zeal and seeming devotion, by which many men judge themselves to be some great ones, and concerning which they are ready to say, These things are the great power of God; which, if they be well examined into, will be found to grow upon no better root than natural self, and to spring from no higher principle than this animal life. It is impossible for me to give an exact catalogue of all these: many of them I have occasionally recorded in the latter end of the ensuing treatise; to which yet many more might be added, if I had a fair opportunity. But, at present, let me in general commend to you this description made by our Saviour of true religion, as the rule whereby I do earnestly entreat you faithfully to examine yourselves, your actions, affections,

zeal, confidence, professions, performances. Let me speak freely, all pomps of worship, all speculative knowledge, though ever so orthodox, is as dear to the animal life as the divine: and all external models of devotion, submiss confessions, devout hymns, pathetical prayers, raptures of joy, much zeal to reform indecencies in worship or superstitions, a fierce raging against the political Antichrist, do as well agree to a natural man as a spiritual, and may be as fairly acted over, by a mere selfish carnal principle, as by that which is truly divine. When Diogenes trampled upon Plato's stately bed, saying, "I trample on Plato's pride," it was answered him very sharply, "He was prouder in treading upon it, than Plato was in lying upon it." I doubt it may be applied too truly to a great deal of that cynical and scornful zeal, that is in the world at this day; men declaim against the pride, and pomp, and grandeur of Antichristian prelates, with a pride no whit inferior to theirs whom they thus decry. However, it is plain, that those things which are imitable by a sensual heart, and indeed performable by the mere magic of an exalted fancy, are not to be rested in by a sincere Christian. Read over, therefore, I beseech you, the fruits of the Spirit, recorded by the Apostle Paul, and the Apostle Peter, and estimate yourselves by them. These things are utterly incompatible to the mere animal man: all the natural men and devils in the world cannot be humble, meek, self-denying, patient, charitable, lovers of God more than of themselves, or of their enemies as themselves. Would you judge rightly of the goodness of any

opinion? then value it by the tendency that is in it to advance the life of God: particularly judge of the Millenarian opinion, which begins to be so much hugged in the world: concerning which I will only say thus much at present, that, in the common notion of it, as it promises a state of much ease, liberty, power, prosperity, and freedom from all persecutions and oppressions, it is as grateful to the fleshly palate, and will be as gladly embraced by the mere animal man, as by the greatest saint upon earth. And therefore, supposing it to be true, yet I cannot but wonder how it comes to administer so much satisfaction, and afford such a marvellous relish, to minds divinely principled, as many seem to taste in it. By this same tendency, to advance the divine life in your souls, judge also of all your enjoyments, riches, honours, liberties, friends, health, children, &c. and value them, if it be possible, only under this consideration. But, to hasten to an end, I will endeavour to set on this general exhortation by two or three weighty considerations.—First, it is utterly impossible that any speculation, opinion, profession, enjoyment, ornament, performance, or any other thing, but the transformation of the mind into the very image and nature of God, should ever be able to perfect our souls, or commend us unto God. They cannot perfect our souls, as being most of them exterior, and all of them inferior to it. They cannot commend a man to God, who loves us, and whom we so far know and love, as we partake of his nature, and resemble him: this is the love of God, this is the worship of God, and this is really the

souls acquaintance with him, and nothing but this. Secondly, The advancement of the divine life is that which God mainly designs in the world. I need instance but in two things: 1. The sending of his own Son into the world for this very end and purpose, “that he might take away our sins,” says the Apostle John; and again, “that he might destroy the works of the devil;” and again, says the Apostle Paul, “That he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.” 2. It appears that this is the grand design of God in the world, in as much as he doth not deliver his faithful servants out of their afflictions and tribulations: which he would not fail to do, did he not intend them a greater good thereby, and design to lead them on, and raise them up to a higher life. Now, what can more ennoble these souls of ours, than to live upon the same design with God himself?

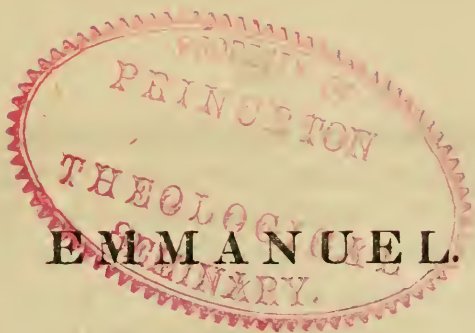
And now, reader, I commend thee to the blessing of God, in the perusal of this small tract, which I have composed, and now exposed, under a sense of that common obligation, that lies upon every person to be active in his sphere for the interest of the name and honour of God, and to render his life as useful as he may: more particularly, under a sense of my own deficiency in several accomplishments, whereby others are better fitted to serve their generation: and especially under a sense of the peculiar engagement that lieth upon me, to dedicate my life entirely to his service, from whom I have so lately, and that so signally, received the same afresh; in

imitation of whom, I hope thou wilt be indulgent towards my infirmities. To whom I heartily commend thee, and to the precious influences of his eternal Spirit, and rest,

Thy Servant in his work,

And for his sake,

SAMUEL SHAW.



JOHN iv. 14.

“ But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

CHAPTER I.

The original of true religion. All souls the offspring of God; but godly souls yet more especially. God the author of religion from without; God the author of it from within, enlightening the faculty. Religion something of God in the soul. A discovery of religious men by the affinity that they have to God. God alone to be acknowledged in all holy accomplishments.

THIS chapter contains an excellent, profitable, familiar discourse of the blessed Saviour of the world, into whose lips grace was poured, and he ceased not to pour it out again. That which is said of the wise, Prov. xv. 7. is fully verified of Wisdom itself, his lips dispersed knowledge. A poor woman of Samaria comes to draw water, and our Saviour takes occasion, from the water, to instruct her in the great and excellent doctrines of the kingdom of heaven. O the admirable zeal for God, and compassion for souls, which dwelt in that divine breast! and O the

wonderful, unsearchable counsels of an all-wise God ! He ordains Saul's seeking of asses to be the means of his finding a kingdom upon earth ; and this poor woman's seeking of water, to be an occasion of her finding the way to the kingdom of heaven. She comes to the well of Jacob, and, behold she meets with the God of Jacob there. The occasion, instruction, and issue of this discourse, would each afford many good and profitable observations : but I think none more than this verse that I have pitched upon ; in which the mystery of gospel-grace is admirably unfolded, and true Christian religion is excellently described. For so I understand our Saviour, not as speaking of faith, or knowledge, or any other particular grace, but of grace in general, of the Holy Spirit of God ; that is, the gifts and graces of it, of true godliness ; or, if you will, of the Christian religion ; for that word I shall choose to retain throughout my discourse, as being most intelligible and comprehensive.

In which words we find the true Christian religion unfolded in the original, nature, properties, consequent, and end of it. The original of it is found in those words, " I shall give him ;" the nature of it is described by a " well of water ;" the properties of it will be found in the phrase of " springing up ;" the consequent of it, that the man that is endowed with it shall " never thirst ;" the end or perfection of it, is " everlasting life." Of all these, by God's assistance, in this order.

First, I begin at the original of it, as it seems meet I should ; for indeed it is first found in the words,—“ The water that I shall give him.” And

here the proposition that I shall proceed upon must be, "That the true Christian religion is of a divine original." All souls are indeed the offspring of God. Those noble faculties of understanding, and a will free from constraint, do more resemble the nature of God than all the world besides. There is more of the glory, beauty, and brightness of God in a soul, than there is in the sun itself. The Apostle allows it as a proper speech spoken in common of all men, "For we are also his offspring." God hath impressed more lively prints of himself, and his divine essence upon a rational soul, than he hath upon the whole creation. So that the soul of man, even as to its constitution, doth declare and discover more of the nature of God, than all the other things that he hath made, whereof the Apostle speaks, Rom. i. 20. He that rightly converseth with his own soul, will get more acquaintance with God, than they that gaze continually upon the material heavens, or traverse the dark and utmost corners of the earth, or go down into the sea in ships; the serious consideration of the little world will teach more of him than the great one could do. So that I doubt not to take the Apostle's words concerning the word of God, and apply them to the nature of God: "Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven," to bring a discovery of God from thence? Or, "who shall descend into the deep," to fetch it up from thence? The nature and essence of God is nigh thee; even in thine own soul, excellently displayed in the constitution and frame, powers and faculties thereof. God hath not made any creature so capable of receiving and reflecting his image and

glory, as angels and men: which hath made me often to say, “That the vilest soul of man is much more beautiful and honourable than the most excellent body, than the very body of the sun at noon-day.” And, by the way, this may render sin odious and loathsome; because it hath defiled the fairest piece of God’s workmanship in the world, and hath defaced the clearest copy which he had drawn of himself in the whole creation.

But though all rational souls be the children of God, yet all of them do not imitate their Father; though their constitution do express much of the essence of God, yet their disposition doth express the image of the devil. But godly souls, who are followers of God, are indeed his dear children. Holy souls, who are endowed with a divine and God-like disposition, and do work the works of God, these are most truly and properly his offspring, Matt. v. 44, 45. And, in this respect, God’s children are his “workmanship created unto good works.” Religion is of a divine original. God is the Author and Father of it, both from without, and from within.

1. God is the author of it from without. When man had fallen from God by sin, and so had lost his way, and was become both unwilling and unable to return, God was pleased to set up that glorious light, his own Son, “the Sun of righteousness,” in the world, that he might guide their feet into the way of peace, who is therefore called, “A light to lighten the Gentiles,” and is compared to a candle, set upon a candlestick. God, of his infinite free grace, and overflowing goodness, provided a Mediator,

in and by whom these apostate souls might be reconciled, and re-united to himself. “And to as many as receive him, to them he giveth power to become the sons of God.”

Yet further, it pleased God, in his infinite wisdom and mercy, to chalk out the way of life and peace in the Holy Scriptures, and therein to unlock the secrets of salvation to succeeding generations. Herein he hath plainly laid down the terms of the covenant of peace, which was made in the Mediator, and given precepts and promises for the direction and encouragement of as many as will inquire into them. These are the sacred oracles which give clear and certain answers to all that do consult them about their future state, Rom. iii. 2. Christ Jesus opened the way into the holiest of all, and the Scriptures come after, and point it out to us: he purchased life and immortality, and these bring it to light.

And yet further, that these might not be mistaken, or perverted to men's destruction, which were ordained for their salvation, which sometimes doth come to pass, God hath been pleased to commit these records into the hands of his church, and therein to his ministers, whom he hath appointed, called, qualified, instructed, for the opening, explaining, interpreting, and applying of them; so that they are called “scribes instructed unto the kingdom of God, and stewards of the mysteries, stewards over the household of God, to give unto every one his portion.” These Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, God hath given for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

These things hath God done for us, from without us; he hath set up a light, chalked out our way, and appointed us guides. To which I might add the many enticements and motives which we call mercies or comforts of this life; and the many affrightments of judgments and afflictions which God hath added to the promises and threatenings of his word, to bring us into the way of life. But all these are too little, too weak of themselves, to bring back a straggling soul, or to produce a living principle of true religion in it. Therefore,

2. God is the author of religion from within. He doth not only reveal himself and his Son to the soul, but in it; he doth not only make discoveries to it, but lively impressions upon it; he doth not only appoint, and point out the way of life, but breathes in the breath of life. He hath not only provided a Saviour, a Redeemer; but he also draws the soul unto him. He hath not only appointed pastors and teachers, but he himself impregnates their word, and clothes their doctrine with his own power, using their ministry as an instrument whereby to teach; so that the children of God are said to be "all taught of God." Ministers can only discover, and, as it were, enlighten the object; but God enlightens the faculty, he gives the seeing eye, and does actually enable it to discern. Therefore, the work of converting a soul is still ascribed to God in Scripture; he begets us again, 1 Pet. i. 3. he draws the soul, before it can run after him, Cant. i. 4. Christ apprehends the soul, lays powerful hold of it, Phil. iii. 12. God gives a heart of flesh, a new heart; he causes men to walk in his statutes, Ezek. xxxvi.

26, 27. He puts his law into their inward parts, and writes it in their hearts, Jer. xxxi. 33. To which I might add many more quotations of the same import.

But yet, methinks, we are not come to a perfect discovery of religion's being the offspring of God in the minds of men. For it is God who enlighteneth the faculty as to the learning of all other things also; he teacheth the grammar and the rhetoric, as well as the divinity; he instructeth even the husbandman to discretion in his affairs of husbandry, and teaches him to plough, and sow, and thrash, &c. Not only the gift of divine knowledge, but indeed "every good gift cometh from the Father of lights." God doth from within give that capacity, illumination of the faculty, ingenuity, whereby we comprehend the mysteries of nature, as well as of grace.

Therefore, we may conceive of the original of religion in a more inward and spiritual manner still. It is not so much given of God, as itself is something of God in the soul; as the soul is not so properly said to give, as to be the life of man. As the conjunction of the soul with the body is the life of the body; so verily the life of the soul stands in its conjunction with God by a spiritual union of will and affections. God doth not enlighten men's minds as the sun enlightens the world, by shining unto them, and round about them, but by shining into them; by enlightening the faculty, as I said before; yea, which seems to be somewhat more, by "shining in their hearts," as the Apostle expresseth it. He sets up a candle, which is his own light within the soul; so that the soul sees God in his own light, and loves him with the love that he hath shed abroad in

it: and religion is no other than a reflection of that divine image, life, and light, and love, which from God are stamped and imprinted upon the souls of true Christians. God is said to enlighten the soul, but it is not as the sun enlightens, you see; so he draws the soul too, but not from without only, as one draweth another with a cord, as Jupiter in Homer draws men up to heaven by a chain, and Mahomet his disciples by a lock of hair; but he draws the soul, as the sun draws up earthly vapours, by infusing its virtue and power into them; or, as the loadstone draws the iron, by the powerful insinuations of his grace. God doth not so much communicate himself to the soul by way of discovery, as by way of impression, as I said before; and indeed, not so much by impression neither, as by a mystical and wonderful way of implantation. Religion is not so much something from God, as something of God in the minds of good men; for so the Scripture allows us to speak: it is therefore called his image, Col. iii. 10. and good men are said to “live according to God in the spirit:” but, as if that were not high enough, it is not only called his image, but even a participation of his divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. something of Christ in the soul, an “infant Christ,” as one calls it, alluding to the Apostle, where the saving knowledge of Christ is called Christ himself,—“until Christ be formed in you.” True religion is, as it were, God dwelling in the soul, and Christ dwelling in the soul, as the Apostles St. John and St. Paul do express it; yea, God himself is pleased thus to express his relation to the godly soul: “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that

is of an humble spirit ;” and again, “ As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them.” Pure religion is a beam of the Father of lights ; it is a drop of that eternal fountain of goodness and holiness ; the breath of the power of God ; a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty ; the brightness of the everlasting light ; the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness, more beautiful than the sun, and above all the orders of stars ; being compared with the light, she is found before it, as the author of the book of Wisdom speaks, chap. vii. What is spoken of the eternal Son of God, Heb. i. 3. may, in a sense, be truly affirmed of religion in the abstract,—that it is the effulgency, or beaming forth of divine glory ; for there is more of the divine glory and beauty shining forth in one godly soul, than in all things in the world beside : the glorious light of the sun is but a dark shadow of the divine light, not to be compared with the beauty of holiness. An immortal soul doth more resemble the divine nature than any other created being ; but religion in the soul is a thousand times more divine than the soul itself. The material world is indeed a darker representation of divine wisdom, power, and goodness ; it is, as it were, the footsteps of God : the immaterial world of angels and spirits does represent him more clearly, and are the face of God ; but holiness in the soul doth most nearly resemble him of all created things ; one may call it the beauty and glory of his face. Every creature partakes of God indeed ; he had no copy but himself and his own essence to frame the world by ; so that all these must needs carry

some resemblance of their Maker. But no creature is capable of such communications of God, as a rational immortal spirit is; and the highest that angel or spirit, or any created nature, can be made capable of, is to be “holy as God is holy.” So then, if the poet may call the soul,—and St. Paul allows him in it,—“a particle of the divine breath;” sure one may rather speak at that rate of religion, which is the highest perfection that the soul can attain to, either in the world that now is, or that which is to come. One soul, any one soul of man, is worth all the world beside for glory and dignity; but the lowest degree of true holiness, pure religion, conformity to the divine nature and will, is more worth than a world of souls, and to be preferred before the essence of angels. I have often admired three great mysteries and mercies: God revealed in the flesh, God revealed in the word, and God revealed in the soul. This last is the mystery of godliness which I am speaking of, but cannot fathom; it is this that the Apostle says transcends the sight of our eyes, the capacity of our ears, and all the faculties of our souls too, “Eye hath not seen,” &c. Christ Jesus formed in the soul of man, incarnate in a heart of flesh, is as great a miracle, and a greater mercy, than Christ formed in the womb of a virgin, and incarnate in a human body. There was once much glorying concerning Christ in the world, the hope of Israel; but let us call out to the powers of eternity, and the ages of the world to come, to help us to celebrate and magnify “Christ in us, the hope of glory;” or, if you will, Christ in us the first fruits of glory.

1. This will then help us in our discoveries of

that precious pearl, Religion. There is nothing in the world that men do generally more seek, or less find: no nation in the world but hath courted it one way or other; but, alas, how few that have obtained it! At this day there are many claims laid to it, all pretending a just title: the men of Judah cry, She is of kin to us; the men of Israel say, We have ten parts in this queen, and we have more right in religion than ye: according as they contended of old about king David, 2 Sam. xix. They say of Christ, as it was foretold, though perhaps not in the same sense as was foretold, Lo, here he is, and lo, there he is; which hath made many say, he is not at all: or, if I may go on in the same allusion, they live by the rule that there follows, they will not go forth to seek him any where. Mighty strivings, yea, and wars, there have been about the Prince of peace, whose he should be: and at this day no question more debated, nor less decided, than, Which is the religious party in the land? Oh would to God, men would dispute this controversy with works, and not with words, much less with blows! Religion is of an eminent pedigree, of a noble descent; you may find her name in the register of heaven, and look where God is, there is she. She carries her name in her forehead; the divine disposition that she is of, the divine works which she worketh, which no one else can work, the same do bear witness which is she. I am ready to say with the man that had been blind, John ix. 3. herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not religion, who she is, and yet she is the mighty power of God, opening the eyes, changing the hearts, and, as it were, deifying the

souls of men. Why do we not also go about inquiring which of those many stars is the moon in the firmament? If ye ask of the religious party, I will point you to the blessed and eternal God, and say, As he is, so are they, in their capacity, each one resembling the children of a king; or, I will point out the religious Christian by the same token as Christ himself was marked out to John the Baptist, "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining, the same is he." If ye inquire about the children of God, the Apostle shall describe them for you: The followers of God are his dear children. That which is most nearly allied to the nature and life of God, that call religion, under whatsoever disguises or reproaches it may go in the world. Examine the world by no lower a mark, than that character that is given of David, 1 Sam. xiii. 14. and the man that doth appear to be after God's heart, namely, conformable to his image, compliant with his will, and studious of his glory, pitch upon him; for that is that man, under what name soever he goes, of what party or faction soever he is. And let no soul examine itself by any lower marks than this, participation of the divine nature, conformity to the divine image. Examine what alliance your soul hath to God; "whose is the image and superscription." Religion is a divine accomplishment, an efflux from God, and may, by its affinity to heaven, be discerned from a brat of hell and darkness. Therefore, Christians, if you will make a judgment of your state, lay your hearts and lives to the rule, the eternal goodness, the uncreated purity and holiness, and see

whether you resemble that copy : for conformity to the image and will of God, that is religion ; and that God will own for his, when all the counterfeits and shadows of it will fly away, and disappear for ever. I fear it may be imputed as a great piece of vanity and idle curiosity to many counterfeit speculative Christians, that they are very inquisitive, prying into the hidden rolls of God's decree, the secrets of predestination, to find out the causes and method of their vocation and salvation ; in the mean time, they are not solicitous for, nor studious of, the relation and resemblance that every religious soul bears unto God himself, the heaven that is opened within the godly soul itself, and the whole mystery of salvation transacted upon the heart of a true Christian. There is a vanity which I have observed in many pretenders to nobility and learning, when men seek to demonstrate the one by their coat of arms, and the records of their family, and the other by a gown or a title, or their names standing in the register of the university, rather than by the accomplishments and behaviours of gentlemen or scholars. A like vanity, I fear, may be observed in many pretenders to religion : some are searching God's decretals, to find their names written in the book of life, when they should be studying to find God's name written upon their hearts, "holiness to the Lord" engraven upon their souls ; some are busy examining themselves by notes and marks without them ; when they should labour to find the marks and prints of God and his nature upon them : some have their religion in their books and authors, which should be the law of God written in the tables of the heart : some

glory in the bulk of their duties, and in the multitude of their pompous performances, and religious achievements, crying, with Jehu, "Come, see here my zeal for the Lord;" whereas it were much more excellent, if one could see their likeness to the Lord, and the characters of divine beauty and holiness drawn upon their hearts and lives. But we, if we would judge rightly of our religious state, must view ourselves in God, who is the fountain of all goodness and holiness, and the rule of all perfection. Value yourselves by your souls, and not by your bodies, estates, friends, or any outward accomplishments, as most men do: but that is not enough; if men rest there, they make an idol of the fairest of God's creatures, even their own souls; therefore, value your souls themselves by what they have of God in them. To study the blessed and glorious God in his word, and to converse with him in his works, is indeed an excellent and honourable employment; but O what a blessed study is it to view him in the communications of himself, and the impressions of his grace upon our own souls! All the thin and subtile speculations which the most eminent philosophers have of the essence and nature of God, are a poor, and low, and beggarly employment and attainment, in comparison of those blessed visions of God which a godly soul hath in itself, when it finds itself partaker of a divine nature, and living a divine life. O labour to view God and his divine perfections in your own souls, in those copies and transcripts of them which his Holy Spirit draws upon the hearts of all godly men. This is the most excellent discovery of God that any soul is capable of: it is

better and more desirable than that famous discovery that was made to Moses in the cleft of the rock. Nay, I should much rather desire to see the real impression of a godlike nature upon my own soul, to see the crucifying of my own pride and self-will, the mortifying of the mere sensual life, and a divine life springing up in my soul instead of it; I would much rather desire to see my soul glorified in the image and beauty of God put upon it, which is indeed a pledge, yea, and a part of eternal glory, than to have a vision from the Almighty, or hear a voice witnessing from heaven, and saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom my soul is well pleased." This that I am speaking of is a true foundation of heaven itself in the soul, a real beginning of happiness: for happiness, heaven itself, is nothing else but a perfect conformity, a cheerful and eternal compliance of all the powers of the soul with the will of God: so that, as far as a godly soul is thus conformed to God, and filled with his fulness, so far is he glorified upon earth.

2. Let wisdom then be justified of her children; let the children of God, those that are his genuine offspring, rise up and call him blessed, in imitation of their Lord and Saviour, that eldest Son of God, that "first-born amongst many brethren," who rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast revealed these things," or, according to the style of the Apostle Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again!" There is no greater contradiction in the world, than a man

pretending religion, and yet ascribing it to himself; whereas, pure religion is purely of a divine original: besides, religion doth principally consist in the subduing of self-will, in conformity to, and compliance with, the divine will, in serving the interest of God's glory in the world. Then, and not till then, may a soul be truly called religious, when God becomes greatest of all to it and in it, and the interest of God is so powerfully planted in it, that no other interest, no self-interest, no creature-love, no particular private end, can grow by it, no more than the magicians could stand before Moses, when he came in the power of God to work wonders. So that what Solomon saith of self-seeking, "For men to seek their own glory is not glory;" the like I may safely say, upon that double ground that I have laid down, self-religion, is not religion. How vainly, and madly, do men dream of their self-religion carrying them to heaven: when heaven itself is nothing else but the perfection of self-denial, and God's becoming all things to the saints, 1 Cor. xv. 28. Instead of advancing men towards heaven, there is nothing in the world that doth more directly make war against heaven, than that proud and petulant spirit of self-will, that rules in the children of disobedience. So that when the Holy Ghost would describe David one of the best men, to the best advantage, he describes him with opposition to self, and self-will, "a man after God's own heart;" and again, "he served the will of God in his generation."

There have been of old a great number of philosophical men, who being raised up above the speculation of their own souls, to a contemplation of a

Deity; and being purged by a lower kind of virtue and moral goodness, from the pollutions that are in this world through lust, did yet ultimately settle into themselves, and their own self-love. They were full indeed, but it was not with the “fulness of God,” as the Apostle speaks, but with a self-sufficiency; the leaven of self-love lying at the bottom did make them swell with pride and self-conceit. Now these men, though they were free from gross external enormities, yet did not attain to a true knowledge of God, nor any true religion, because they set up themselves to be their own idols, and carried such an image of themselves continually before their eyes, that they had no clear and spiritual discernment of God. They did, as it is storied of one of the Persian kings, enshrine themselves in a temple of their own. But what speak I of Heathen philosophers? Is there not the same unclean spirit of self-adoration to be found amongst many Christians, yea, and teachers of Christianity too? witness that whole brood, those men, who, whilst they hang the grace of God upon man’s free-will, do utterly rob him of his glory. Some of these have impudently given a short, but unsavoury answer to the Apostle’s question, “Who maketh you to differ from another?” I make myself to differ. These men, whilst they pretend to high attainments, discover a low and most ignoble spirit: to fasten and feed upon any thing in the creature, is the part of a low and degenerate spirit; on the other hand, it is the greatest perfection of the creature, not to be its own, not to be any thing in itself, or any way distinct from the blessed God, the Father and Fountain

of light and grace. Holy Paul is all along in a different strain, "I, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." I told you before what a fair and honourable character the Holy Ghost hath given of holy David, a man after God's own heart; now you may also find a description of these men, too, in Scripture, not much differing from the other in phrase, but very much in sense; it is the same that is given of the proud prince of Tyrus, "They set their heart as the heart of God." But we, if we do indeed partake of the divine nature, shall not dare to take any part of the divine glory; if we conform to God's image, we shall not set up our own. This self-glorifying, in the predominancy of it, is utterly inconsistent with true religion, as fire is with water; for religion is nothing else but the shinations forth of God into the soul, the reflection of a beauty and glory which God hath put upon it. Give all therefore unto God; for whatsoever is kept back, is sacrilegiously purloined from him: glory we in the fulness of God alone, and in self-penury and nothingness. The whole of religion is of God. Do we see and discern the great things of God? It is by that light that God hath set up in us; according to that of the Apostle, "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." That love whereby we love him, he first shed abroad in our hearts. If our souls be beautiful, it is with his brightness, the beauty and glory of essential holiness, according to that of the Apostle, "Partakers of his holiness." If we be really and truly full, we receive it of his fulness, according to that of the Apostle, "Filled with all the fulness of God." In a word, if we be

in any godlike dispositions, like unto him, it is by his spreading of his image in us, and over us. By all this, it appears to be a thing not only wicked and unwarrantable, but utterly impossible for a godly soul to exalt himself against God, for grace to advance itself against divine glory; for grace is nothing else but a communication of divine glory; and God is then glorified, when the soul, in holy and gracious dispositions, becomes like unto him. How is it possible that grace should be a shadow to obscure divine glory, when itself is nothing else, as it comes from God, but a beam of glory? and as it is found in the creature, may properly be called a reflection of it. To conclude then, be ye persuaded, that a man hath so much of God, as he hath of humility, and self-denial, and self-nothingness, and no more; he is so far of God, as he loves him, honours him, imitates him, and lives to him, and no further.

3. By this discovery of the original of religion, we come to understand the original of sin and wickedness. And here, according to the method wherein I spoke of the original of religion, I might show you how the original of sin from without, is of the devil, that first ushered it into the world, and ceaseth not to tempt men to it continually; as also of men, who are his instruments; and that it does, in a sense, spring from many occasions without. But these things are more improperly said to be the causes of sin. The inward cause is the corrupt heart of man, that unclean spirit, that devilish nature, which is indeed the worst and most pernicious devil in the world to man. It is an old saying, "One man is a

devil to another;" which, though it be, in some sense, true, yet it is more proper to say, "Man is a devil to himself," taking the spirit and principle of apostacy, that rebellious nature, for the devil, which indeed doth best deserve that name. But yet, if we inquire more strictly into the original and nature of this monster, we shall best know what to say of it, and how to describe it, by what we have heard of religion. Sin, then, to speak properly, is nothing else but a degeneration from a holy state, an apostacy from a holy God. Religion is a participation of God, and sin is a straggling off from him. Therefore it is wont to be defined by negatives, a departure from God, a forsaking of him, a living in the world without him, &c. The soul's falling off from God, does describe the general nature of sin; but then, as it sinks into itself, or settles upon the world, and fastens upon the creature, or any thing therein; so it becomes specified, and is called pride, covetousness, ambition, and by many other names. All souls are the offspring of God, were originally formed in his image and likeness; and when they express the purity and holiness of the divine nature, in being perfect as God is perfect, they are then called the children of God: but those impure spirits that do lapse and slide from God, may be said, to implant themselves into another stock, by their own low and earthly lives, and are no more owned for the children of God, but "are of their father the devil." By which you may understand the low and base original of sin: nothing can be so vile as that which, to speak properly, is nothing else but a perfect falling off from glory itself. By this you may

also, by the way, take notice of the miserable condition of unholy souls. We need not call for fire and brimstone to paint out the wretched state of sinful souls. Sin itself is hell and death, and misery to the soul, as being a departure from goodness and holiness itself; I mean from God, in conjunction with whom the happiness, and blessedness, and heaven of a soul doth consist. Avoid it, therefore, as you would avoid being miserable.

CHAPTER II.

True religion described by water : 1. By reason of the cleansing virtue of it. 2. By reason of the quenching virtue of it. The nature of religion described by a well of water : That it is a principle in the souls of men. An examination of religion by this test. A godly man hath neither the whole of his business, nor his motives, lying without him. In the same examination, many things internal found not to be religion.

I COME now to speak of the nature of true religion, which is here described by our blessed Lord, by a “well of water :” 1. By water. 2. By a well of water. I shall speak something of both these, but more briefly of the former.

1. Pure religion, or gospel-grace, is described by water. This is a comparison very familiar in the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New. By this similitude, gospel-grace was typified in the ceremonial law, wherein both persons and things, ceremonially unclean, were commanded to be washed in water, as is abundantly to be seen in that administration. Under this notion the same grace is prayed for by the Psalmist, when he had defiled himself in the bed of a stranger: “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” He had drunk water out of a strange cistern, as his son Solomon describes that unclean act, Prov. v. 15. and now he calls out for water from the fountain of grace, to undefile him : he now cries out for water from the fountain of grace, the blessed Messiah, that sprung

up into the world at Bethlehem, and that with more earnestness than formerly; we read that he wished for the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate, 2 Sam. xxiii. In the same phrase the same grace is promised by the ministry of the prophets, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto us. Thus we read of the fair and flourishing state of the church, "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not;" and of the fruitful state of the gospel proselytes, "All the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim." Which promises are understood of the grace of sanctification, as the prophet Ezekiel showeth plainly, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you:" for ordinary elementary water cannot cleanse men from idols. The prophet Isaiah also puts it out of doubt, whose prophecy, together with the interpretation of it, we find both in one verse, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." By the same ceremony, the gospel dispensation shadows out the same mystery in the sacrament of baptism; and, by the same phrase, our Saviour offers and promises the same grace, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink:" and his Apostles after him, who, in allusion to water, call this grace the "washing of regeneration." To which I might add, 1 Pet. iii. 21. and many other texts, if it needed.

Now, as the grace of God is compared to fire, because of its refining nature, and consuming the dross and refuse of lust in the soul; and to other things for other reasons: so it is compared to water, especially for those two properties, namely, cleansing and quenching: for observe this, by the way, that it is a very injurious thing to the Holy Ghost, to press the metaphors which he useth in Scripture, further than they naturally and freely serve. Neither are we to adhere to the letter of the metaphor, but to attend to the scope of it. If we tenaciously adhere to the phrase, wanton wits will be ready to quarrel with absurdities, and so unawares run into strange blasphemies: they will cry out presently, How can fire wash? when they read that of the prophet, “The Lord will wash away the filth of the daughter of Zion, by the spirit of burning.” But who art thou, O man! that wilt teach him to speak, who formed the tongue? The Spirit of God intends the virtue and property of things, when he names them; and that we must mainly attend to.

(1.) Therefore, by the phrase *water*, is the cleansing nature of religion commended to us: it is the undefiling of the soul, which sin and wickedness hath polluted: sin is often described in Scripture by filthiness, loathsomeness, abomination, uncleanness, a spot, a blemish, a stain, a pollution; which indeed is a most proper description of it. The spots of leprosy, and the scurf of the foulest scurvy, are beauty-spots in comparison of it. Job upon the dunghill, furnished cap-a-pee with scabs and boils, was not half so loathsome as goodly Absalom, in whose body “there was no blemish from the sole of

his foot to the crown of his head ;” but his soul was stained with the sanguine spots of malice and revenge, and festered with the loathsome carbuncle and tumour of ambition. Lazarus, lying at the gates full of raw and running sores, was a far more lovely object in the pure eyes of God, than dame Jezebel, looking out at the window, adorned with spots and paints. If the best of a godly man that he hath of his own, even his righteousness, be as a filthy rag, whence shall we borrow a phrase foul enough to describe the worst of a wicked man, even his wickedness? I need say no more of it, I can say no worse of it, than to tell you, it is something contrary to God, who is the eternal Father of light, who is beauty, and brightness, and glory itself; or, to give it you in the Apostle’s phrase, “A falling short of the glory of God.” Which hath made me many times to wonder, and almost ready to cry out with the prophet, “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this,” when I have seen poor, ignorant, wicked, and profane wretches, passing by a person, or a family, visited with some loathsome disease, in a mixture of fear and disdain, stopping their noses and hastening away; when their own souls have been more vile than the dung upon the earth, spotted with ignorance and atheism, swollen with the risings of pride and self-will, and contempt of God and his holy image. This might well be a matter of wonder to any man, till he consider with himself, that one part of these men’s uncleanness, is that very blindness which keeps them from discerning it: I speak principally of the defilement of the soul; though indeed the same do pollute the whole conversation: every

action springing from such an unclean heart, thereby becomes filthy ; even as Moses' hand, put into his bosom, became leprous ; or rather as one that is unclean by a dead body, defileth all that he toucheth, Hag. ii. 13.

Now, religion is the cleansing of this unclean spirit and conversation ; so that, though the soul were formerly as filthy and odious as Augeas' stable, when once those living waters flow into it, and through it, from the pure fountain of grace and holiness, the Spirit of our God, one may say of it, as the Apostle of his Corinthians, " Such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified," &c. The soul that before was white as leprosy, is now white as wool, Isa. i. 18. The soul that before was like Moses' hand, leprous as snow, is now like David's heart, white as snow ; yea, and whiter too. O what a beauty and glory is upon that godly soul, that shines with the image and brightness of God upon it ! Solomon, in all his glory, was not beautiful like such a soul : nay, I dare say, the splendour of the sun, in its greatest strength and altitude, is a miserable glimmering, if it be compared with the day-star of religion, that even in this life arises in the heart ; or, if you will, in the prophet's style, the Sun of Righteousness, which ariseth with healing in his wings, upon them that fear the name of God. To speak without a metaphor, the godly soul, having entertained in itself the pure effluxes of divine light and love, breathes after nothing more than to see more familiarly, and to love more ardently : its inclinations are pure and holy ; its motions spiritual and powerful ; its delights high and heavenly ; it

may be said to rest in its love; and yet it may be said, that love will not suffer it to rest, but is still carrying it out into a more intimate union with its beloved object. What is said of the ointment of Christ's name, is true of the water of his Spirit; it is poured forth, "therefore do the virgins love him:" religion begets a chaste and virgin love in the soul towards that blessed God that begot it; it bathes itself in the fountain that produced it; and suns itself perpetually in the warm beams that first hatched it. Religion issues from God himself, and is ever issuing out towards God alone, passionately breathing with the holy Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? In earth there is none that I desire beside thee!" The soul that formerly may be said to have lain among the pots, by reason of its filthiness, is now as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold: the soul that formerly may be said to have sitten down by the flesh-pots of Egypt, in regard of its sensual and earthly loves, being redeemed by the almighty grace of God, is upon its way to the holy land, hastening to a country, not earthly but heavenly. This pure principle being put into the soul, puts it upon holy studies, indites holy meditations, directs it to high and noble ends, and makes all its embraces to be pure and chaste, labouring to compass God himself, which before were adulterous and idolatrous, only free for sin, and self, and the world, to lodge and lie down in. In a word, this offspring of heaven, this King's daughter, the godly soul, "is all glorious within:" yea, and outwardly too, she is clothed with wrought gold. Her faith within is more precious

than gold, and her conversation curiously made up of an embroidery of good works, some of piety, some of charity, some of sobriety, but all of purity, shineth with more noble and excellent splendour, than the high priest's garments and breast-plate spangled with such variety of precious stones. This precious ointment, this holy unction, as the Apostle calls it, is as diffusive of itself, and ten thousand times more fragrant, than that of Aaron, so much commended in Psal. cxxxiii. that ran down from his head upon his beard, and from thence upon the skirts of his garment. "Not my feet only, but my hands and my head, Lord," said Peter, not well knowing what he said; but the soul that is truly sensible of the excellent purity which is caused by divine washings, longs to have the whole man, the whole life also, made partaker of it, and cries, Lord, not my head only, not my heart only, but my hands and my feet also, make me wholly pure, as God is pure. In a word, then, true religion is the cleansing of the soul, and all the powers of it; so that, whereas murderers sometimes lodged in it, now righteousness; the den of thieves, thievish lusts and loves, and interests, and ends, which formerly stole away the soul from God, its right owner, is now become a temple fit for the great King to dwell, and live, and reign in: and the whole conversation is turned from its wonted vanity, worldliness, and iniquity, and is continually employed about things that are "true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report."

(2.) By the phrase *water*, the quenching nature of religion is commended to us. God hath endued the immortal soul with a restless appetite, and raging

thirst after some chief good, which the heart of every man is continually groping after, and catching at, though indeed few find it, because they seek it where it is not to be found. If we speak properly, it is not gold, or silver, or popular applause, which the covetous or ambitious mind doth ultimately aim at, but some chief good, happiness, sufficiency, and satisfaction in these things; wherein they are more guilty of blasphemy than atheism: for it is clear that they do not deny a supreme good; for that which men chiefly and ultimately aim at, is their god, be it what it will; but they do verily blaspheme the true God, when they place their happiness there where it is not to be found, and attribute that fulness and sufficiency to something else besides the living God. Sin hath not destroyed the nature and capacity of the rational soul, but hath diverted the mind from its adequate object, and hath sunk it into the creature, where it wanders hither and thither, like a banished man, from one den and cave to another, but is secure no where. A wicked man, who is loosed from his centre by sin, and departed from the fountain of his life, flies low in his affections, and flutters perpetually about the earth, and earthly objects, but can find no more rest for the foot of his soul, than Noah's dove could find for the sole of her foot. Now, religion is the hand that pulls this wandering bird into her own ark from whence she was departed; it settles the soul upon its proper centre, and quenches its burning thirst after happiness. And for this reason it is called 'water' in Scripture. "The Lord shall satisfy thy soul in drought;" and "I will pour water upon him that is

thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;" compared with John vii. 37. "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Religion is a taste of infinite goodness, which quenches the soul's thirst after all other created and finite good; even as that taste which honest Nathanael had of Christ's divinity, took him off from the expectation of any Messiah to come, and made him cry out presently, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." And every religious soul hath such a taste of God, even in this life, which, though it do not perfectly fill him, yet doth perfectly assure him where all fulness dwells. But of this I shall have occasion to discourse more largely, when I come to treat of the consequents of true religion.

2. I proceed, therefore, to the second phrase, whereby our Saviour describes the nature of true religion; it is a well, a fountain in the soul, "Shall be in him a well of water." From which phrase, to waive niceties, I shall only observe,

"That religion is a principle in the souls of men."

The water that Christ pours into the soul is not like the water he pours upon our streets, that washes them, and runs away; but it becomes a cleansing principle within the soul itself; every drop from God becomes a fountain in man; not as a man had a kind of *αὐτοζωή* in himself, or were the first spring of his own motions towards God: I find not any will in the natural man so divinely free. God hath indeed given this to his natural Son, his only begotten Son, to have "life in himself," but not to any of his

adopted ones. If you ask me concerning man in his natural capacity, I am so far from thinking that he hath a self-quickenings power, a principle of life in himself, that I must needs assert the contrary, with the Apostle, that he is “dead in trespasses and sins;” so far from thinking that he hath in himself a well of water, that I must call him, with the prophet, “thirsty and dry ground.” As for the regenerate man, I will not enter into that deep controversy concerning the co-operation of man’s will with the Spirit of God, and its subordination to that in all gracious acts, or what a kind of cause of them this renewed will of man may be safely called; only I will affirm, that repenting and believing are properly man’s acts, and yet they are performed by God’s power; first, Christ must give this water ere it can be a well of water in the soul; which is enough, I suppose, to clear me from siding with either of those parties, whether those that ascribe to God that which he cannot do, or those that ascribe to free-will that which God alone can do. But I fear nothing from these controversies; for the way wherein I shall discourse of this matter, will nothing at all border upon them. This, then, I affirm, that religion is a living principle in the souls of good men: I cannot better describe the nature of religion, than to say it is a nature; for so does the Apostle speak, or at least allows us to speak, when he calls it a participation of a divine nature. Nothing but a nature can partake of a nature; a man’s friend may partake of his goodness and kindness, but his child only partakes of his nature: he that begets, begets a nature; and so doth

he that begets again. The sun enlightens the world outwardly, but it does not give a sun-like nature to the things so enlightened; and the rain doth moisten the earth, and refresh it inwardly, but it does not beget the nature of water in the earth: "But this water that I give," says our Saviour, "becometh a well of water in the soul." - Religion is not any thing without a man, hanging upon him, or annexed to him; neither is it every something that is in a man, as we shall see anon; but it is a divine principle, informing and actuating the souls of good men, a living and lively principle, a free and flowing principle, a strong and lasting principle, an inward and spiritual principle. I must not speak of all these distinctly in this place, for fear of interfering in my discourse. When I say religion is a principle, a vital form acting the soul, and all the powers of it, an inward nature, &c. saith not the Scripture the same here, a well or fountain of water? And elsewhere, "a new man, the hidden man of the heart, the inward man." As the soul is called an inward man, respective to the body, 2 Cor. iv. 16. so religion is called an inward man respective to the soul itself, Rom. vii. 22. It is a man within man. The man that is truly alive to God, hath in him not only inward parts, for so a dead man hath, but an inward man, an inward nature and principle. Again, it is called a root, Job xix. 28. or, if not there, yet plainly in Mark iv. 17. where temporary professors are said to have no root in themselves. And this it is, by the same propriety of speech, whereby a wicked principle is called, "A root of bitterness." Again, it is called a seed, the seed of

God, 1 John iii. 9. where this seed of God is called an abiding or remaining principle. In the first creation, God made the trees of the earth, having their seed in themselves, and in the new creation, these trees of righteousness of God's planting, are also made with seed in themselves, though not of themselves. It is said to be the seed of God indeed, but remaining in the godly soul. Again, it is called a treasure, in opposition to an alms or annuity, that lasteth but for a day or a year, as a well of water, in opposition to a dish of water; and a treasure of the heart, in opposition to all outward and earthly treasures. It is a treasure affording continual-expenses, not exhausted, yea, increased by expenses; wherein it exceeds all treasures in the world. By the same propriety of speech, sin is called a treasure too, but it is an evil treasure, as our Saviour speaks in that same place. Do you not see what a stock of wickedness sinful men have within themselves, which, although they have spent upon ever since they were born, yet it is not impaired, nay, it is much augmented thereby: and shall not the second Adam bestow something as certain and permanent upon his offspring, as the first Adam conveyed to his posterity? Though men have something without them, to guide them in the way of life, yet it is some living principle within them, that denominates them living men. The Scripture will abundantly inform you which is the true circumcision: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;" the true sacrifice to God,

“ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” And indeed the law itself is not so much to be considered as it was engraven in tables of stone, as being written in the heart. The Jews needed not have taken up their rest in the law, considered as an outward rule or precept; for they knew, or might have known, that God requireth “ truth in the inward parts,” as one of themselves, a prophet and a king of their own, acknowledgeth. But I doubt many Christians are also sick of the same disease, whilst they view the gospel as a history, and an external dispensation; whereas, the Apostle, when he opposeth it to the law, seems altogether to make it an internal thing, a vital form and principle, seated in the minds and spirits of men, 2 Cor. iii. The law was an external rule or dispensation, that could not give life, though it showed the way to it; but the gospel, in the most proper notion of it, seems to be an internal impression from God, a living principle, whereby the soul is enabled to express a real conformity to God himself. If we consider the gospel, in the history of it, and as a piece of book-learning, it is as weak and impotent a thing as the law was; and men may be as formal in the profession of this, as they were of that, which we see by daily sad experience. But if we consider the gospel, as an efflux of life and power from God himself upon the soul, producing life wherever it comes, then we have a clear distinction between the law and the gospel; to which the Apostle seems to refer, when he calls the Corinthians “ the epistle of Christ, not written with ink, nor in the tables of

stone, but with the Spirit of the living God, in fleshly tables of the heart." According to which notion of the law and gospel, I think we may, with a learned man of our own, come to a good understanding of that controverted text, Jer. xxxi. 33. quoted by the Apostle, Heb. x. 16. "This is the covenant that I will make, I will put my law into their minds," &c. The gospel doth not so much consist in words as in virtue; a divine principle of religion in the soul, is the best gospel: and so Abraham and Moses, under the law, were truly gossellers; and, on the other hand, all carnal Christians that converse with the gospel, only as a thing without them, are as truly legal, and as far short of the righteousness of God, as ever any of the Jews were.

Thus we see that religion is a principle in the souls of good men—"Shall be in him a well of water."

We shall now take notice of the difference between the true and all counterfeit religions. Religion is that pearl of great price, which few men are possessed of, though all men pretend to it, Laodicean-like, saying, they are rich, and need nothing, when indeed they are poor, and have nothing. This, then, shall be the test by which, at present, we will a little try the counterfeit pearls. True religion is an inward nature, an inward and abiding principle in the minds of good men, "a well of water."

(1.) Then, we must exclude all things that are merely external; these are not it. Religion is not something annexed to the soul from without, but a new nature put into it. And here we shall glance at two things.

Ist, A godly soul does not find the whole of his business lying without him. Religion does not consist in external reformatiōns, though ever so many and specious. A false and overly religion may serve to tie men's hands, and reduce their outward actions to a fair seemliness in the eyes of men : but true religion's main dominion and power is over the soul, and its business lies mostly in reforming and purging the heart, with all the affections and motions thereof. It is not a battering-ram coming from without, and serving to beat down the out-works of open and visible enormities of life ; but enters with a secret and sweet power into the soul itself, and reduces it from its rebellious temper, and persuades it willingly to surrender itself, and all that is in it. Sin may be beaten out of the outward conversation, and yet retire and hide itself in the secret places of the soul, and there bear rule as perfectly by wicked loves and lusts, as ever it did by profane and notorious practices. A man's hands may be tied by some external cords cast upon them, from visible revenge, and yet murderers may lodge in the temple of his heart, as murderers lodged in the temple of old ; men's tongues may be tied up from the foul sin of giving fair words concerning themselves ; very shame may chastise them out of proud boastings, and self-exaltings, when, in the mean time, they swell in self-conceit, and are not afraid to bear an unchaste and sinful love towards their own perfections, and adore an image of self set up in their hearts. What a fair outside the Pharisee had, himself will best describe ; for indeed it is one of his properties to describe himself, Luke xviii.

“God, I thank thee, that I am not,” &c. But, if you will have a draught of his inside, you may best take it from our Saviour, Matth. xxiii. Neither doth religion consist in external performances, though ever so many, and seemingly spiritual. Many professors of Christianity, I doubt, sink all their religion into a constant course of duties, and a model of performances, being mere strangers to the life, and strength, and sweetness of true religion. Those things are needful, and useful, and helpful, yea, and honourable, because they have a relation and some tendency to God; but they are apt to become snares and idols to superstitious minds, who conceive that God is some way gratified by these; and so they take up their rest in them. That religion, that only varnishes and beautifies the outside, tunes the tongue to prayer and conference, instructs and extends the hands to diligence and alms-deeds, that awes the conversation into some external righteousness or devotion, is here excluded, as also by the Apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. Much less can that pass for religion, that spends itself about forms, and opinions, and parties, and many disputable points, which we have seen so much of in our own generation. The religion that runs upon modes, and turns upon interests, as a door turns upon its hinges, is a poor, narrow, scanty thing, and may easily view itself at once, altogether from first to last. Men may be as far from the kingdom of heaven in their more spiritual forms, and orthodox opinions, as they were in their more carnal and erroneous ones, if they take up their rest in them; neither is it the pursuing of any interest that will denominate them religious, but the grand interest of their souls.

2d, A godly soul, in his more inward and spiritual acts, hath not his motive without him: for a man may be somewhat inward in his motions, and yet as outward in his motives as the former. Religious acts, and gracious motions, are not originally and primarily caused by some weights hung upon the soul, either by God or men, neither by the worldly blessings which God gives, nor the heavy afflictions which he sends. The wings, by which the godly soul flies out towards God, are not waxed to him, as the poets feign Icarus's to have been; but they grow out of himself, as the wings of an eagle that flies swiftly towards heaven: on the other hand, a soul may be pressed down into humiliation, under the heavy weight of God's judgments, that has no mind to stoop, no self-denying or self-debasing disposition in it. Thus you may see Jehu flying upon the wings of ambition and revenge, borne up by successes in his government; and his predecessor Ahab bowing down mournfully under a heavy sentence. The laws, and penalties, and encouragements, and observations of men, do sometimes put a weight upon the soul too, but they beget a more sluggish, uneven, and unkindly motion in it. You may expect, that under this head I should speak something of heaven and hell; and truly so I may pertinently, for I think they do belong to this place. If you take heaven, properly, for a full and glorious union to God, and fruition of him, and hell for an eternal separation and straggling from the divinity; and suppose that the love of God, and the fear of living without him, be well drunk into the soul, then, verily, these are pure and religious principles:

but if we view them as things merely without us, and reserved for us, and under those common, carnal notions of delectableness and dreadfulness, they are no higher nor better motives to us, than the carnal Jews had in the wilderness, when they turned their back upon Egypt, where they had been in bondage, and set their faces towards Canaan, where they hoped to find milk and honey, peace, plenty, and liberty. A soul is not carried to heaven, as a body is carried to the grave, upon men's shoulders; it is not borne up by props, whether human or divine; nor carried to God in a chariot, as a man is carried to see his friend; the holy fire of ardent love, wherein the soul of Elijah had been long carried up towards God, was something more excellent, and indeed more desirable, than the fiery chariot by which his body and soul were translated together. Religion is a spring of motion which God hath put into the soul itself.

And as all things that are external, whether actions or motives, are excluded in this examination, which we make of religion; so neither,

(2.) Must we allow of every thing that is internal, to be religion. And, therefore,

First, It is not a fit, a start, a sudden passion of the mind, caused by the power and strength of some present conviction in the soul, which, in a hot mood, will needs go out after God in all haste. This may fitly be compared to the rash and rude motion of the host of Israel, who, being chidden for their slothfulness over night, rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, "Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place

which the Lord hath promised : for we have sinned.” And, indeed, it fares with these men oftentimes as it did with those, both as to the undertaking, and as to the success ; their motion is as sinful as their station ; and their success is answerable, they are driven back and discomfited in their enterprise. Nay, though this passion might arise so high, as to be called an ecstasy or a rapture, yet it deserves not the name of religion : “ For religion is,” as one speaks elegantly, “ like the natural heat that is radicated in the hearts of living creatures, which hath the dominion of the whole body, and sends forth warm blood and spirits, and vital nourishment into every part and member ; it regulates and orders the motions of it in a due and even manner.” But these ecstatical souls, though they may blaze like a comet, and swell like a torrent or land-flood for a time, and shoot forth fresh and high for a little season, are soon extinguished, emptied, and dried up, because they have not a principle, a stock to spend upon, or, as our Saviour speaks, no root in themselves. These men’s motions and actions bear no more proportion to religion, than a land-flood, that swells high and runs swiftly, but it is only during the rain ; or, in the Scripture phrase, no more than a morning dew, that soon passes away, is like a well or fountain of water.

Second, If religion be a principle, a new nature in the soul, then it is not a mere mechanism, a piece of art. Art imitates nature ; nothing more ordinary, I fear, than for religion itself, that new nature, to go into an art. I need not tell you how all the external acts and shootings forth of religion, may be dissembled and imitated by art, and be acted over by

a mimical, apish Pharisee, who finds nothing at all of the gentle and mighty heat, nor the divine and noble life of it in his own soul, whereby he may fairly deceive the credulous world, as I have partly hinted already. But it is possible, I wish it be not common, for men that are somewhat more convinced, enlightened, and affected, to imitate the very power and spirit of religion, and to deceive themselves too, as if they possessed some true living principle; and herein they exceed the most exquisite painters. Now, this may be done by the power of a quick and raised fancy; men hearing such glorious things spoken of heaven, the city of the great King, the new Jerusalem, may be carried out by the power of self-love, to wish themselves there, being mightily taken with a conceit of the place. But how shall they come at it? Why, they have seen in books, and heard in discourses, of certain signs of grace, and evidences of salvation; and now they set their fancies on work, to find or make some such things in themselves. Fancy is well acquainted with the several affections of love, fear, joy, grief, which are in the soul, and having a great command over the animal spirits, it can send them forth to raise up these affections, even almost when it listeth; and when it hath raised them, it is but putting to some thoughts of God and heaven, and then these look like a handsome platform of true religion drawn in the soul, which they presently view, and fall in love with, and think they do even taste of the powers of the world to come, when indeed it is nothing but a self-fulness and sufficiency that they feed upon. Now, you may know this artificial religion by this;

these men can vary it, alter it, enlarge it, straiten it, and new-mould it at pleasure, according to what they see in others, or according to what themselves like best; one while acting over the joy and confidence of some Christians, anon the humiliation and brokenness of others. But this fanciful religion, proceeding indeed from nothing but low and carnal conceits of God and heaven, is of a flitting and vanishing nature. But true Christians are gently, yet powerfully, moved by the natural force of true goodness, and the beauty of God, and do move on steadily and constantly in their way to him, and pursuit of him. The spirit of regeneration in good men spreads itself upon the understanding, and sweetly insinuates itself through the will and affections, which makes true religion to be a consistent and thriving principle in the soul, as not being acted upon the stage of imagination, but upon the highest powers of the soul itself, and may be discerned by the evenness of its motions, and the immortality of its nature; for a good man, though indeed he cannot go on always with like speed and cheerfulness in his way, yet he is not willing at any time to be quite out of it.

By this same nature of true religion you may examine all those spurious and counterfeit religions, that spring from a natural belief of a Deity, from convictions, observations, fleshly and low apprehensions of heaven, book-learning, and the precepts of men, as the prophet calls them, and the rest, which are seated in the fancy, and swim in the brain; whose effect is but to gild the outward man, or, at best, but to move the soul by an external force, in

an unnatural, inconstant, and transient manner. In a word, all these pretenders to religion may seem to have water, but they have no well; as there are others, deep men, principled indeed with learning, policy, ingenuity, &c. but not with true goodness, whom the Apostle calls “wells,” but “without water.” But the truly godly, and godlike soul, hath in itself a principle of pure religion.—“The water that I shall give him, shall be a well of water springing up into eternal life.”

CHAPTER III.

Containing the first property mentioned of true religion, namely, The freeness and unconstrainedness of it. This freedom considered as to its Author ; in which is considered how far the command of God may be said to act a godly soul. Secondly, Considered as to its object. Two cautionary concessions : 1. That some things without the soul may be said to be motives. 2. That there is a constraint lying upon the godly soul ; which yet takes not away its freedom.

I PROCEED now, from the nature of religion, to speak of the properties of it, as many of them as are couched under this phrase, “springing up into everlasting life.” Not to press the phrase any further than it will naturally afford discourse, I shall only take notice of these three properties of true religion, contained in the Word, “springing up,” namely, the freeness, activity, and permanency, or perseverance of it.

The first property of it, couched under this phrase, is, that it is free and unconstrained. Religion is a principle, and it flows and acts freely in the soul, after the manner of a fountain ; and, in the day of its mighty power, makes the people a willing people, and the soul, in whom it is truly seated, to become a free-will offering unto God. Alexander the Great subdued the world with force of arms, and made men rather his tributaries and servants, than his lovers and friends : but the great God, the king of souls, obtains an amicable conquest over the hearts of his elect, and overpowers them in such a manner, that

they love to be his servants, and do willingly and readily obey him, without dissimulation or constraint, without mercenariness or morosity: in which they are unlike to the subjects of the kingdoms of the world, who are kept in their duties by fear and force, not from a pure kindness and benevolence of mind, to whom the present yoke is always grievous. Hence it is that the propagation of this people is called their flowing unto the Lord, “The mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established, and all nations shall flow unto it;” and, again, “They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord.” And the disposition of this people is described to be a hearty and willing frame, Eph. vi. 6, 7. and elsewhere. Now, this willingness or freeness of godly souls might be explained and confirmed by the consideration both of their outward and inward acts.

1. As to the outward acts of service which the true Christian performs, he is freely carried out towards them, without any constraint or force. If he keep himself from the evils of the place, and age, and company, wherein he lives and converses, it is not by a restraint, which is upon him merely from without him, but by a principle of holy temperance planted in his soul: it is the seed of God abiding in him, that preserves him from the commission of sin. He is not kept back from sin as a horse by a bridle, but by an inward and spiritual change made in his nature. On the other hand, if he employ himself in any external acts of moral or instituted duty, he does it freely, not as of necessity, or by constraint. If you speak of acts of charity, the godly man gives from a principle of love to God, and kindness to his

brother ; and so cheerfully, “not grudgingly, or of necessity.” An alms may be wrung out of a miser, but it proceeds from the liberal soul, as a stream from its fountain : therefore he is called a deviser of liberal things, and one that standeth upon liberalities, as those last words of Isa. xxxii. 8. are rendered by the Dutch translators. If you speak of righteousness or temperance, he is not overruled by power, or compelled by laws, but indeed actuated by the power of that law which is written and engraven upon his mind. If you speak of acts of worship, whether moral or instituted, in all these he is also free, as to any constraint. Prayer is not his task, or a piece of penance, but it is the natural cry of the new-born soul ; neither does he take it up as a piece of policy, to bribe God’s justice, or engage men’s charity, to purchase favour with God or man, or his own clamorous conscience : but he prays, because he wants, and loves, and believes ; he wants the fuller presence of that God whom he loves ; he loves the presence which he wants ; he believes that He that loves him, will not suffer him to want any good thing that he prays for. And therefore he does not bind up himself severely, and limit himself penuriously to a morning and evening sacrifice and solemnity, as to certain rent-seasons, wherein to pay a homage of dry devotion ; but his loving and longing soul, disdaining to be confined within canonical hours, is frequently soaring in some heavenly raptures or other, and sallying forth in holy ejaculations : he is not content with some weak essays towards heaven, in set and formal prayer, once or twice a-day, but labours also to be all the day long drawing in those

divine influences, and streams of grace, by the mouth of faith, which he begged in the morning by the tongue of prayer ; which hath made me sometimes think it a proper speech to say, the faith of prayer, as well as the prayer of faith ; for believing, and hanging upon divine grace, doth really drink in what prayer opens its mouth for, and is, in effect, a powerful kind of praying in silence : by believing we pray, as well as in praying we do believe. A truly godly man hath not his hands tied up merely by the force of a national law, no, nor yet by the authority of the fourth commandment, to keep one in seven a day of rest ; as he is not content with mere resting upon the Sabbath, knowing that neither working, nor ceasing from work, doth of itself commend a soul to God, but doth press after intimacy with God in the duties of his worship ; so neither can he be content with one Sabbath in a week, nor think himself absolved from holy and heavenly meditations any day in the week ; but labours to make every day a Sabbath, as to the keeping of his heart up unto God in a holy frame, and to find every day to be a Sabbath, as to the communications of God unto his soul : though the necessities of his body will not allow him, it may be, though indeed God hath granted this to some men, to keep every day as a Sabbath of rest ; yet the necessities of his soul do call upon him, to make every day, as far as may be, a Sabbath of communion with the blessed God. If you speak of fasting, he keeps not fasts merely by virtue of a civil, no, nor a divine institution ; but, from a principle of godly sorrow, afflicts his soul for sin, and daily endeavours more and more to be emptied of himself,

which is the most excellent fasting in the world. If you speak of thanksgiving, he does not give thanks by laws and ordinances, but having in himself a law of thankfulness, and an ordinance of love engraven upon, and deeply radicated in his soul, delights to live unto God, and to make his heart and life a living descant upon the goodness and love of God; which is the most divine way of thank-offering in the world; it is the hallelujah which the angels sing continually. In a word, wherever God hath a tongue to command, true godliness will find a hand to perform; whatever yoke Jesus Christ shall put upon the soul, religion will enable to bear it, yea, and to count it easy too; the mouth of Christ hath pronounced it easy, and the Spirit of Christ makes it easy. Let the commandment be what it will, it will not be grievous. The same spirit doth, in some measure, dwell in every Christian, which, without measure, dwelt in Christ, who counted it "his meat and drink to do the will of his Father."

2. And more especially, the true Christian is free from any constraint as to the inward acts which he performeth. Holy love to God is one principal act of the gracious soul, whereby it is carried out freely, and with an ardent love towards the object that is truly and infinitely lovely and satisfactory, and to the enjoyment of it. I know, indeed, that this springs from self-indigency, and is commanded by the sovereignty of the supreme good, the object that the soul eyes: but it is properly free from any constraint. Love is an affection, that cannot be extorted as fear is; nor forced by any external power, nor indeed internal neither: the revenues of the king of Per-

sia, or the treasures of Egypt, cannot commit a rape upon it; neither, indeed, can the soul itself raise and lay this spirit at pleasure.

Though the outward bodily acts of religion are ordinarily forced, yet this pure, chaste, virgin affection cannot be ravished; it seems to be a kind of a peculiar in the soul, though under the jurisdiction of the understanding. By this property of it, it is elegantly described by the Spirit of God: "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." It cannot be bought with money, or money-worth, cannot be purchased with gifts or arts; and if any should offer to bribe it, it would give him a sharp and scornful check, in the language of Peter to Simon, "Thy money perish with thee;" love is no hireling, no base-born, mercenary affection, but noble, free, and generous. Neither is it low-spirited and slavish as fear is: therefore, when it comes to full age, it will not suffer this son of the bondwoman to divide the inheritance, the dominions of the soul, with it; when it comes to be "perfect, it casteth out fear," says the Apostle. Neither, indeed, is it directly under the authority of any law, whether human or divine: it is not begotten by the influence of a divine law, as a law, but as holy, just, and good, as we shall see anon: *quis legem dat amantibus? ipse est sibi lex amor*: the law of love; or, if you will, in the Apostle's phrase, "the spirit of love, and of power," in opposition to the spirit of fear, doth more influence the godly man in his pursuit of God than any law without him: this is as a wing to the soul; whereas outward commandments are but as guides in his way; or, at most, but as spurs in his sides.

The same I may say of holy delight in God, which is indeed the flower of love, or love grown up to its full age and stature, which hath no torment in it, and consequently no force upon it. Like unto which are holy confidence, faith and hope, ingenuous and natural acts of the religious soul, whereby it hastens into the divine embraces, “as the eagle hasteneth to the prey,” swiftly and speedily, and not by force and constraint, “as a fool to the correction of the stocks,” or a bear to the stake. These are all genuine offsprings of holy religion in the soul, and they are utterly incapable of force; violence is contrary to the nature of them; for, to use the Apostle’s words, with the change of one word, “Hope that is forced, is not hope.”

Now, a little farther to explain this excellent property of true religion, we may a little consider the author, and the object of it.

The author of this noble and free principle is God himself, who hath made it a partaker of his own nature, who is the free agent; himself is the fountain of his own acts. The uncreated life and liberty hath given this privilege to the religious soul, in some sense, to have life and liberty in itself, and a dominion over its own acts. I do not know that any created being in the world hath more of divinity in it than the soul of man, *qua nihil homini dedit Deus ipse divinius*, as Tully speaks; nor that any thing in the soul doth more resemble the divine essence, than the noble freedom that the soul hath in itself; which freedom is never so divine and generous, as when it is placed upon God himself. This excellent freedom is something of God in the soul of

man, and therefore may justly claim the free Spirit for its author, Psal. li. 12. 2 Cor. iii. 17. or the Son of God for its original, according to that in John viii. 36. "If the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed."

But here it may be demanded, whether the command of God doth not move the godly soul, and set it upon its holy motions? I confess indeed that the command of God is much eyed by a godly man, and is of great weight with him, and does in some sense lay a constraint upon him; but yet I think not so much the authority of the law, as the reasonableness and goodness of it, does prevail principally with him. The religious soul does not so much eye the law under the notion of a command, as under the notion of holy, just and good, as the Apostle speaks, and so embraces it, chooses it, and longs to be perfectly conformable to it. I do not think it so proper to say that a good man loves God, and all righteousness and holiness, and religious duties, by virtue of a command to do so, as by virtue of a new nature that God hath put into him, which doth instruct and prompt him so to do. A religious soul being reconciled to the nature of God, embraces all his laws by virtue of the equitableness and perfection that he sees in them; not because they are commanded, but because they are in themselves to be desired, as David speaks: "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb." In which Psalm the holy man gives us a full account why he did so love and esteem the laws and commandments of God, namely, because they are perfect, right,

pure, clean, true, sweet, and lovely. To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and strength, and mind, is not only a duty, by virtue of that first and great commandment that doth require it; but indeed the highest privilege, honour, and happiness of the soul. To this purpose may that profession of the Psalmist's be applied, "I have chosen thy precepts;" and "I have chosen the way of truth." Choosing is an act of judgment and understanding, and respects the quality of the thing, more than the authority of the command. David did not stumble into the way of truth accidentally, by virtue of his education, or acquaintance, or the like circumstance; nor was he whipped or driven into it by the mere severity of a law without him; but he chose the way of truth, as that which was indeed most eligible, pleasant, and desirable. What our blessed Saviour says concerning himself, is also true of every Christian in his measure; he makes it his meat and drink to do the will of God. Now, we know that men do not eat and drink, because physicians prescribe it as a means to preserve life; but the sensual appetite is carried out towards food, because it is good, sweet, suitable: so is the spiritual appetite carried out towards spiritual food, not so much by the force of an external precept, as by the attractive power of that higher good which it finds suitable and sufficient for it. As for the object of this free and generous spirit of religion, it is no other than God himself principally and ultimately, and other things only, as they are subservient to the enjoyment of him. God, as the supreme good, able to fill, and perfectly satisfy all the wants and indigencies of the soul, and so to

make it wholly and eternally happy, is the proper object of the soul's most free and cheerful motions. The soul eyes God as the perfect and absolute good, and God in Christ as a feasible and attainable good, and so finds every way enough in this object, to encourage it to pursue after him, and throw himself upon him. Religion fixes upon God, as upon its own centre, as upon its proper and adequate object; it views God as the infinite and absolute good, and so is drawn to him without any external force. The godly soul is overpowered indeed, but it is only with the infinite goodness of God, which exercises its sovereignty over all the faculties of the soul; which overpowering is so far from straitening or pinching it, that it makes it truly free and generous in its motions. Religion wings the soul, and makes it take a flight freely and swiftly towards God and eternal life: it is of God, and by a sympathy that it hath with him, it carries the soul out after him, and into conjunction with him. In a word, the godly soul being loosed from self-love, emptied of self-fulness, beaten out of all self-satisfaction, and delivered from all self-confining lusts, wills, interests, and ends, and being mightily overcome with a sense of a higher and more excellent good, goes after that freely, centres upon it firmly, grasps after it continually, and had rather be that, than what itself is, as seeing that the nature of that supreme good is infinitely more excellent and desirable than its own.

Thus have I briefly explained and confirmed the freeness of this principle in the truly godly soul: I would now make some little improvement of it, but that it seems needful I should here interweave a cautionary concession or two.

1. It must be granted, that some things without the soul may be motives, in our common sense, and encouragements to the soul to quicken, and hasten, and strengthen it in its religious acts. Though grace be an internal principle, and most free from any constraint, yet it may be excited, or stirred up, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Tim. i. 6. by such means as God hath appointed hereunto, as prayer, meditation, reading, administration of our callings, as the Apostle intimates in the body of that fore-quoted epistle. But perhaps there will a question arise concerning some other things, which may seem to lay a constraint upon the spirits of men. I deny not but that the seemingly religious motions of many men are merely violent, and their devotion is purely forced as we shall see by and by: but I affirm, and I think have confirmed it, that true and sincere religion is perfectly free and unconstrained. This being premised, now, if you ask me, what I think of afflictions; I confess God doth ordinarily use them as means to make good men better, and it may be sometimes to make bad men good: these may be as weights to hasten and speed the soul's motions towards God, but they do not principally beget such motions. If you ask me of temporal prosperity, commonly called mercies and blessings, of promises and rewards propounded; I confess they may be as oil to the wheels, and ought to quicken and encourage to the study of true and powerful godliness; but they are not the spring of the soul's motions; they ought to be unto us, as dew upon the grass, to refresh and fructify the soul; but it is the root which properly gives life and growth.

2. It may be granted, that there is a kind of constraint and necessity lying upon the godly soul, in its holy and most excellent motions ; according to that of the Apostle, “ The love of Christ constraineth us ; ” and again, “ Necessity is laid upon me to preach the gospel.” But yet it holds good, that grace is a most free principle in the soul, and that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. For the constraint that the Apostle speaks of is not opposed to freedom of soul, but to not acting ; now, although the soul, so principled and spirited, cannot but act, yet it acts freely. Those things that are according to nature, though they be done necessarily, yet are they done with the greatest freedom imaginable. The water flows, and the fire burns necessarily, yet freely. Religion is a new nature in the soul ; and the religious soul being touched effectually with the sense, and impressed with the influences of divine goodness, fulness, and perfection, is carried indeed necessarily towards God, as its proper centre, and yet its motions are pure, free, generous, and with the greatest delight and pleasure conceivable. The necessity that lay upon Paul to preach the gospel, is not to be understood of any external violence that was done to him, much less of bodily necessity, by reason of which many men serve their own bellies in that great function, more than the Lord Jesus ; for though he preached the gospel necessarily, yet did he preach freely and willingly, as he oft professeth. The godly soul cannot but love God as his chiefest good, yet he delights in this necessity, under which he lieth, and is exceeding glad that he finds his heart framed and enlarged to love

him. I say enlarged, because God is such an object, as does not contract, and pinch, and straiten the soul, as all created objects do, but ennoble, ampliate, and enlarge it. The sinful soul, the more it lets out, and lays out, and spends itself upon the creature, the more it is straitened and contracted, and the native freedom of it is enslaved, debased, and destroyed : but grace does establish and ennoble the freedom of the soul, and restore it to its primitive perfection : so that a godly soul is never more large, more at rest, more at liberty, than when it finds itself delivered from all self-confining creature-loves and lusts, and under the most powerful influences and constraint of infinite love and goodness.

By this that hath been said of the free and generous spirit of true religion, we may learn what to think of the forced devotion of many pressed soldiers of Christ in his church militant ; that there is a vast difference and distance between the pressed, and the impressed Christian. Though indeed the freedom of the will cannot be destroyed, yet, in opposition to a principle, many men's devotion may be said to be wrung out of them, and their obedience may be said to be constrained. I shall explain it briefly in two or three particulars.

1. Men force themselves, many times, to some things in religion, that are besides, yea, and against, their nature and genius. I need not instance in an overly conformity to the letter of the law, and some external duties which they force themselves to perform, as to hear, pray, to give alms, or the like : in all which the violent and unnatural obedience of the Pharisee may be more popular and specious, than

the true and genuine obedience of a free-born disciple of Jesus Christ. If going on hunting, and catching of venison might denominate a good and dutiful son, Esau may indeed be as acceptable to his father as Jacob; but God is not such a father as Isaac, whose affections were bribed with fat morsels, he feeds not upon the pains of his children, nor drinks the sweat of their brows. I doubt not but that an unprincipled Christian, that hath the heart of a slave, may also force himself to imitate the more spiritual part of religion, and, as it were, to act over the very temper and disposition of a son of God. Therefore we read of a semblance of joy and zeal, which was found in some, whom yet our Saviour reckons no better than "stony ground;" and of great ecstasies in some, whom yet the Apostle supposes may come to nothing, Heb. vi. and what appearance of the most excellent and divine graces of patience, and contempt of the world, many of the sourer sort of monastical Papists, and our mongrel breed of Papists, the Quakers, do make at this day, all men know: nay, some of these last sort do seem to themselves, I believe, to act over the temper and experiences of the chiefest Apostles, rejoicing with Peter, and the rest, that they are "counted worthy to suffer shame," and keeping a catalogue of their stripes with Paul; and in these things, I am confident, to use the Apostle's words, that they think themselves "not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles:" nay, they are not ashamed to lay claim to that grace of graces, self-denial, which they have forced themselves to act over so artificially, that even a wise man might almost be deceived into a favour-

able opinion of them, but that we know that whilst they profess it, they destroy it ; for it is contrary to the nature of self-denial, to magnify and boast itself : and indeed it is very evident to a wise observer, that these men, by a pretence of voluntary humility, and counterfeit self-denial, do, in truth, endeavour most of all to establish, their own righteousness, and erect an idol of self-supremacy in themselves, and do really fall in love with an *αυταρξεια*, or self-sufficiency, instead of the infinite fulness of God.

Now, there seem to be three things in a formal hypocrite, that do especially force a kind of devotion, and show of religion from him, namely, conscience of guilt, self-love, and false apprehensions of God. First, There is in all men a natural conscience of guilt, arising from that imperfect and glimmering light they have of God, and of their duty towards him ; which, though it be in some men more quick and stinging, in others more remiss and languid, yea, I think, is not utterly choked and extinguished, no, not in the worst and most dissolute men, but that it sometimes begets a bitter sadness in the midst of their sweetest merriments, and disturbs their most supine and secure rest, by fastening its stings in their very souls at some time or other, and filling them with agonies and anguish, and haunting them with dreadful apparitions, which they cannot be perfectly rid of, no more than they can run away from themselves. This foundation of hell is laid in the bowels of sin itself, as a preface of eternal horror. Now, although some more profligate and desperate wretches do furiously bluster through these briars, yet others are so caught in them, that they cannot escape these

pangs and throes, except they make a composition, and enter into terms to live more honestly, or, at least, less scandalously. In which undertaking, they are carried on, in the next place, by the power of self-love, or a natural desire of self-preservation : for the worst of men hath so much reason left him, that he could wish that himself were happy, though he have not so much light as to discover, nor so much true freedom of will as to choose, the right way of happiness. Conscience having discovered the certain reward and wages of sin, self-love will easily prompt men to do something or other to escape it. But now, what shall they do ? why, religion is the only expedient that can be found out ; and therefore they begin to think how they may become friends with God ; they will up and be doing. But how come they to run into so great a mistake about religion ? why, their false and gross apprehensions of God drive them from him, in the way of superstition and hypocrisy, instead of leading them in the way of sincere love, and self-resignation to him. Self being the great Diana of every natural man, and the only standard by which he measures all things, he knows not how to judge of God himself, but by this ; and so he comes to fancy God in a dreadful manner, as an austere, passionate, surly, revengeful majesty ; and so something must be done to appease him : but yet he fancies this angry deity to be of an impotent, mercenary temper like himself, and not hard to be appeased neither ; and so imagines that some cheap services, specious oblations, external courtesies, will engage him, and make him a friend ; a sheep, or a goat, or a bullock,

under the Old Testament ; a prayer, or a sacrament, or an alms, under the New : for it is reconciliation to an angry God that he aims at, not union with a good God ; he seeks to be reconciled to God, not united to him, though indeed these two can never be divided. Thus we see how a man, void of the life and spirit of religion, yet forces himself to do God a kind of worship, and pay him a kind of homage.

2. Sometimes men may be said, in a sense, to be forced by other men to put on a vizard of holiness, a dress of religion. And this constraint men may lay upon men by their tongues, hands, and eyes. By their tongues, in the business of education ; often and ardent exhortation and inculcation of things divine and heavenly : and thus an unjust man, like the unjust judge in the gospel, though he fear not God sincerely, yet may be overcome by the importunity of his father, friend, minister, tutor, to do some righteous acts. This seems to have been the case of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, the spring-head of whose religion was no higher than the instructions of his tutor and guardian Jehoiada, the high-priest, 2 Kings xii. 2. By their hands ; that is, either by the enacting and executing of penal laws upon them, or by the holy example which they continually set before them. By their eyes ; that is, by continual observing and watching their behaviour ; when many eyes are upon men, they must do something to satisfy expectations of others, and purchase a reputation to themselves. It may be said that sometimes God doth lay an external force upon men ; as particularly by his severe judgments, or threatenings of judg-

ments awakening them, humbling them, and constraining them to some kind of worship and religion. Such a forced devotion as this was the humiliation of Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. and the supplication of Saul, 1 Sam. xiii. 11, 12. For God himself acting upon men, only from without them, is far from producing a living principle of free and noble religion in the soul.

Now, the better to discern this forced and violent religion, I will briefly describe it by three or four of its properties, with which I will shut up this point.

1. This forced religion is, for the most part, dry and spiritless. I know, indeed, that fancy may be screwed up to a high pitch of joy and frolicsomeness, so as to raise the mind into a kind of rapture, as I have formerly hinted in my discourse upon these words. A mere artificial and counterfeit Christian may be so strongly acted by imagination, and the power of self-love, that he may seem to himself to be fuller of God than the sober and constant soul. You may see how the hypocritical Pharisees, swollen with self-conceit, gloried over the poor man that had been blind, but now saw more than all they: "Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?" And, indeed, over the whole people: "This people that knoweth not the law is cursed." A counterfeit Christian may rise high as a meteor, and blaze much as a comet, which is yet drawn up, by mere force, from the surface of the earth or water. And as to the external and visible acts and duties of religion, which depend much upon the temper and constitution of the body, it may easily be conceived and accounted, how the mimical and mechanical Christian may rise higher than these, and be more zealous,

watchful, and cheerful, than many truly religious and godly men, as having greater power and quickness of fancy, and a greater number of animal spirits, upon which the motions and actions of the body do mainly depend. The animal spirits may so nimbly serve the soul in these corporal acts, that the whole transaction may be a fair imitation of the motions of the divine Spirit, and one would verily think there were a gracious principle in the soul itself. This seems to be notably exemplified in Captain Jehu, whose religious actions, as he would fain have them to be esteemed, 2 Kings x. 16. were indeed rather fury than zeal, and proceeded more from his own fiery spirits, than from that spirit of fire, or spirit of burning, which is of God, Isa. iv. 4. But commonly this forced devotion is jejune and dry, void of zeal and warmth, drives on heavily in pursuit of the God of Israel, as Pharaoh did in pursuit of the Israel of God, when his chariot-wheels were taken off. God's drawing the soul from within, as a principle, doth indeed cause that soul to run after him; but you know the motion of those things that are drawn by external force is commonly heavy, slow, and languid.

2. This forced religion is penurious and needy. Something the slavish-spirited Christian must do, to appease an angry God, or to allay a storming conscience, as I hinted before; but it shall be as little as may be. He is ready to grudge God so much of his time and strength, and find fault that Sabbaths come so thick, and last so long, and that duties are to be performed so often; so he is described by the prophet; "When will the Sabbath be past, and the new moon gone?" But yet I will not deny, but

that this kind of religion may be very liberal and expensive too, and run out much into the branches of external duties, as is the manner of many trees that bear no fruit; for so did the base spirit of the Pharisees, whose often fasting, and long praying, is recorded by our Saviour in the gospel, but not with approbation. Therefore, these are not the things by which you must take measure, and make estimate of your religion. But in the great things of the law, in the grand duties of mortification, self-denial, and resignation; here this forced religion is always very stingy and penurious. In the duties that do nearly touch upon their beloved lusts, they will be as strict with God as may be; they will break with him for a small matter. God must have no more than his due, as they blasphemously phrase it in their hearts; with the slothful servant in the gospel, "Lo, there thou hast that is thine;" self and the world sure may be allowed the rest. They will not part with all for Christ. Is it not a little one? let me escape thither, and take up my abode there, said Lot, Gen. xix. They will not give up themselves entirely unto God: "The Lord pardon me in this one thing," cries Naaman; so they, in this or that, let God hold me excused. The slavish-spirited Christian is never more shrunk up within himself, than when he is to converse with God indeed: but the godly soul is never freer, larger, gladder, than when he doth most intimately and familiarly converse with God. The soul that is free as to liberty, is free also as to liberality and expenses; and that not only in external, but internal and spiritual obedience, and compliance with the will of God: he gives him-

self wholly up to God, knows no interest of his own, keeps no reserve for himself, or for the creature.

3. This forced religion is uneven, as depending upon inconstant causes. As land-floods, that have no spring within themselves, vary their motions,—are swift and slow, high and low, according as they are supplied with rain,—even so these men's motions in religion, depending upon fancy for the most part, than which nothing is more fickle and flitting, have no constancy nor consistency in them. I know, indeed, that the spirits of the best men cannot always keep one pace, nor their lives be always of one piece; but yet they are never willingly quite out of the call or compass of religion. But this I also touched upon formerly. Therefore,

4. This forced religion is not permanent. The meteors will down again, and be choked in the earth, whence they arose. Take away the weight, and the motion ceases; take away Jehoiada, and Jehoash stands still, yea, runs backward. But this I shall speak more to, when I come to speak of the last property of religion,—namely, its perseverance.

CHAPTER IV.

The active and vigorous nature of true religion proved by many scriptural phrases of the most powerful importance ; more particularly explained in three things ;

- 1. In the soul's continual care and study to be good.*
- 2. In its care to do good.*
- 3. In its powerful and incessant longings after the most full enjoyment of God.*

I COME now to the second property of true religion, which is to be found in this phrase, “springing up,” or leaping up; wherein the activity and vigorousness of it is described. Religion, though it be compared to water, yet is no standing pool of water, but a “well of water springing up.” And here the proposition that I shall establish, is, “That true religion is active and vigorous.” It is no lazy and languid thing, but full of life and power: so I find it everywhere described in Scripture, by things that are most active, lively, vigorous, operative, spreading, powerful, and sometimes even by motion itself. As sin is, in Scripture, described by death and darkness, which are a cessation and privation of life, and light, and motion; so religion is described by life, which is active and vigorous; by an angelical life, which is spiritual and powerful; yea a divine life, which is, as I may say, most lively and vivacious. “Christ liveth in me,” and the production of this new nature in the soul is called a quickening, “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;” and the reception of it, a “passing from death unto life.” Again, as sin and wickedness is described by

flesh, which is sluggish and inactive, so this holy principle in the soul is called *spirit*—"The Spirit lusteth against the flesh;" yea, "the Spirit of power," and the "Spirit of life,"—"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." How can the power and activity of any principle be more commended than by saying it is life, and the Spirit of life, and the law of the Spirit of life in the soul? which hath made me sometimes to apply those words of the prophet, as a description of every godly soul, "I am full of power and might by the Spirit of the Lord."

Yea, further, the holy Apostle seems to describe a godly principle in the soul by activity and motion itself, where he gives this excellent character of himself, and this lively description of his religious disposition, as if it were nothing else but activity and fervour; "I follow after, that I may apprehend; I forget those things that are behind, and reach forth unto those things that are before; I press towards the mark," &c. It were too much to comment upon those phrases of like importance, labouring, seeking, striving, fighting, running, wrestling, panting, longing, hungering, thirsting, watching, and many others, which the Holy Ghost makes use of, in the Scriptures, to express the active, industrious, vigorous, diligent, and powerful nature of this divine principle, which God hath put into the souls of his elect. The streams of divine grace, which flow forth from the throne of God, and of the Lamb, into the souls of men, do not cleanse them, and so pass away, like some violent land-flood, that washes

the fields and meadows, and so leaves them to contract as much filth as ever : but the same becomes a “well of water,” continually springing up, boiling, and bubbling, and working in the soul, and sending out fresh rivers, as our Saviour calls them : “ Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

But, more particularly, to unfold the active nature of this divine principle in the soul, we shall consider it in these three particulars, namely, as it is still conforming to God, doing for him, and longing after him.

1. The active and sprightly nature of true godliness, or religion planted by God in the soul, shows itself, in a continued care and study to be good, to conform more and more to the nature of the blessed God, the glorious pattern of all perfection. The nature of God being infinitely and absolutely perfect, is the only rule of perfection to the creature. If we speak of goodness, our Saviour tells us, that God alone is good, Luke xviii. 19. of wisdom, the Apostle tells us, that God is only wise, 1 Tim. i. 17. of power, he is omnipotent, Rev. xix. 6. of mercy and kindness, he is love itself, 1 John iv. 8. Men are only good by way of participation from God, and in a way of assimilation to him : so that, though good men may be imitated, and followed, yet it must be with this limitation, as far as they are followers of God : the great Apostle durst not press his example any further, “ Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” But the nature of God being infinitely and absolutely perfect, is to be eyed and imitated singly, entirely, universally, in all things wherein the creature is capable of following him, and

becoming like unto him. So Christians are required to look up unto the Father of lights, the fountain of all perfections, and to take from him the pattern of their dispositions and conversations, to eye him continually, and, eyeing him, to derive an image of him, not into their eye, as we do by sensible objects, but into their souls, to polish and frame them into the most clear and lively resemblances of him; that is, in the language of Scripture, to be "perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect," to be "holy as God is holy." And thus the genuine children of God are described by the Holy Ghost, they are "followers of God." This is the shortest, but the surest and clearest mark that can be given of a good man, "a follower of God." They are not owned for the children of God, who are created by him, nor they who have a notional knowledge of him, who profess him, or exhibit some external worship and service to him in the world, but they that imitate him: the true children of Abraham were not those that were descended from him, or boasted of him, but they that did the works of Abraham, John viii. 39. even so are they only the offspring of heaven, the true and dear children of the living God, who are followers of him; "be ye followers of God as dear children." A godly soul having its eyes opened, to behold the infinite beauty, purity, and perfection, of that good God, whose nature is the very fountain, and must, therefore, be the rule of all goodness, presently comes to undervalue all created excellencies, both in itself, and all the world besides, as to any satisfaction that is to be had in them, or any perfection that can be acquired by them, and cannot endure

to take up with any lower good, or live by any lower rule than God himself. A godly man, having the unclean and rebellious spirit cast out, and being once reconciled to the nature of God, is daily labouring to be more intimately united thereunto, and to be all that God is, as far as he is capable,—the nature of God being infinitely more pure and perfect, and more desirable than his own. Religion is a participation of life from him, who is life itself, and so must needs be an active principle, spreading itself in the soul, and causing the soul to spread itself in God: and, therefore, the kingdom of heaven, which, in many places of the gospel, I take to be nothing else but this divine principle in the soul, which is both the truest heaven, and most properly a kingdom (for thereby God doth most powerfully reign and exercise his sovereignty, and most excellently display and manifest his glory in the world) is compared to “seed sown in good ground,” which both springeth up into a blade, and bringeth forth fruit; to mustard-seed, which spreadeth itself, and groweth great, so that the birds of the air may lodge in the branches thereof; to leaven, spreading itself through the whole quantity of meal, and leavening the whole, and all the parts of it. By a like similitude, the path of the just is compared to a shining light, whose glory and lustre increaseth continually, “shining more and more unto the perfect day;” which continual growing up of the holy soul into God, is excellently described by the Apostle, in an elegant metaphor, “We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory;” that is, from

one resemblance of divine glory to another. The gracious soul not being contented with its present attainments, and having in its eye a perfect and absolute good, forgets that which is behind, and labours, prays, strives, and studies, to get the perfections of God more clearly copied out upon itself, and itself, as much as may be, swallowed up in the Divinity. It covets earnestly these best things, to be perfected in grace and holiness, to have divine characters more fair and legible, divine impressions more deep and lively, divine life more strong and powerful, and the communicable image of the blessed God spread quite over it, and through it. A godly soul is not content to receive of Christ's fulness, but labours to be filled with the fulness, with all the fulness of God; he rejoices, indeed, that he hath received of Christ grace for grace, as a child hath limb for limb with his father; but this his joy is not fulfilled, except he find himself adding daily some cubits to his infant-stature; nor indeed then neither, nor can it be, until he come to the measure of the stature of his Lord, and be grown up unto him in all things, who is the head, even Christ. He delights and glories in God, beholding his spices growing in his soul; but that does not satisfy him, except he may see them flowing out also. He is neither barren nor unfruitful, as the Apostle Peter speaks; but that is not enough, he desires to be fat and fruitful also, as a watered garden, as the Prophet expresseth it, even as the garden of God. The Spirit lusteth against the flesh, and struggles with it in the same womb of the soul, as Jacob with Esau, until he had cast him out. The seed of God warreth continually against

the seed of the serpent, raging and restless, like Jehu, shooting, and stabbing, and strangling all he meets with, till none at all remain of the family of that Ahab, who had formerly been his master. Oh how does the godly and devout soul long to have Christ's victory carried on in itself, to have Christ going on in him conquering and to conquer, till at length the very last enemy be subdued; that the Prince of peace may ride triumphantly through all the coasts and regions of his heart and life, and not so much as a dog move his tongue against him! This holy principle which is of God in the soul, is actually industrious too; it doth not fold the arms together, hide its hand in its bosom, faintly wishing to obtain a final conquest over its enemies, but advances itself with a noble stoutness against lusts and passions, even as the sun glorieth against the darkness of the night, until it hath chased it all away. The godly soul puts itself under the banner of Christ, fights under the conduct of the angel of God's presence, and so marches up undauntedly against the children of Anak, those earthly loves, lusts, sensual affections, which are indeed taller and stronger than all other enemies that encounter it in this wilderness state: and the gracious God is not wanting to such endeavours, he "remembering his promise, helpeth his servants," even that promise, that "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." A true Israelitish soul, impregnated with this noble and heroic principle, is not like those slothful Israelites, that were content with what they had got of the holy land, and either could not, or cared not to enlarge their border. But he makes war upon the

remainder of the Canaanites, and is never at rest till he have, with Sarah, cast out the bond-woman and her son too. You may see an emblem of such a soul in Moses holding up his hands all the day long, till Amalek was quite discomfited, *Exod. xvii.* As oft as the floods of temptation, springing from the devil, the world, or the flesh, do offer to come in upon him, he opposeth them in the strength of Christ; or, if you will, in the prophet's phrase, "The Spirit of the Lord lifteth up a standard against them;" so that he is not carried down by them, or, at least, not overwhelmed with them. In the beginning of my discourse upon this head, I hinted to you the reason why the godly soul continually studies conformity to God, even because he is the perfect and absolute good, and the soul reckons that its happiness consists only in being like unto him, in partaking of a divine nature. But I might also here take occasion to speak of three things, which I will but briefly name, and so pass on.

1st, A godly man reckons with himself, that conformity to the image and nature of God, is the most proper conversing with God in the world. The great, and indeed only employment of an immortal soul, is to converse with its Creator; for this end it was made, and made so capacious as we see it: now, to partake of a divine nature, to be endued with a God-like disposition, is most properly to converse with God; this is a real, powerful, practical, and feeling converse with him, infinitely to be preferred before all notions, professions, performances, or speculations.

2dly, A godly man reckons that the image of

God is the glory and ornament of the soul; it is the lustre, and brightness, and beauty of the soul, as the soul is of the body. Holiness is not only the duty, but the highest honour and dignity that any created nature is capable of: and, therefore, the godly soul, who hath his senses exercised to discern good and evil, pursues after it, as after his full and proper perfection.

3dly, A godly man reckons, that conformity to the divine image, participation of the divine nature, is the surest and most comfortable evidence of divine love, which is a matter of so great inquiry in the world. By growing up daily in Christ Jesus, we are infallibly assured of our implantation into him. The Spirit of God descending upon the soul in the impressions of meekness, kindness, uprightness, which is a dove-like disposition, is a better, and more desirable evidence of our sonship, and God's favour towards us, than if we had the Spirit descending upon our heads in a dove-like shape, as it did upon our blessed Saviour. These are the reasons, why the religious Christian, above all things, labours to become God-like, to be formed more and more into a resemblance of the supreme good, and to drink in divine perfections into the very inmost of his soul.

2. The active and industrious nature of true godliness, or religion, manifests itself in a good man's continual care and study to do good, to serve the interest of the holy and blessed God in the world. A good man being mastered with the sense of the infinite goodness of God, and the great end of his life, cannot think it worth while to spend himself for

any inferior good, or bestow his time and strength for any lower end than that is; and, therefore, as it is the main happiness of his life to enjoy God, so he makes it the main business of his life to serve him,—to be doing for him, to lay out himself for him, and to display and propagate his glory in the world. And, as he is ravished with the apprehensions of the supreme goodness, which doth infinitely deserve, and may justly challenge, all that he can do or expend for him, so he doth indeed really partake of the active and communicative nature of that blessed being, and himself becomes active and communicative too: a godly soul sluggish and inactive, is as if one should say, a godly soul altogether unlike to God; a pure contradiction. I cannot dwell upon any of those particular designs of serving the interest of God's glory, which a good man is still driving on in the world: only this, in general, whether he pray, or preach, or read, or celebrate Sabbaths, or administer private reproof or instruction, or indeed plough or sow, eat or drink, all this while he lives not to himself, but serves a higher interest than that of the flesh, and a higher good than himself, or any created being. A true Christian activity doth not only appear in those things which we call duties of worship, or religious performances, but in the whole frame of the heart contriving, and the conversation expressing and unfolding, the glory of God. A holy, serious, heavenly, humble, sober, righteous, and self-denying course of life, does most excellently express the divine glory, by imitating the nature of God, and most effectually calls all men to the imitation of it; according as our Saviour hath

nakedly stated the case: "Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit." By which fruits are not to be understood only preaching, praying, conference, which are indeed high and excellent duties; but also righteousness, temperance, self-denial, which things are pure reflections of the divine image, and a real glorifying of God's name and perfections. A good Christian cannot be content to be happy alone, to be still drawing down heaven into his own soul; but he endeavours also, by prayer, counsel, and holy example, to draw up the souls of other men heaven-ward. This God witnesseth of Abraham: "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord;" and this Moses doth excellently witness of himself in that holy rapture of his, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!" By such examples as these a good man desires to live, yea, by higher precedents than either Abraham or Moses, even by the example of the Father and of the Son. He admires, and strives to imitate, that character which is given of God himself, "Thou art good, and dost good;" and that which is given of Christ Jesus, the Lord of life, who "went about doing good;" who also witnessed elsewhere concerning himself, that he came not into the world to do his own will, nor seek his own glory, but the will and glory of him that sent him: and, again, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Oh how happy would the godly soul count itself, if it could but live and converse in the world in the

same manner, and with the same devout, fervent, exalted spirit, as Christ Jesus did, whose meat and drink it was, still to be doing the will, and advancing the glory, of his Father ! But, alas ! the poor soul finds itself insnared by passions, and selfish affections from within, clogged with an unwieldy body, and distracted with secular affairs from without, that it cannot rise so nimbly, run so swiftly, nor serve the infinite and glorious God so cheerfully, nor liberally, as it would ; and, therefore, the poor prisoner sighs within itself, and wishes that it might escape : but finding a certain time determined upon it in the body, which it must be content to live out, it looks up, and is ready to envy the angels of God, because it cannot live as they do, who are always upon God's errand, and almost thinks much that itself is not a ministering spirit, serving the pure and perfect will of the supreme good, without grudging or ceasing. The godly soul, under these powerful apprehensions of the nature of God, the example of Christ, and the honourable office of the holy angels, is ready to grudge the body that attendance that it calls for, and those offices which it is forced to perform to it ; as judging them impertinent to its main happiness, and most excellent employment. It is ready to envy that more cheerful and willing service, which it finds from the heavy and drossy body with which it is united, and to cry out, Oh that I were that to my God, which my body, my eyes, hands, and feet, are to me ! for I say to one of these, Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Do this, and he doth it. In a word, a good man being acquainted feelingly with the highest good, eyeing diligently the great end of

his coming into the world, and his short time of being in it, serves the eternal and blessed God, lives upon eternal designs, and, by consecrating all his actions unto God, gives a kind of immortality to them, which are in themselves flitting and transient: he counts it a reproach to any man, much more to a godly man, to do any thing insignificantly, much more to live impertinently; and he reckons all things that have not a tendency to the highest good, and a subserviency to the great and last end, to be impertinencies, yea, and absurdities in an immortal soul, which should continually be “springing up into everlasting life.”

3. The active and vigorous nature of true religion, manifests itself in those powerful and incessant longings after God, with which it fills that soul in which it is planted. This I superadd to the two former, because the godly man, though he be formed into some likeness to God, yet desires to be more like him; and though he be somewhat serviceable to him, yet desires to be more instrumental to his will: though he be good, yet he desires to be better; and though he do good, yet he desires to do better, or or at least more. And, indeed, I reckon that these sincere and holy hungerings after God, which I am going to speak of, are one of the best signs that I know in the world of spiritual health, and the best criterion of a true Christian: for, in this low and animal state, we are better acquainted with lovings and languishings, than with fruition or satisfaction; and the best enjoyment that we have of God in this world, is but scant and short, indeed but a kind of longing to enjoy him. Love is certainly a high and

noble affection ; but alas ! our love, whilst we are here in the body, is in its nonage, in its weak and sickly state, rather a longing, than a loving ; much unlike to what it will be, when it shall be grown up unto its perfect stature in glory. But this sickly kind of languishing affection, is a certain symptom of a healthful constitution ; or, as the Apostle calls it, of “ the spirit of a sound mind.” Godly souls are thirsty souls, always gasping after the living springs of divine grace, even as the parched desert gapeth for the dew of heaven, the early and the latter rain. One would wonder what kind of magic there was in Elijah’s mantle, that the very casting of it upon Elisha should make him leave oxen and plough, yea, father and mother, and all, to run after a stranger : Elijah himself seems to wonder at it, “ What have I done to thee ?” Oh, but what a mighty charm is there in divine love ! which, when it is once shed abroad in the soul, makes the soul to spread itself in it, and to it, as the heliotrope attending the motions of the sun, and turning itself every way towards it, welcoming its warm and refreshing beams. Elijah passing by Elisha as he was at plough, and catching him with his mantle, is but a scant resemblance of the blessed God passing by a carnal mind, and wrapping it in the mantle of his love, and thereby causing it to run, yea, to fly swiftly after him. If divine grace do but once touch the soul, the soul presently sticks to it, as the needle to the loadstone. They that heard Christ Jesus chiding the winds and the waves, cried out, “ What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him ?” but if one had been present when he called James and

John from their nets, Matthew from the custom-house, and Zaccheus from the tree, and by calling made them willing to come, would have cried out, sure, what manner of God is this ! that, by his bare word, makes poor men leave their trades and livelihood, and rich men their gainful exactions, usuries, oppressions, to follow him ; and shows them no reason why. What a mighty virtue is there in the ointment of Christ's name, that as soon as it is poured out, the virgins fall in love with him ? Micah cried out, when he was in pursuit of his gods, and should they ask him what ailed him ? And will ye wonder that a holy soul, in pursuit of the holy God, should be in earnest ; that he should run, and cry as he runs ? as I have seen a fond child whom the father or mother have endeavoured to leave behind them. God breathing into the soul, makes the soul breathe after him, and in a mixture of holy disdain and anger, to thrust away from itself all distracting companions, occasions, and concerns, saying, with Ephraim to her idols, " Get ye hence." The soul thus inspired is so far from prostituting itself to any earthly, sensual, selfish lusts and loves, that it cannot brook any thing that would weaken it in the prosecution of the highest good ; it is impatient of every thing that would either stop or slacken its motions after God. The godly man desires still to be doing something for God indeed ; but if the case so fall out, that he cannot spend his life for God as he desires, yet he will be spending his soul upon him : though he cannot perpetually abide upon the knee of prayer, yet he would be continually upon the wing of faith and love : when his tongue cleaves to the

roof of his mouth, that he cannot speak for God, yet his soul shall cleave unto him, and complain because it can speak no longer. For faith and love are knitting graces, and do long to make the soul as much one with their object, as is possible for the creature to be with its Creator. Religion puts a restless appetite into the soul after a higher good, and makes it throw itself into his arms, and wind itself into his embraces, longing to be in a more intimate conjunction with him, or rather entirely wrapped up in him: itself is an unsatiable and covetous principle in the soul, much like to the daughter of the horse-leech, crying continually, "Give, give:" what the prophet speaks rhetorically of hell, is also true concerning this offspring of heaven, in the soul, "it enlargeth itself, and openeth its mouth without measure." The spirit of true godliness seems to be altogether such, that it cannot rest in any measures of grace, or be fully contented with any of its attainments in this life; but ardently longs to receive the more plentiful communications of love, the more deep and legible impressions of grace, the more clear and ample experiences of divine assistance, the more sensible evidences of divine favour, the more powerful and ravishing illapses and incomes of divine consolation into itself; "let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." Such is the spirit of true godliness, that the weakest that is endued with it, longs to be as David, and the Davids to be as God, as the angel of the Lord, according to that promise, "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be

as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." The godly soul that is in his right senses, under the powerful apprehensions of the loveliness of God, and the beauty of holiness, cannot be content to live by any lower instance than that of David, whose soul even broke for the longing that it had unto the Lord; or that of the spouse, who was even "sick of love." You have read of the mother of Sisera, looking out at the window, waiting for his coming, and crying through the lattice, "Why is his chariot so long in coming; why tarry the wheels of his chariot?" But this is not to be compared to the earnest expectation of the creature, the new creature, waiting for the manifestation of God; which the Apostle elegantly expresseth, and yet seems to labour for words, as if he could not sufficiently express it neither, Rom. viii. 23. You have read of the Israelites marching up towards the promised land, and murmuring that they were held so long in the wilderness: but the true Israelitish soul makes more haste with less discontent, marches as under the conduct of the Angel of God's presence, and longs to arrive at its rest; but, alas! it is held in the wilderness too; and therefore cannot be fully quiet in itself, but sends forth spies to view the land, the scouts of faith and hope, like Caleb and Joshua, those men of another spirit; and these go and walk through the holy land, and return home to the soul, and come back, not as Noah's dove, with an olive leaf in her mouth, but with some clusters in their hands, they bring the soul a taste of the good things of the kingdom, of the glories of her eternal state; yea, the soul itself marches up to possess the land, goes out, with the

spouse in the Canticles, to meet the Lord, to seek him whom her soul loveth. Religion is a sacred fire, kept burning in the temple of the soul continually, which being once kindled from heaven, never goes out, but burns up heaven-wards, as the nature of fire is. This fire is kept alive in the soul to all eternity, though sometimes, through the ashes of earthly cares and concerns cast into it, or the sun of earthly prosperity shining upon it, it may sometimes burn more dimly, and seem almost as if it were quite smothered; this fire is for sacrifice too, though sacrifice be not always offered upon it; the same fire of faith and love, which offered up the morning sacrifice, is kept alive all the day long, and is ready to kindle the evening sacrifice too, when the appointed time of it shall come. In this chariot of fire it is, that the soul is continually carried out towards God, and accomplisheth a kind of glorification daily; and when it finds itself firmly seated, and swiftly carried herein, it no longer envies the translation of Elias. The spirit of sanctification is in the soul, as a burning fire shut up in the bones, which makes the soul weary with forbearing, and so powerful in longings, that it cannot stay: as the spirit of prophecy is described, Jer. xx. it is more true of the Spirit of God than of the spirit of Elihu, the spirit within constraineth, and even presseth, the soul, so that it is ready to swoon and faint away for very vehemence of longing. See the amorous spouse falling into one of these fainting fits, and crying out mainly for some cordial from heaven to keep up her sinking spirits, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love.” Oh

beautiful and blessed sight, a soul working towards God, gasping, and longing, and labouring, after its proper happiness and perfection! Well, the sinking soul is relieved; Christ Jesus reacheth forth his left hand to her head, and his right hand embraceth her; and now she recovers, her hanging hands lift up themselves, and the beauties of her fading complexion are restored; now she sits down “under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto her taste.” See here the fairest sight on this side heaven; a soul resting, and glorying, and spreading itself in the arms of God, growing up in him, growing great in him, growing full in his fullness, and perfectly ravished with his pure love! O my soul, be not content to live by any lower instance? “Did not our hearts burn within us,” said the two disciples one to the other, “whilst he talked with us?” But the soul in which the sacred fire of love is powerfully kindled, doth not only burn towards God, whilst he is more familiarly present with it, and, as it were, blows upon it; but if he seem to withdraw from it, it burns after him still: “My Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; I sought him; I called him.” And if the fire begin to languish, and seem as if it would go out, the holy soul is startled presently, and labours, as the Apostle speaks, to revive it, and blow it up again; calls upon itself to awake, to arise and pursue, to mend its pace, and to speed its heavy and sluggish motions. This divine active principle in the soul maintains a continual striving, a holy struggling, and stretching forth of the soul towards God, a bold and ardent contention after the supreme good; religion hath the

strength of the Divinity in it, its motions towards its object are quick and potent. That elegant description which the prophet makes of the wicked heart, with some change, may be brought to express this excellent temper of the godly soul; it is like the working sea which cannot rest; and although its waters do not cast up mire and dirt, yet, in a holy impatience, they rise and swell, and cast up a froth and foam towards heaven. In a word, that I may comprise many things in few expressions, no man so ambitious as the humble, none so covetous as the heavenly-minded, none so voluptuous as the self-denying. Religion gives a largeness and wideness to the soul, which sin, and self, and the world, had straitened and confined; but his ambition is only to be great in God, his covetousness is only to be filled with all the fulness of God, and his voluptuousness is only to drink of the rivers of his pure pleasures: he desires to taste the God whom he sees, and to be satisfied with the God whom he tastes. Oh now, how are all the faculties of the soul awakened to attendance upon the Lord of life! It hearkens for the sound of his feet coming, the noise of his hands knocking at the door; it stands upon its watch-tower, waiting for his appearing, waiting more earnestly than they that watch for the morning, and rejoices to meet him at his coming; and having met him, runs into his arms, kisses him, holds him, and will not let him go, but brings him into the house, and entertains him in the guest-chamber; the soul complains that itself is not large enough, that there is not room enough to entertain so glorious a guest, no, not though it have given

him all the room that it hath ; it entertains him with the widest arms, and the sweetest smiles ; and if he depart and withdraw, fetches him again with the deepest groans, Return, return, O Prince of peace, and make me an everlasting habitation of righteousness unto thyself !

It will not be amiss here briefly to touch upon the reason of the godly soul's so ardent pantings after God. And here I might show first, negatively, that it springs not from any carnal ambition of being better and higher than others, not from any carnal hope of impunity and safety, nor merely from the bitter sense of pressing and tormenting afflictions in this life. But I shall rather insist upon it affirmatively. These earnest breathings after God spring from the feeling apprehensions of self-indigency and insufficiency, and the powerful sense of divine goodness and fulness ; they are begotten of the divine bounty and self-sufficiency, manifesting itself to the spirits of men, and conceived and brought forth by a deep sense of self-poverty. One might almost apply the Apostle's words to this purpose, " We receive the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in him." I shall not discourse upon these two heads disjunctly, but frame them into one notion, and so you may take it thus ; these holy longings of the godly soul after God, do arise from the sense of its distance from God. To be so far distant from God, who is life and love itself, and the proper and full happiness of the soul, is grievous to the soul that is rightly affected towards him : and hence it is that the soul cannot be at rest, but still longs to be more intimately joined to him,

and more perfectly filled with him : and the clearer the soul's apprehensions are of its object, and the deeper its sense is of its own unlikeness to him, and distance from him, the more strong and impatient are its breathings; insomuch that not only fear, as the Apostle speaks, but even love itself sometimes seems to itself to have a kind of agony and torment in itself; which made the spouse cry, she was sick of love, that is, sick of every thing that kept her from her love, sick of that distance at which she stood from her beloved Lord. The godly soul being ravished with the infinite sweetness and goodness of God, longs to be that rather than what itself is; and beholding how it is estranged from him, by many sensual loves, selfish passions, corporeal clogs and distractions, bewails its distance, and cries out within itself, " Oh when shall I come and appear before God ! " Oh when will God come and appear gloriously to me and in me ! " Who will deliver me from this body of death ! " Oh that mortality were swallowed up of life ! David's soul did wait for God as earnestly, and more properly, than they that watch for the morning; they may be said rather to be weary of the long and cold and troublesome night, than properly covetous of the day; but he, out of a pure and spiritual sense of his estrangement from God, longs to appear before him, and be wrapped up in him. Heal the godly man of all his afflictions, grievances, adversities in the world, that he may have nothing to trouble him, nor put him to pain; yet he is not quiet, he is in pain because of the distance at which he stands from God : give him the whole world, and all the glory of it, yet he has not

enough; he still cries, and craves, "Give, give," because he is not entirely swallowed up in God: he openeth his mouth wide, as the Psalmist speaks, and all the silver and gold, peace, health, liberty, preferment, that you cast into it, cannot fill it; because they are not God, he cannot look upon them as his chiefest good. In a word, a godly man doth not so much say, in the sense either of sin or affliction, "Oh that one would give me the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!" as in the sense of his dissimilitude to, and distance from God, Oh that one would give me the wings of an angel, that I might fly away towards heaven!

CHAPTER V.

An expostulation with Christians concerning their remiss and sluggish temper ; an attempt to convince them of it by some considerations ; which are, 1. The activity of worldly men. 2. The restless appetites of the body. 3. The strong propensions of every creature towards its own centre : an inquiry into the slothfulness and inactivity of Christian souls. The grace of faith vindicated from the slander of being merely passive. A short attempt to awaken Christians unto greater vigour and activity.

WE have seen in what respects religion is an active principle in the soul where it is seated ; give me leave to enlarge a little here for conviction or reprehension. By this property of true religion we shall be able to discover much that is false and counterfeit in the world. If religion be no lazy, languid, sluggish, passive thing, but life, love, the spirit of power and freedom, a fire burning, a well of water springing up, as we have sufficiently seen, what shall we say then of that heavy, sluggish, spiritless kind of religion that most men take up with ? Shall we call it a spirit of life, with the Apostle ; and yet allow of a religion that is cold and dead ? Shall we call it a spirit of love and power, with the same Apostle ; and yet allow of it, though it be indifferent, low, and impotent ? Or will such pass for current with the wise and holy God, if we should pass a favourable censure upon it ? And why should it ever pass with men, if it will not for-

ever pass with God? But, indeed, how can this inactivity and sluggishness pass for religion amongst men? Who can think you are in pursuit of the infinite and supreme good, that sees you so slow in your motions towards it? Who can think that your treasure is in heaven, that sees your heart so far from thence? The more any thing partakes of God, and the nearer it comes to him who is the fountain of life, and power, and virtue, the more active, powerful, and lively will it be. We read of an atheistical generation in Zeph. i. 12. who fancied to themselves an idle and slothful God, that minded not the affairs of the world at all, saying, “The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil;” which was also the false and gross conceit of many of the heathen, as Cicero confesses of some of the philosophers themselves, “who maintain that God has no power in himself, and can impart no power to any other:” and, indeed, though it be not so blasphemous, yet it is almost as absurd, to fancy an idle saint, as an idle deity. Sure I am, if it be not altogether impossible, yet it is altogether a shameful and deformed sight; a holy soul in a lethargy, a godly soul that is not in pursuit of God. Moses indeed bids Israel “stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord;” but there is no such divinity in the Holy Scriptures as this, ‘stand still and see the salvation of the soul,’ though some have violently pressed those words, Exod. xiv. 13. to serve under their slothful standard: no, no, the Scripture speaks to us in another manner—“work out your own salvation:” and, indeed, the Spirit of God doth every where describe religion by the activity, industry,

vigour, and quietness of it, as I hinted in the very beginning of this discourse, and could abundantly confirm and explain, if there were need of it.

But that I may more powerfully convince and awaken the lazy and heavy spirit and temper of many professors, I will briefly touch upon a few particulars, which I will next propound to their serious consideration.

1. The children of this world, earthly and sensual men, are not so slothful, so lazy, so indifferent in the pursuit of earthly and sensual objects. You say you have laid up your treasure in heaven; we know they have laid up their treasure in the earth: now, who is it that behaves himself more suitably and seemly towards his treasure? You or they? You say you have a treasure in heaven, and are content to be able to say so, but make no haste to be fully and feelingly possessed of it, to enjoy the benefit and sweetness of it. But they “rise up early and sit up late,” and either pine themselves, or eat the bread of sorrow, to obtain earthly and perishing inheritances; they compass the world, travel far, sell all to purchase that part which is of so great price with them: and when they have accomplished it, Oh how do they set their heart upon it, bind up their souls in the same bags with their money, and seal up their affections together with it: yea, and they are not at rest neither, but find a gnawing hunger upon their hearts after more still, to add house to house, and land to land, and one bag to another;—the covetous miser is ready to sit down and wring his hands, because he hath no more hands to scrape with; the voluptuous epicure

is angry that he hath not the neck of a crane the better to taste his dainties; and ambitious Alexander, when he domineer's over the known world, is ready to sit down and whine, because there are no more worlds to conquer. What Christian but must be ashamed of himself, when he reads the description which Plautus, the comedian, makes of a covetous worldling, under the person of Euclio, how he hid his pot of gold, heeded it, watched it, visited it almost every hour, would not go from it in the day, could not sleep for it in the night, suspected every body that so much as looked towards it, and by all means kept it even as his life? For where is the like eager and ardent disposition to be found in a Christian towards God himself? Tell me, is it possible for a man that vehemently loves a virgin, to be content all his life long to court her at a distance, and not care whether ever he do actually enjoy her or not? Or must not such a one necessarily pursue a matrimonial and most intimate union with her? Let us now confess the truth, and every one judge himself.

2. This dull and earthly body, is not so indifferently affected towards meat and drink, and rest, and the things that serve its necessities, and gratify its temper. Hunger will break down stone walls, and thirst will give away a kingdom for a cup of water; sickness will not be eased by good words, nor will a drowsy brain be bribed by any entertainments of company or recreation: no, no, the necessities of the body must and will be relieved with food, and physic, and sleep; the restless and raging appetite will never cease calling and crying to the soul for supplies till

it arise and give them. Behold, O my soul ! consider the mighty and incessant appetites and tendencies of the body after sensual objects, after its suitable good and proper perfection, and be ashamed of thy more remiss and sluggish inclinations towards the highest good, a God-like perfection?

3. No creature in the whole world is so languid, slow, and indifferent, in its motions towards its proper rest and centre. How easy were it to call heaven and earth to witness the free, pleasant, cheerful, eager addresses of every creature according to its kind, towards its own centre and happiness? The sun in the firmament rejoices to run its race, and will not stand still one moment, except it be miraculously overpowered by the command of God himself; 'the rivers seem to be in pain, till by a continued flowing, they have accomplished to themselves a kind of perfection, and be swallowed up in the bosom of the ocean, except they be benumbed with cold, or otherwise over-mastered and retarded by foreign violence. I need not instance in sensitives and vegetatives; all which, you know, with a natural vigour and activity, grow up daily towards a perfect state and stature. Were it not a strange and monstrous sight, to see a stone settling in the air, and not working towards its centre? Such a spectacle is a godly soul settling upon earth, and not endeavouring a nearer and more intimate union with its God. Wherefore, Christians, either cease to pretend that you have chosen God for your portion, centre, happiness, or else arise and cease not to pursue and accomplish the closest union and the most familiar conjunction with him that your souls are capable of: otherwise I call heaven

and earth to witness against you this day: and the day is coming, when you will be put to shame by the whole creation. Doth every, even the meanest creature of God, pursue its end and perfection, and proper happiness, with ardent and vehement longings; and shall a soul, the noblest of all creatures, stand folding up itself in itself, or choking up its wide and divine capacity with dust and dirt? Shall a godly soul, the noblest of all souls, hang the wings, suspend its motions towards the supreme good, or so much as once offer to faint and languish in its enterprizes for eternal life? Tell it not at Athens, publish it not at Rome, lest the heathen philosophers deride, and hiss us out of the world.

But you will ask me, when a Christian may be said to be sluggish and inactive? and who these lazy souls are? I will premise two things, and then give you a brief account of them. 1. When I speak of a sluggish and spiritless religion, I do not speak as the hot-spirited Anabaptists or Chiliasts, who being themselves acted by a strange fervour of mind, mis-called zeal, are wont to declaim against all men as cold and benumbed in their spirits, who do not call for fire from heaven to consume all dissenters, under the notion of Antichristian; who are not afraid to reproach the divine, holy, gentle, yet generous spirit of religion, calling it weak, womanish, cowardly, low, cold, and I know not what. These men, I believe, so far as I can guess at their spirit, if they had lived in the days of our Saviour, and had beheld that gentle, meek, humble, peaceable spirit, which did infinitely shine forth in him, would have gone nigh to have reprov'd him for not carrying on his own

kingdom with sufficient vigour and activity; if not have judged Christ himself to be much Antichristian. I hope you see nothing, in all my discoveries of the active spirit of religion, that savours of such a fiery spirit as this. 2. When I do so highly commend the active spirit of true religion, and the vigorous temper of truly religious souls, I would not be understood, as if I thought all such souls were alike swift, or that any such soul did always move with like swiftness, and keep a like pace towards God. I know that there are different degrees of active souls, yea, and different degrees of activity in the same soul, as may be seen, Cant. v. 3. compared with the sixth verse of the same chapter, and in many other places of Scripture.

But yet, that none may flatter and deceive themselves with an opinion of their being what indeed they are not, I will briefly discover the sluggishness and inactivity of Christians in a few particulars. I pray take it not ill though the greater part of Christians be found guilty; for that is no other than what Christ himself hath prophesied.

1. The active spirit of religion in the soul will not suffer men to take up their rest in a constant course of external performances; and they are but slothful souls that place their religion in any thing without them. By external performances, I mean not only open, and public, and solemn services, but even the most private, and secret performances that are in and by the body, and without the soul. It is not possible that a soul should be happy in any thing that is extrinsical to itself, no not in God himself, if we consider him only as something without

the soul: the devil himself knows and sees much of God without him; but, having no communications of a divine nature or life, being perfectly estranged from the life of God, he remains perfectly miserable. I doubt it is a common deceit in the world; men toil and labour in bodily acts of worship and religion in a slavish and mercenary manner, and think, with those labourers in the parable, that, at the end, they must needs receive great wages, and much thanks, because they have borne the heat and burden of the day. Alas! that ever men should so grossly mistake the nature of religion, as to sink it into a few bodily acts and carcase-services, and to think it is nothing else but a running the round of duties and ordinances, and a keeping up a constant set and course of actions! Such an external legal righteousness the Apostle Paul, after his conversion, could not take up with, but counted it all loss and dung in comparison of that God-like righteousness which was now brought into his soul, that inward and spiritual conformity to Christ, which was now wrought in him: "That I may be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection; and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." I know indeed that men will be loath to confess that they place their religion in any thing without them; but, I pray, consider seriously wherein you excel other men, save only in praying, or hearing now and then, or some other outward acts, and judge yourselves by your nature, and not by your actions.

2. The active spirit of religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer men to take up their rest in a mere pardon of sin ; and they are but slothful souls that could be so satisfied. Blessed is the man indeed “ whose iniquities are pardoned.” But if we could suppose a soul to be acquitted of the guilt of all sin, and yet to lie bound under the dominion of lusts and passions, and to live without God in the world, he were yet far from true blessedness. A real hell and misery will arise out of the very bowels of sin and wickedness, though there should be no reserve of fire and brimstone in the world to come. It is utterly impossible that a soul should be happy out of God, though it had the greatest security imaginable that it should never suffer any thing from him. The highest care and ambition indeed of a slavish and mercenary spirit, is to be secured from the wrath and vengeance of God, but the breathings of the ingenuous and holy soul are after a divine life, and God-like perfections. This right gracious temper you may see in David, which is also the temper of every truly religious soul : “ Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence ; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ; and uphold me with thy free spirit.”

3. The active spirit of religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer men to take up their rest in mere innocency, freedom from sin ; and they are slothful souls that could count it happiness enough to be harmless. I doubt men are much mistaken about

holiness ; it is more than mere innocency, or freedom from the guilt or power of sin, it is not a negative thing ; there is something active, noble, divine, powerful, in true religion. A soul that rightly understands its own penury and self-insufficiency, and the emptiness and meanness of all creature-good, cannot possibly take up its rest, or place its happiness in any thing but in a real participation of God himself ; and therefore is continually making out towards that God from whom it came, and is labouring to unite itself more and more unto him. Let a low-spirited, fleshly-minded Pharisee take up with a negative holiness and happiness, as he doth, “ God, I thank thee, that I am not ” so and so ; a noble and high-spirited Christian cannot take up his rest in any negation or freedom from sin. Every godly soul is not so learned, indeed, as to be able to describe the nature and proper perfection of a soul, and to tell you how the happiness of a soul consists, not in cessation and rest, as the happiness of a stone doth, but in life, and power, and vigour, as the happiness of God himself doth : but yet the spirit of true religion is so excellent and powerful in every godly soul, that it is still carrying it to the fuller enjoyment of a higher good ; and the soul doth find and feel within itself, though it cannot discourse philosophically of these things, that though it were free from all disturbance of sin and affliction in the world, yet still it wants some supreme and possible good to make it completely happy, and so bends all its power thitherward. This is the description which you will every where find made in Scripture of the true spirit of holiness, which hath always some-

thing positive and divine in it, as “Cease to do evil, learn to do well;” and “Put off the old man—put on that new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” And, accordingly, a truly godly soul, to use the Apostle’s words, though he know nothing by himself, yet doth not thereby count himself happy.

4. The active spirit of true religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer men to take up their rest in some measures of grace received; and so far as the soul doth so, it is sluggish and less active than it ought to be. This, indeed, oftentimes comes to pass, when the soul is under some distemper of proud selfishness, earthly-mindedness, or the like; or is less apprehensive of its object and happiness; as it seems to have been the case of the spouse, “I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?” Some such fainting fits, languishings, surfeitings, insensibleness, must be allowed to be in the godly soul during its imprisoned and imperfect state: but we must not judge ourselves by any present distempers, or infirmities. The nature of religion, when it acts the soul rightly and powerfully, is to carry after it a more lively resemblance of God, which is the most proper and excellent enjoyment of him. A mind rightly and actually sound is most sick of love; and the nature of love is, not to know when it is near enough to its object, but still to long after the most perfect conjunction with it. This well of water, if it be not violently obstructed for a time, is ever springing up till it be swallowed up in the ocean of divine love and grace. The soul that is rightly acquainted with

itself and its God, sees something still wanting in itself, and to be enjoyed in him, which makes it that it cannot be at rest, but is still springing up into him, till it come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of its Lord. In this holy, loving, longing, striving, active temper, we find the great Apostle : “ Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect ; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended : but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” And by how much the more of divine grace any soul hath drunk in, the more thirsty is it after much more.

5. The active spirit of true religion, where it is powerfully seated in the minds of men, will not suffer them to settle into a love of this animal life, nor indeed suffer them to be content to live for ever in such a kind of body as this ; and that soul is in a degree lazy and slothful, that doth not desire to depart and be with his Lord. The godly soul eyeing God as his perfect and full happiness, and finding that his being in the body doth separate him from God, keeps him in a poor and imperfect state, and hinders his blissful communion with the highest good, groans within itself, with the Apostle, that “ mortality were swallowed up of life.” I know not how much, but I think he hath not very much of God, neither sight of him, nor love of him, that could be content to abide for ever in this imperfect,

mixed, low state, and never be perfected in the full enjoyment of him. And it seems, that they in whom the love of God is rightly predominant, potent, flourishing, do also look earnestly “for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,” as without doubt they ought to do: “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God!”

Let this suffice by way of general reprehension.

2. More particularly, the consideration of the active nature of true religion may well serve to correct a mistake about that noble grace of faith. How dishonourably do some speak of this excellent and powerful grace, when they make it to be a slothful, passive thing, an idle kind of waiting, or a melancholic sitting still; where, in deed and in truth, it is life and power. Be not mistaken in so high and eminent a grace: true faith doth not only accept the imputed righteousness of Christ for justification, but by a lively dependence upon God, drinks in divine influences, and eagerly draws in grace, and virtue, and life, from the fountain of grace, for its more perfect sanctification: and for this cause, I think, a purifying virtue is ascribed to it, Acts xv. 9. Faith is not a lazy, languid thing, content to wait for salvation till the world to come; but it is even now gasping after it, and accomplishing it too in a way of mortification, self-denial, and growing up in God: it is not content to be a candidate waiting for life and happiness, but is actually drawing down heaven into the soul, attracting God to itself, sucking in participations of divine grace and image into the soul: its

motto is that of the famous painter, “No day without a line :” it longs to find some divine lineament, some line of God’s image drawn upon the soul daily. Faith is a giving grace, as well as receiving ; it gives up the whole soul to God, and is troubled that it can give him no more ; it binds over the soul afresh to God every day, and is troubled that it can bind it no faster, nor closer to him. The believing soul is wearied because of murderers, murdering loves, lusts, cares, earthly pleasures, and calls mightily upon Christ, to come and take vengeance upon them : it is wearied because of those robbers that are daily stealing away precious time and affections from God, which are due unto him, and calls upon Christ, to come and scourge these thieves, these buyers and sellers out of his own temple. In a word, the godly soul is active, and faith is the very life and action of the soul itself.

Lastly, Let me exhort all Christians from hence to be zealous, to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, and longing after him : “Stir up the grace of God that is in you :” quench not, that is, blow up, inflame the Spirit of God in you. Awake, Christian soul, out of thy lethargy, and rejoice, as the sun, to run the race that is set before thee, and, as a mighty man refreshed with wine, to fight thy spiritual battles against the armies of uncircumcised, profane, and earthly concupiscences, love, and passions. Eye God as your centre, the enjoyment of him as the happiness, and full conformity to him as the perfection, of your souls ; and then say, Awake, arise, O my soul, and hide not thy hand in thy bosom, but throw thyself into the very heart and bosom of

God; lay hold upon eternal life. Again, observe how all things in the world pursue their several perfections with unwearied and impatient longings, and say, Come, my soul, and do thou likewise. Converse not with God, so much under the notion of a lawgiver, but as with love itself; nor with his commands, as having authority in them, but as having goodness, and life, and sweetness in them. Again, consider your poverty as creatures, and how utterly impossible it is for you to be happy in yourselves, and say, Arise, O my soul, from off this weak and tottering foundation, and build thyself upon God; cease pinching thyself within the straits of self-sufficiencies, and come, stretch thyself upon infinite goodness and fulness. Again, pore not upon your attainments; do not sit brooding upon your present accomplishments, but forget the things that are behind, and say, Awake, O my soul; there is yet infinitely much more in God; pursue after him for it, till thou hast gotten as much as a created being is capable to receive of the divine nature. In a word, take heed you live not by the lowest examples, (which thing keeps many in a dwindling state all their days) but by the highest: read over the spouse's temper, "sick of love;" David's temper, "waiting for God more than they that watch for the morning—breaking in heart for the longing that he had to the Lord," and say, Arise, O my soul, and live as high as the highest; it is no fault to desire to be as good; as holy, as happy as an angel of God. "And thus, O my soul, open thy mouth wide, and God hath promised to fill thee!"

CHAPTER VI.

That religion is a lasting and persevering principle in the souls of men. The grounds of this perseverance assigned ; first, negatively, it doth not arise from the absolute impossibility of losing of grace in the creature, nor from the strength of man's free-will. Secondly, affirmatively, the grace of election cannot fail. The grace of justification is neither suspended nor violated : the covenant of grace is everlasting : the Mediator of this covenant lives for ever : the promises of it immutable ; the righteousness brought in by the Messiah everlasting. An objection answered concerning a regenerate man's willing his own apostacy. An objection answered, drawn from the falls of saints in Scripture. A discovery of counterfeit religion, and the shameful apostacy of false professors. An encouragement to all holy diligence, from the consideration of this doctrine.

I COME now to the third property of true religion contained in these words, and that is, the perseverance of it. And here the foundation of my following discourse shall be this proposition,

“ True religion is a lasting and persevering principle in the souls of good men.” It is said of the hypocritical Jews, that their goodness was as the “early dew, that soon passes away.” But that principle of goodness which God planteth in the souls of his people, is compared to a well of water, evermore sending forth fresh streams, and incessantly springing up towards God himself. Our Saviour compares hypocritical professors to “seed sown upon stony

ground," that springs up indeed, but soon withers away, but this well of water, which is in the sincere godly soul, springs up into everlasting life; it springs and is never dried up; "it is a spring of water, whose waters fail not," or lies not, as it is expressed by the Prophet, Isa. lviii. 11. or if you look upon it under the metaphor of oil, as it is sometimes expressed in Scripture, then it is truly that oil that faileth not, whereof the widow of Sarepta's cruise of oil was but a scant resemblance. Amongst other texts which the learned Dr. Arrowsmith brings to prove the infallibility of the perseverance of saints, this saying of our Saviour's, which is the subject of my whole discourse, is one; who also quoteth Theophylact for the same opinion, namely, the perseverance of this principle, yea, and somewhat more, even the growth and multiplication of it. To the same purpose the same excellent author quoteth John x. 27, 28. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." In which words our Saviour strongly asserteth the certain glorification of his elect, by using a verb of the present tense, "I give unto them eternal life;" he will as certainly give it them, as if they had it already; except the words do imply that they have it already, namely, the beginnings of it, even in this life: and if so, then the words do yet more strongly assert the doctrine of perseverance; for how can that life be called eternal, which may be ended? In the same words, he seemeth purposely to prevent fears, and before-hand to answer objections, by securing

them both from internal and external enemies ; “ they shall never perish,” namely, of their own accord ; “ neither shall any pluck them out of my hand :” for the word in the original is such as doth secure them from the power of devils as well as men ; and what is said of the church in general, is also certain concerning every true member of it in particular ; “ the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Christ hath not only chosen and ordained his people that they should be holy, but also that they should persevere in holiness ; not only that they should bring forth good fruits, but that their “ fruits should remain.” Hence they are said to be “ born again of incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever.” And he that is born of God, is said to have the seed of God in him, and remaining in him, and so remaining in him as that he shall never again commit sin, that is, shall not become any more ungodly, 1 John iii. 9. To all which may be added that strong and strengthening text, “ I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord :” which one text doth excellently assert both those high and comfortable doctrines of assurance and perseverance ; and they are worthy to be honoured in the church of God, who have vindicated it from the corrupt glosses and cavils of the Papists, who have endeavoured to rob Christians of the sweetness which may be drawn out of that pregnant honey-comb. In a word, let the holy Psalmist’s experience of the supporting virtue of

this doctrine shut up the proof of it at present, who found himself wonderfully comforted by it after all his fears and falls, where he sings of the loving-kindness of the Lord in time past; "Thou hast holden me by my right hand;" and, at present, "I am continually with thee;" that is, thou art continually with me; and, with the like courage and confidence, he speaks of all time to come, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." Now, although the doctrine of the perseverance of saints be thus fully and clearly laid down in Scripture, yet it is easy to err, in giving an account of it, and of the grounds of it. And, therefore, I shall proceed to the grounds of it, which I shall briefly lay down negatively and affirmatively. First, negatively.

1. The certain perseverance of the saints in a state of grace, doth not arise from the absolute impossibility of losing of grace in the creature: it is one thing to affirm, that grace shall not be lost, and another thing to affirm, that it is absolutely unloseable. God hath told us, that the world shall no more be drowned, but who will say for all that, that it is not in itself capable of drowning? Whilst we think to honour God by asserting the permanency of grace, we must take heed lest we make a god of grace, and so dishonour him. Grace, as it is in God, in the fountain, which divines sometimes call active grace, is eternal and unchangeable, not subject to any defection or alteration. There is no time, or place, or case, wherein the love and goodness of God faileth towards his elect. It is one and the same in God towards his people, even when they

are under the greatest desertions, and have no sense at all of it. We must not say the sun is grown dark, as oft as a dark cloud interposeth between it and our sight. Yea, however, it be most certain, that the pure and holy God hateth sin even in his elect, yet it is also certain, that the good and gracious God loveth the persons of his saints, even at what time they sin: "For the love of God towards the regenerate," saith Davenant, "is not founded upon their perfect purity and holiness, but upon Christ Jesus the Mediator, who hath transferred their sins upon himself, and so hath redeemed them from the wrath of God." The love and kindness of God towards his people is absolutely unchangeable and everlasting. But grace in the creature, itself being a creature, is not simply and absolutely unchangeable or unloseable: there is a possibility of losing inherent grace, if it be considered in itself; yea, and it would actually be lost and perish, but that God upholdeth his people with one hand, whilst he exerciseth them with the other. Though, with all my might, I desire to maintain the perseverance of the saints, yet I dare not, as the manner of some is, ground it upon the firmness and rootedness of faith in man, but upon the goodness and faithfulness of God, which is such towards his elect, that he will "keep them by his mighty power through faith unto salvation," as the Apostle expresseth it.

2. It doth not arise from the strength of man's free-will, as if he were, of himself, able to keep himself for ever in a state of grace, when God had once put him into it. The saints, indeed, shall for ever will their own perseverance, as we shall see after-

wards; but it is God that worketh in them even this will. Man's own free-will, or self-sufficiency, is so far from being the ground of his perseverance in grace and holiness, that I do believe nothing in the world is more directly contrary to grace, than habitual and predominant self-confidence; and, even in the saints themselves, there is nothing that tends more towards their apostacy, than this self-conceit and confidence of their own strength, as something distinct from God, though the same be not habitual and predominant; for they themselves are many times sadly weakened and set back by that means, and suffer many lamentable spiritual decays. This seems to have sometimes been the case of Hezekiah, and of David too, and had like to have been the case of Paul, when he had so much abounded in revelations, 2 Cor. xii. 7. Sure it is, that nothing doth more estrange the hearts of God's people from him, nor bind up the influences of divine grace and favour from them, than this security, confidence in the strength of their own wills, and vain opinion of self-sufficiency, which thing the sad experience of holy Christians doth attest: not only the apostles James and Peter, but indeed all the true disciples of Christ in the world, agree to that proverb, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." In a word, though "to do justly, and to love mercy," have indeed much of religion in them, yet unto perseverance, it is also required that a man deny himself and the sufficiency of his own free-will; and, in the prophet's expression, "walk humbly with his God." You know whose boast it was, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I

never be offended;" and again, " Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;" and what was the lamentable consequence of this self-confidence, you know likewise. Wherefore, let him that standeth by his own strength, take heed lest he fall.

I proceed now to speak something affirmatively concerning the grounds of the saints' perseverance in a state of grace. I have already showed you that active grace is absolutely of an immutable nature; and although passive grace be not so, yet it shall not be totally and finally lost. For,

1. The grace of election cannot fail. When I think of that uncertain, conditional, mutable decree of saving men, which some ascribe to God, who is infinite and eternal wisdom and oneness, methinks I may, with great reason, apply the Apostle's words, spoken concerning himself, and say, when God is thus graciously minded to elect his people to eternal life, " Doth he use lightness; or the things that he purposeth, doth he purpose according to the flesh," after the manner of men, who are unsteady and wavering in their determinations? Is there with him " Yea, yea, and nay, nay?" What doth the Apostle mean by those words, " The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his?" The Apostle, in the foregoing verse, having related the apostacy of Hymeneus and Philetus, and the overthrow of some men's faith by their means, immediately subjoins this comfortable doctrine of the steadfastness and firmness of God's decrees of election, to prevent the offence which the saints might take against the falls

of others, and to relieve them against the fears that they might possibly conceive concerning their own perseverance; *q. d.* let no one be offended, as if the salvation of the elect were uncertain. It appears that these men were none of God's elect, because they are seduced, and the faith that they had is overthrown. And as for your part who are elected, fear not lest ye also should apostatise; it is not possible to deceive the elect in the necessary and fundamental truths of the gospel: fear not lest ye also should be drawn away by the error of the wicked unto perdition; "for the foundation of God standeth sure," &c. In which sentence, says Dr. Arrowsmith, almost every word breathes firmness and performance: nothing is more sure in a building than the foundation; that you may not doubt of that, it is also called sure, or steady. This sure foundation is said to stand, that is, say the Dutch annotators, abideth steadfast and certain; for it is the foundation, not of man's laying, but of God, with whom there is "no variableness nor shadow of change." Yea, further, this foundation is said to be sealed: now, what is accounted more firm and sure than those things which are sealed with a seal, especially such a seal as this, "The Lord knoweth who are his?" Though the wisest of men are oft deceived in their opinions, yet the knowledge of God is infinitely infallible. According to that of Austin, "If any of the elect perish, God is deceived: but God is not deceived; therefore, none of the elect can perish, for the Lord knoweth who are his." When Samuel, indeed, went to separate one of the sons of Jesse from the rest of his brethren to be king over Israel, he first

pitched upon Eliab, and afterwards rejected him; but God is guilty of no such inconstancy in that eternal election which he makes of men to be kings and priests unto himself. Those several acts of divine grace mentioned, Rom. viii. 29, 30. though they be many links, yet run one into another, and all, from first to last, make up but one chain; concerning which divine and mysterious concatenation, one may boldly use that peremptory prohibition which our Lord useth concerning a less indissoluble conjunction, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

2. The grace of justification is neither suspended nor violated; it admits neither of intercision nor rescision, neither of pause nor period. There is nothing between justification and glorification in the Apostle's sentence, but the copulative *and*, Rom. viii. 30. there is nothing between a justified soul and glory, but a mere passage into it. May we be allowed to triumph with the holy Apostle in the same chapter, "Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect? It is God that justifieth." But what though you be at present justified, may some say, Is there not a possibility of being unjustified again? May not the righteousness of the righteous be taken from him? may you not be condemned hereafter? But "who is he that shall condemn us? It is Christ that died." As if the Apostle had said, The love of God towards his justified ones is not grounded upon their purity, loveliness, or perfection, but it is founded upon their Redeemer; which Redeemer hath done enough, both to bring them into a justified state, and to keep them in it for ever. It

is Christ that died to free them from sin; it is Christ that is risen again for their justification; “who is at the right hand of God,” to deliver them from all their enemies, that maketh intercession for them, for their perseverance. God loves nothing but the communications of himself. So far as any thing partakes of the divine image, so far it partakes of divine favour and complacency; so that, whilst a good man bears a resemblance to God, so long he shall be accepted of him, and embraced in the arms of his love; and that shall be for ever, as we shall see under the next head. Until you have blotted out all the image and superscription of God out of a godly soul; until you have razed out all the stamps and impressions of goodness; in a word, until you have rendered him wicked and ungodly, you cannot abandon him from the embraces of God: which thing men and devils shall never be able to do, as I have partly showed already, and shall yet show more at large.

It is true, indeed, that Adam fell from a just state, though not from a justified state; for that supposes sin formerly committed. But this is no great wonder; for he had his righteousness in himself, and his happiness in his own keeping: but the condition of believers is now more safe and firm, as depending not upon any created power or will, but upon the infinite and effectual help and strength of a Mediator, which will never fail.

3. The covenant of grace is everlasting. It hath pleased God to enter into a covenant of grace and peace with every believing soul; which, I suppose, I need not go about to prove, all Christians acknow-

ledging it, though they do not all agree in one notion of it. Now, this covenant, wherein God engages himself to be their God (for that is the summary contents of it on his part) is expressly called by the Apostle, "the everlasting covenant." And again, Jer. xxxii. 40. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them;" which covenant, and the everlastingness of it, are fully explained in the following words, "I will not turn away from them to do them good;" the inviolable nature of this covenant is also expressly asserted in that famous place, Jer. xxxi. 31, 32. "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, (which my covenant they brake;)" as if he had said, I will make a covenant that shall not be subject to breaches. In the former covenant with their fathers, I gave them laws to keep, which they kept not; but, in the new covenant, I will give them also a heart to keep my laws; it is not possible that covenant should be broken, one principal part of which is a heart both able and willing to keep it. The similitudes which God useth in the 35th, 36th, and 37th verses of that same chapter, do also further confirm and illustrate this doctrine of the everlastingness of this covenant of grace.

Under this head let me glance at three things.

1. The Mediator of this covenant lives for ever, and lives to make intercession for believers, and from this the Apostle argues, that they shall be saved to the uttermost, or evermore, as the margin reads it. From this, also, the Apostle argues the unchangeable state of believers, as we observed be-

fore, out of Rom. viii. 34. Christ Jesus is always heard and accepted of the Father, in all the requests that he maketh to him, according to that in John xi. 41, 42. "Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me always." If these things be so, then the perseverance of the saints is built upon a most certain foundation, is secured against the very gates of hell; for Christ hath prayed for them that they may be where he is, and, in the meantime, that they may be kept "from the evil," and that their "faith fail not."

The promises of this covenant are immutable, "they are in Christ Jesus yea and amen;" as if one should say in Latin, *Certo certiora*, 'perfectly sure and certain.' God, who is truth itself, will not, cannot be unto his people as a liar, or "as waters that fail," as the prophet's phrase is; the infinite fountain of grace and truth cannot possibly become like one of the brooks which Job speaks of, which seem to be full of water, and are so at a certain winter season; but when the poor scorched Arabian comes to look for water in summer, he goes away ashamed, because they are now vanished, they are consumed out of their place. Now, the promise is concerning not only grace, but the final perseverance of it: if he promise pardoning grace, it is in these full and satisfying expressions, "I will remember their sin (any one of their sins) no more." If he promise purging and purifying grace, it is in the like amplitude of phrase, "that they may fear me for ever;" and, again, "they shall not depart from me," with many other places of like importance.

3. The righteousness brought in by this Mediator is “an everlasting righteousness,” as it is expressly called, Dan. ix. 24. by which I do not understand the righteousness of justification, (which was always one and the same, and there was never any righteousness of that kind temporary or fading) but the righteousness of real internal sanctification, in opposition to that positive and temporary righteousness, which depended upon the pleasure of God that did prescribe it. This righteousness brought in and advanced by Christ, (who, in a powerful and vital way, dispenseth the same by his Holy Spirit unto the minds and souls of men,) is not only true and inward, in opposition to the Pharisaical, which was an external conformity only, but it is of an everlasting and unchangeable nature, as being grounded upon, and indeed conformable to eternal and unchangeable truth, in opposition to that temporary kind of righteousness which was grounded upon positive laws, and the arbitrary commands of God, if I may so call them. This eternal righteousness is by Christ Jesus, the Prince of life, put into the very souls of men, and, being a plant of his planting, shall never be plucked up. We read, indeed, in the prophet Ezekiel, that the glory of God departed out of the temple made with hands; but this glory of God, his image, shall never depart out of the living temple, the souls of good men, having once powerfully displayed itself there. And therefore God is said to dwell in the souls of his people, in opposition to a wayfaring man, “who turneth in to tarry for a night.” God indeed hath promised, that it shall be said to them that were not his people,

“Ye are the sons of the living God,” but never on the contrary; he hath no where threatened them that are the sons of the living God, that it shall at any time be said to them, ye are not my people. True indeed, as to external profession, church-membership, mere covenant holiness, and outward communion, God doth many times disinherit and reject them that were so his people: but, as to true godliness, participation of the divine image, internal and spiritual communion, we may confidently say, with the Apostle to the Corinthians, “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;” or, with the same Apostle to the Thessalonians, “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” Do what? why, that which he was speaking of, and praying for, namely, “Preserve spirit, and soul, and body, blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I conclude then, that grace in the creature is a participation of him who is essential and perfect grace and goodness; a communication made by him of his holy nature, which becomes a living principle in the souls of men; a fountain sending forth a continued stream of holy dispositions and affections without intercession or cessation: though these streams run sometimes higher, sometimes lower, sometimes swifter, sometimes slower, yet they are never wholly dried up as the brooks of Tema were. For, where God hath once opened a fountain in the soul, he feeds it with fresh supplies from himself, as a fountain itself would dry up, if it were not nourished by the supplies of subterraneous waters. The perseverance of grace depends purely upon the supports and sup-

plies of uncreated essential life and goodness. But how do we know that God will certainly afford these supplies? We build upon his goodness and love in Christ towards his elect, which is infinite and unspeakable; and upon his faithfulness in accomplishing his promise, namely, that “he will never leave nor forsake them,” that “he will keep them by his power unto salvation.” They that are of the number of God’s holy and chosen ones, shall, no doubt, continue of that number according to that in 1 John ii. 19. They that are truly in Christ shall abide in him. The seed of God remaineth in the godly, and they cannot sin, because they are born of God. “He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” What can be more express and ample than that consolatory promise of our Lord, made to his poor frail sheep, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.”

But some one may say, perhaps, what if man will apostatize? What if the saints themselves will forsake God? Will he not then say of them as the Apostle of the unbelieving husband, “If they will depart, let them depart?” Will not God forsake them that forsake him?

Ans. Yes, God will forsake them that forsake him; but they never shall forsake him: they being rightly renewed after the image of God, and perfectly overpowered by his grace, shall never will any such departure: “I will betroth thee unto me for ever.” “It is certain,” says Dr. Arrowsmith, “that God will condemn all impenitent sinners; but it is as certain that all justified and regenerate sinners shall

repent;—this always occurs through the influence of the Spirit.” It seems unreasonable to demand, what if man himself will apostatize? seeing he is, by the grace of God, so renewed in his will, and put into such a condition, that he cannot will any such thing. “God doth not give unto his saints,” saith Austin, “only such help, without which they could not persevere if they would (which was that which he gave Adam;) but he also worketh in them the will: that because they shall not persevere except they both can and will, his bountiful grace bestoweth upon them both the *can* and the *will*: for their will is so inflamed by the Spirit of God, that they therefore can, because they so will, they therefore so will, because God worketh in them to will.” Neither is it any disparagement or injury to the freedom of man’s will, that it should be overpowered by divine grace, and determined only to that which is good. The indifferency and fluctuation of the will of man is indeed the imperfection of it; and the more God reveals himself to the soul, as the chiefest good, the more this indifferency of the will is destroyed, and the faculty is determined; not by being constrained, but indeed perfected. Oh unhappy liberty, for a soul to be indifferently affected towards its own happiness, and to be free to choose its own misery! The noblest freedom in the world is, when a soul, being delivered from its hesitancies, and healed of its indifferences, is carried like a ship, with spread sails and powerful winds, in a most speedy, cheerful, and steady course into its own harbour, into the arms and embraces of its own object. The grace of God doth never so overpower the will of man, as to

reduce it to a condition of slavery, so as that man should not have a proper dominion over his own acts; but I think we do generally conclude, that, in the world to come, in the future state, the wills of all glorified saints shall be so advanced and perfected in their freedom, as not in the least to verge towards any thing that is evil, but shall in the most gladsome and steady manner be eternally carried towards their full and glorious object, which the glorified understanding shall then represent in a most true, clear, and ample manner; and this we take to be the soul's truest liberty in the highest elevation of it. Now, although it be not altogether thus with us in this present world, (for by reason of the weakness and muddiness of our understandings, which do here represent God to us so faintly and disadvantageously, it comes to pass that the will cannot so freely and fervently, with so ardent and generous motions, pursue its excellent object, as it shall do hereafter,) yet I believe that the more God reveals himself to any soul, the more the fluctuations and equilibrinousness of it are healed, and a true liberty of will increased; and that he doth so far reveal himself to every truly godly soul, as to establish this noble freedom in him, in such a degree as will keep him from willing a final departure from him, and carry him certainly, (how remissly and faintly soever) towards the supreme and sovereign good, till he come to be perfectly swallowed up in it. A will thus truly and divinely free, though it be not the proper efficient cause, yet certainly is an inseparable concomitant of final perseverance. So then, the more God communicateth himself to any soul, the more powerfully it willet a

nearer conjunction with him; and no soul, I conceive, to whom God communicateth himself savingly, can at any time will an utter separation from him.

As for the foulest falls of Scripture saints, that are any where recorded, I know not what more can rationally be inferred from them, but that grace in the creature admits of ebbs and flows, is subject to augmentations and diminutions; which I know no sober person that denies. But, I think, the history of their lapses, if we take it altogether, hath a very favourable aspect upon the doctrine of perseverance; yea, for aught I know, one great design of God, in penning those relations, might be to confirm this very doctrine, by giving us so express and ample an account of their repentance and recovery, that we are indeed to believe they were strengthened by their falls, so far were their falls from proving mortal to them. One would think, that if ever the habits of grace should be utterly suffocated and extinct, if ever they should languish even unto death, it should be under the power of such contrary acts as David and Peter committed; and especially Solomon, whose acts, for aught I can see, were as foul, and also often repeated, which is the likeliest thing that I know to destroy gracious habits. I know there are instances given of good Jehoash, Hymeneus, Alexander, Demas, utterly falling from that gracious state, wherein sometimes they had been; but it did never yet appear to me beyond contradiction, that ever they were any of them in such a state. Jehoash is put amongst the number of hypocrites, by some that have examined his story; and, for aught that can evidently appear to the contrary, Demas might be

no better. Most is pleaded for Hymeneus and Alexander, who put away a good conscience, and made shipwreck of faith, 1 Tim. i. 19. But it does not yet appear, that the faith which they made shipwreck of was any more than the profession or doctrine of the true faith; yea, rather, it doth appear that it was no more. Neither does it at all appear that they ever had that good conscience, which they are said, in our translation, to have put away, which may as fitly be rendered *rejected*; for that we find to be the most common use of the Greek word *απωθειω*—to reject, repel, or thrust away from one. I am not confident that this apostacy of theirs was total neither, supposing it to be an apostacy; for however their faith was shipwrecked, possibly some plank or other of it might be left. And who dare say that it was final? The Apostle doth not, that I perceive, give them up for lost, but executes discipline upon them, as it seems, for their recovery, of which one might think, by the following words, that he had some hopes,—“that they may learn not to blaspheme.” In short, then, as to these two men, I conceive, that good conscience which they put away they never had, and the faith which they had was not that good faith. And, as to the other two that were named, and indeed as to all other instances of the like nature, I suppose we may give this general answer; that either they did but seem to stand, or they did but seem to fall: the former, perhaps, was the case of Jehoshaphat, the latter of Demas. Whenever you observe, therefore, the backslidings of any seeming Christians, take heed of concluding rashly against the perseverance of saints; but rather infer

with the holy Apostle, " They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us:" which words, if they be meant only of a communion in doctrine and profession, so as to conclude against the separation of such as are indeed in such a communion, then we may argue the more strongly, from the less to the greater, against the final apostacy of any that are in a higher and more excellent communion.

As for those texts of Scripture that seem to suppose a man's falling away from grace, and turning from righteousness, I conceive a fair answer may be given to them, by the distinguishing of righteousness; and so it may be granted, that many men have turned away from, and utterly made shipwreck of, their legal righteousness, consisting in an external conformity to the letter of the precepts of the law, void of the supernatural and divine principle: it is indeed the common lot of these men that spring up thus fairly, and yet have no root, to wither away. And yet, on the other hand, it abides an everlasting maxim of truth, " Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." If there be any texts that seem to speak of apostatizing from an evangelical righteousness, a righteousness of faith, and so cannot well be solved by this distinction, as that in Heb. x. 38. and some others; it must be considered that suppositions are made of things impossible as well as possible, yea, and that even in the Scriptures themselves, as some have observed from Gal. i. 8. 1 Cor. xv. 14. which texts do not at all imply what they suppose. I know, indeed, that

eternal salvation is ordinarily entailed upon perseverance, and so is promised to us in Scripture, as it were conditionally: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." "You hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy, and unblamable, and unreprouvable in his sight; if ye continue in the faith, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel," &c. To the same purpose are those words: "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved;" and, "He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give," &c. All which do strongly imply, that there is no salvation but in a way of perseverance; and the words being laid down thus conditionally, especially the words first quoted, are indeed cautionary and quickening to the dull and sluggish minds of men, but do not necessarily imply any uncertainty or doubtfulness in the thing itself, no more than those words of the Apostle Peter, 1 Peter i. 10. compared with the latter end of the twelfth verse, where he doth affirm them to be established in the truth, and yet, at the same time, doth speak to them by way of caution and encouragement. There are many texts that seem to suppose the apostacy of men in a state of regeneration, but not one that doth assert it, that ever I could yet find; but they are almost without number, that, to my apprehension, do more than seem to assert the contrary, namely, their final perseverance: of which perseverance we have also, through the goodness of God, thousands of instances; but no man could ever yet produce one instance of the contrary, but by mere conjecture; which conjectures,

let them that make them, see that they neither be overcharitable towards men, or uncharitable towards God. Wherefore I do conclude, that what is said concerning heaven and hell in the parable, as to one branch of it, is true of grace and wickedness; a gulf is fixed, and they that would pass from God to sin and the devil cannot: not that there shall ever be in any a real and predominant desire so to pass, as I suppose I have already proved; but it denotes the impossibility of the thing. It is equally impossible that a godly soul should fall from God, and become a hater of him, fall from his love and image, and take upon him the image of the devil, as it was for Lazarus to quit Abraham's bosom for the flames of hell. The case seems to be the same, the former being the most real heaven, and the latter the truest hell. True religion is that holy fire, which, being once kindled in the soul from heaven, never goes out; whereof the fire of the altar was but a faint and imperfect resemblance; it is as true, in this respect, of good men, as it is of wicked men in another, "their fire never goes out."

And here, now, we are presented with another great difference between true and counterfeit religion. All counterfeit religion will fade in time, though ever so specious and flourishing; all dew will pass away, though some lie much longer than other; all land-floods will fail; yea, the flood of Noah at length dried up, though it were of many months' duration. But this well of water, which our Saviour speaks of here, will never utterly fail; cold adversity cannot freeze it up; scorching prosperity cannot dry it up; the upper springs of uncreated grace and goodness

will evermore feed those nether springs of grace and holiness in the creature. Though heaven and earth pass away, yet shall the seed of God remain, "He that hath begun a good work will certainly perform it." Where the grace of God hath begotten a divine principle and spirit of true religion in a soul, there is the central force even of heaven itself, still attracting, and carrying the soul in its motions thitherward, until it have lodged it in the very bosom and heart of God. If any principle lower than true religion do actuate a man, it will certainly waste and be exhausted; though it may carry him swiftly in a rapid motion, yet not in a steady; though it may carry him high, yet not quite through. A meteor that is exhaled from the earth by a foreign force, though it may mount high in appearance, and brave it in a blaze, enough to be envied by the poor twinkling stars, and to be admired by ordinary spectators, yet its fate is to fall down, and shamefully confess its base original. That religion which men put on only for a cloak, will wear out and drop into rags, if it be not presently thrown by as a garment of fashion. You have read of the seeming righteousness of Jehu, founded in ambition and cruelty, the piety and devotion of Jehoash, grounded upon a good and virtuous education, the zeal of Saul for the worship of God, and his fat sacrifices, growing upon a root of superstition, as Samuel, that man of God, interprets it, 1 Sam. xv. 22. and you have seen the shameful issue of all these dissemblers, and the stinking snuff in which all this candle-light religion ended, very much unlike to that sun-light lustre of true and genuine goodness, "which shineth more and more

unto the perfect day," according to that elegant description which the Spirit of God makes of it in the writings of Solomon, whose pen hath as much adorned this great truth as his life hath blotted it: "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." To this purpose I might fairly allege the frequent testimonies which the Holy Ghost in Scripture gives concerning such hypocritical and unprincipled professors; that, having no root, they wither away in a scorching season, that they are again entangled in the pollutions of the world, and overcome, that, like dogs, they turn to their own vomit again, and, like sows, wallow in the mire from which they had been washed, together with many others of the same nature: as also the prophecies that are made concerning them, that that which they seemed to have shall be taken away from them, that they shall proceed no further; "for their folly shall be manifest unto all men," that "evil men and seducers," and of those, self-seducers are the worst, "shall wax worse and worse," with other places of the like nature. It were easy to record many histories of many men, especially great men, who have speedily, I had almost said, disdainfully, thrown off that semblance of humility, meekness, self-denial, justice, and faithfulness, which they had put on, for a vizard, during their probationaryship for preferment, the better to accomplish their selfish designs, and to be possessed of some base ends of their own. But yet I will not deny, but that a hypocrite may maintain a fair conformity to, and correspondence with, the letter of the law of God; he may continue fair and specious to

the very end of his life; yea, perhaps, may go to his grave undiscovered either to himself, or any in the world besides. I believe many men have lived and died Pharisees, have never apostatized from that righteousness which they professed, but have persevered in their formality and hypocrisy to the last. But yet, although that counterfeit righteousness and religion may possibly not fade away, yet, nevertheless, being of an earthly and selfish constitution, it is transitory and fading; and, if it were soundly assaulted and battered with persecutions and temptations, no doubt, would actually vanish and disappear: on the other hand, the promise of God is pregnant and precious, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall walk and not faint."

Take encouragement from hence, all ye that love the Lord; go on in the strength of God; be the more lively, by how much the more you are assured that this well of water shall spring up in you into everlasting life. Make this good use of this comfortable doctrine: will God, indeed, work in you "both to will and to do?" why, then, so much the rather "work out your own salvation," according to the Apostle. "Will the Lord God be with you? will he not fail you nor forsake you till you have finished all your work?" why then, "be strong, and of good courage, and do," as good David infers and argues. Have you this hope, this firm ground of hope, in the promise and goodness of God? why then, "purify yourselves as God is pure," according to the Apostle. Stop the mouths of those men that say the doctrine of perseverance is prejudicial to godliness; let them see, and be forced to acknowledge

it, that the more a godly soul is assured of the infinite and unchangeable love and care of God towards him, the more he is winged with love and zeal, with speed mounting up thither daily, where he longs to arrive. They that understand the doctrine of perseverance, do also understand that they must accomplish it in a way of dutiful diligence, and watchful willingness; and if any grow profane and licentious, and apostatize from the way of righteousness which they have known, it is an evident argument to them that they are no saints, and then what will the doctrine of the perseverance of saints avail them?

CHAPTER VII.

Religion considered in the consequent of not thirsting : divine grace gives a solid satisfaction to the soul. This aphorism confirmed by some Scriptures, and largely explained in six propositions. First, that there is a raging thirst in every soul of man, after some ultimate and satisfactory good. Second, that every natural man thirsteth principally after happiness in the creature. Third, that no man can find that soul-filling satisfaction in any creature enjoyment. Fourth, that grace takes not away the soul's thirst after happiness. Fifth, that the godly soul thirsteth no more after rest in any worldly thing, but in God alone ; how far a godly man may be said to thirst after the creature. Sixth, that in the enjoyment of God the soul is at rest ; and this in a double sense, namely, so as that it is perfectly matched with its object. Secondly, so satisfied as to have joy and pleasure in him. The chapter concludes with a passionate lamentation over the levity and earthliness of Christian minds.

HITHERTO we have taken a view of true religion, as it stands described in this pregnant text, by its original, nature, and properties : we are now to consider it in the certain and genuine consequent of it ; and that is, in one word, affirmatively, *satisfaction* ; or, if you will, negatively, *not thirsting* : for so it is, in our Saviour's phrase, " Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

Whilst I address myself to the explication of this phrase, I suppose I need not be so exact and curious as to tell you in order, with a certain kind of scho-

lastical gravity, first, what is not; and then, what is meant by it: for I presume no body will dream of a corporeal or gross kind of thirsting to be meant here. Grace doth no more quench the thirst of the body, than elementary water can relieve the panting of the soul. Nay, he himself was subject to this gross kind of thirst, who gave to others the water, whereof, if they drank, they should never thirst more. If it be understood of a spiritual thirst, yet I suppose I need not to tell you, that then it must not be understood absolutely: for it cannot possibly be, that the thirst of a soul should be perfectly allayed, till all its faculties be filled up to the brim of their respective capacities, which will never be, until it be swallowed up in the infinite and unbounded ocean of the supreme good.

But I conceive we may fairly come to the meaning of this phrase, “never thirst,” neither by adding or distinguishing.

1. Then, let us supply the sentence thus, “Who-soever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst after any other water.” There is no worldly liquor can be so accommodated or attempered to the palate, as to give it a universal satisfaction, as that a man should be perfectly mortified to all variety: but this heavenly water, which our Saviour treats of here, is so fitted to the palate of spirits, and brings such satisfaction along with it, that the soul that is made to drink of it does suspend its chase of all other delights, counts all other waters but a filthy puddle, thirsts no more after any other thing, neither through necessity nor for variety. The more indeed the soul drinks of this water, the

more it thirsteth after fuller measures, and larger portions of the same; and does not only draw in divine virtue and influences, but even longs to be itself swallowed up in the Divinity, as we shall see further in the procedure of this discourse: but its thirst after all created good, all the waters of the cistern are hereby extinguished, or at least mastered and mortified. Or,

2. By distinguishing upon thirst, the sense of the phrase will be clearly this: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him," shall never be at a loss more, never be to seek any more, never be uncertain or unsatisfied as to his main happiness or supreme object; he shall not rove and range up and down the world in an unfixedness and suspense any more; shall not run up and down to seek satisfaction and rest any more. From an internal unsatisfiedness of the body, spring violent and restless motions and runnings up and down, by which thirst is contracted; so that, by a metonymy, thirst comes to be used for unsatisfiedness, which is the remote cause of it; and, by a metaphor, the same phrase comes to be applied to the soul. I suppose I am warranted, by the sacred style, thus to interpret, especially by the use and explication of the phrase in Jer. ii. 25. where the prophet intimates, that by thirst is to be meant a restless and discontented running up and down to seek satisfaction, "Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst;" which two phrases are of the same importance, and signify no more, than cease from gadding after your idols; and that this is the meaning of that thirsting, appears by the answer that the wilful and desperate

people make in the sequel of the verse: for, instead of saying, No, but we will thirst, they cry, “No, but after them will I go.” To thirst, then, is, in an unsatisfiedness and spiritual disquiet, to range up and down, seeking something wherein ultimately to acquiesce. And, in this sense, it is most true what our Lord here pronounceth, that “whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” Of which thirst that famous proclamation of our Saviour’s is to be understood, “If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink;” in which place also we must necessarily understand what is here expressed, that then he shall never thirst more.

It matters not much by which of these two ways we explain the phrase here of “not thirsting;” for, according to either of them, it will result in this theological maxim, namely, That

“Divine grace, or the true Christian religion, gives a real and solid satisfaction to the soul that is principled with it.” This will appear plain, though we apply but out of each Testament of the Holy Scriptures one text thereunto. I think it cannot reasonably be doubted, but that the prophecy and promise made in Isa. xlix. 10. is to be performed to believers in this present life; for so must the foregoing verses necessarily be understood; and there we have the doctrine expressly asserted, “They shall not hunger nor thirst, &c. for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.” To which those words of our Saviour are parallel, “He that believeth on me shall never thirst:” which doctrine of his is yet amplified and enlarged in John vii. 38.

“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

What greater security from thirst can be desired, than that one should be led by springs of water?

Yes, one may be led by the springs of water, and yet not be suffered to drink of them: well, therefore, to put all out of fear, the godly soul shall contain within himself a spring of water; he shall have rivers of living waters in himself; and, for his fuller security, these rivers shall be ever flowing too. It shall suffice at present, thus briefly to have established this conclusion. And now, having lapt up the meaning of the words in this short position, I shall endeavour to unfold it in these six following propositions:—

1. “There is a raging thirst in every soul of man after some ultimate and satisfactory good.” The God of nature hath implanted in every created nature a secret but powerful tendency towards a centre, the dictates of which, arising out of the very constitution of it, it cannot disobey, until it cease to be such, and utterly apostatize from the state of its creation. And the nobler any being is, the more excellent is the object assigned to it, and the more strong and potent, and uncontrollable are its raptures and motions thereunto. Wherefore, the soul of man must needs also have its own proper centre, which must be something superior to, and more excellent than itself, able to fill up all its indigencies, to match all its capacities, to master all its cravings, and give a plenary and perfect satisfaction: which therefore can be no other than the uncreated goodness, even God himself. It was not possible that God should make

man of such faculties, and of that capaciousness as we see them, and appoint any thing below himself, to be his ultimate happiness. Now, although it be sadly true, that the faculties of the soul are miserably maimed, depraved, benighted, distorted; yet I do not see that the soul is utterly changed in its nature by sin, so as that any other thing should be obtruded upon it for its centre and happiness, than the same infinite good that was such from the beginning, or so as that its main and cardinal motions should be ultimately directed to any other than its natural and primitive object. The natural understanding hath not, indeed, any clear or distinct sight of this blessed object; but yet it retains a darker and more general apprehension of him, and may be said, even in all its pursuits of other things, to be still groping in the dark after him: neither is it without some secret and latent sense of God, that the will of man chooseth or embraceth any thing for good. The Apostle hesitates not to affirm, that the idolatrous Athenians themselves did worship God, though at that time, indeed, they knew not what they worshipped: their worship was secretly and implicitly directed to God, and did ultimately resolve itself into him, though they were not aware of it,—“whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” Now, that he declared God to them, appears abundantly by the following verses; what he says in point of worship, the same, methinks, I may say in point of love, trust, delight, dependence, and apply it to all sorts of idolaters, as well as image-worshippers, and affirm that the covetous idolater, even when he most fondly hugs his bags, and most firmly con-

fideth in his riches, doth ignorantly love and trust in God; the proud idolater, in the highest acts of self-seeking, and self-pleasing, doth ignorantly admire and adore God; the ambitious idolater, even in the hottest chase of secular glory, and popular applause, doth ignorantly pursue, and advance God. For that rest, contentment, peace, happiness, satisfaction, which these mistaken souls do aim at, what is it other than God, though they attribute it to something else which cannot afford it, and so commit a real blasphemy: for they that do in their hearts, and course of their lives, ascribe a filling and satisfying virtue to riches, pleasures, or honours, do as truly, though not so loudly, blaspheme, as they who cried out concerning the calf of gold, *Exod. xxxii. 4.* "These be thy gods, O Israel!" And in this sense that I have been speaking, one may safely affirm, that the most professed Atheist in the world doth secretly pursue the God whom he openly denies, whilst his will is catching at that which his judgment renounceth, and he allows that Deity in his lusts which he will not own in heaven. The hypocrite professes to know God, but in works denies him; on the other hand, the Atheist, though in words he deny God, yet in his works he professeth him: so natural and necessary it is for all men to acknowledge a Deity, though some are so brutish and besotted, as to confine him to their own bellies; of whom the Apostle speaks, "Whose god is their belly." I say natural; for it is not only some few men of better education, and more contemplative complexions, that hunt after this invisible and satisfying good; but indeed the most vulgar souls, re-

taining still the nature of souls, are perpetually catching at an ultimate happiness and satisfaction, and are secretly stung and tormented with the want of it. Certainly the motions of a soul are more strong and weighty than we are ordinarily aware of; and, I think, one may safely conclude, that if there were no latent sense, or natural science of God, the poor man could not spend the powers of his soul so intently for the purchasing a little food and raiment for the body, nor the covetous man so insatiably thirst after houses and land, and a larger heap of refined earth; did they not secretly imagine, I mean, some contentment, happiness, or satisfaction, were to be drunk in together with these acquirements, they would seem to be but dry and insipid morsels to a soul; which ultimate happiness and satisfaction, as I said before, can be no other than God himself, whom these mistaken souls do ignorantly adore, and feel for in the dark. Neither let any one think that this ignorant and unwary pursuit of God can pass for religion, or be acceptable in the sight of God; for, as it is impossible that ever any man should stumble into a happy state, without foresight and free choice, and be in it without any kind of sense or feeling of it, so neither can God accept the blind for sacrifice, or be pleased with any thing less than reasonable service from a reasonable creature. As the Athenians, worshipping God by altars and images, are counted superstitious, not devout, so the whole generation of gross and sensual souls admiring, loving, and ignorantly coveting after God in the pictures and images of true goodness, are, indeed, truly blasphemers and idolaters, but religious they cannot

be. We cannot excuse them from idolatry, who direct their worship purposely to the true God, by or through images; much less can we be favourable to those who bestow their love, joy, confidence, and delight, ignorantly upon the supreme and self-sufficient good, by or through any created good, in which they, as far as they understand, do terminate their devotion. I do not say that all souls have a distinct discovery of the good they aim at, it is evident they have not; but yet the will of every man is secretly in chase of some ultimate end and happiness, and, indeed, in its eager tendencies outflies the understanding. All which mystery seems to be wrapped up in that short but pithy inquiry, which, if it were a little otherwise modified, would be an excellent description of the natural soul, "Many say, who will show us any good?" The nature of the object is set out in the word "good," the eagerness of the motion, in the form of the question, "who will show us?" and the ignorance of the mover appears in the indeterminateness of this object, which is well explained by the supply of the word *any*; "who will show us any good?" And, that this is the cry of every rational soul, is insinuated by the word *many*; which *many* is also, in metre, multiplied into the greater sort, and must indeed, necessarily, be extended unto all.

2. "Every natural man thirsteth principally after happiness and satisfaction in the creature." The fall of the soul consisteth in its sinking itself into the animal life, and the business of every unrenewed soul is in one kind or other still to gratify the same life; for although, as I have shown, God is in the

bottom of these men's cares, and loves, and desires, and implicitly in all their thirstings, yet I may well say of them, as God says of the Assyrian monarch, at what time he executed his pleasure in correcting his people Israel, "Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so:" God is not in all their thoughts, whilst they pursue that in the creature, which really none but God alone can be unto them. They do ultimately direct, as to their intention, all their cares, and covetings, and thirstings, to some created object; all which are calculated for the animal life, the gratifying and accomplishing their own base lusts. This is very apparent in the idolatry of the Pagans, whose lusts gave being to their gods; and so their deities were as many as their concupiscences and filthy passions: to sacrifice to their own revenge and sensuality, under the names of Mars, Bacchus, and Venus, what was it else, but to proclaim to all the world, that they took the highest contentment and satisfaction in the fulfilling of such kind of lusts? this was to them their god or supreme felicity. The case is the same, though not so expressly and professedly, with all carnal Christians, who, although they profess the true God, yet, in truth, make him only a pander to their own lusts and base ends; though they name the name of Christ, yet, in very deed, deify their own passions, and sacrifice to the gratification of their animal powers. The Psalmist, as we have seen, determines the main end of all men to be "good," Psal. iv. 6. but, lest any man should be deceived in them, he presently tells us where this good was placed, ver. 7. namely, "in corn and wine;" by which we

must understand the animal life, and whatsoever administers to the delight thereof. And certainly this will go far; for not only meats and drinks, sensual pleasures, gorgeous apparel, sumptuous buildings, splendid descent, honourable preferments, popular applause, inordinate recreations, and an unwieldy bulk of earthly riches; but also orthodox opinions, philosophical, political, yea, and scholastical learning, fair professions, much pompous worship, yea, and worship industriously void of pomp, specious performances; to which we may add, the most seemly exercises of undaunted valour, unshaken constancy, unbribed justice, uninterrupted temperance, unspotted chastity, and unlimited charity, if much giving may deserve so sacred a name; even all these, and as many more, may serve only as fuel for the rapacious fire of lust and self-love, to maintain and keep alive the mere animal, or, at most, logical life, and are ordinarily designed as sacrifices to that which we significantly call self, in contradistinction from God. I need not here declaim against covetous, luxurious, ambitious souls, the Apostle having so expressly prevented me by his plain and punctual arraignment of such men, Col. iii. 5. Phil. iii. 19. where he charges them with placing a deity in their bags and bellies: otherwise I durst appeal to all the world, that are not parties, yea, to the parties themselves, whether it be God, or themselves, that these persons do intend to serve, and please, and gratify; whether it be a real assimilation to God, and the true honour of his name, or some lust or humour of self-pleasing, self-advancing, and self-enjoying, that they sacrifice their cares and pains, and the main thirstings of their

souls to. I am confident it will be easily acknowledged, that the covetous, voluptuous, and ambitious, do sacrifice all they are, and do, to the latter; but, alas! it is not yet agreed among men who are such; the hypothesis is granted, but the thesis is disputed; and, indeed, this is no wonder neither; for it is as natural for the animal self-life to shift off guilt as it is to contract it; and the pride of the natural man is no less conspicuous in his wrongful endeavours to seem innocent of what he is indeed guilty, than his covetousness and voluptuousness is apparent in the matter wherein his guilt consisteth. It is not only these, and some few of the grossest and profanest sort of souls, that are guilty in this kind which I have been describing, though they, indeed, are grossly and most visibly guilty; but verily the whole generation of mere animal men, who have no principle of divine life implanted in them, do spend all their days, bestow all their pains, and enjoy all their comforts, in a real strain of blasphemy, from first to last. What a blasphemous kind of philosophy was that which professedly placed the supreme good and chiefest happiness of man in the fruition of pleasures? And, indeed, all those kinds of philosophy, which placed it elsewhere, in things below God himself, and the enjoyment of him, were no less profane, though they may seem somewhat less beastly: for whether the Epicureans idolized their own senses, or the more exalted Stoics deified their own faculty, placing their main contentment in their self-sufficiency, and the perpetual serenity and tranquillity of their own minds, it is too apparent that both the one and the other still moved within the narrow and low

sphere of natural self, and grasped after a deity in the poor dark shadows, and glimmering representatives of him. But I am speaking to Christians: and, amongst these, let no man tell me how orthodox his opinions, how pure and spiritual his forms, how numerous and specious his performances are, how rightly he pays his homage, and prays to one living God, by one living Mediator. I will willingly allow, and do, with delight, observe these things wherever they are; but yet all this doth not denominate a Christian: for still that of the Apostle must hold good, “His servants ye are to whom ye obey;” and I may add, by somewhat a like phraseology, “His children ye are whom ye resemble;” his creatures ye are, as far as you can make yourselves so, whose sufficiency and sovereignty is most magnified in your hearts; his worshippers ye are whom ye mostly love, trust in, delight in, depend upon; in a word, that is your God, which your soul doth mainly rest, and centre, and wrap up itself in. And, alas! how visibly dear and precious is the self-central life, which is so universally pampered, cherished, and sacrificed unto, besides the invisible and more spiritual oblations that are made thereunto. This is as true an Antichrist in the mystery as there is any literal Antichrist in the world; and, of this, one may as truly say, as St. John doth of the other, “All the world wondereth after the beast.” In a word, then, whosoever saith in his heart concerning any thing that is not God, what that rich man in the gospel said concerning his goods, “Soul, take thine ease in them, and be merry,” the same is an idolater and blasphemer: and this I affirm to be the lan-

guage of every apostate spirit and unregenerate soul of man.

3. "No man can find that happiness, and soul-filling satisfaction in any creature-enjoyment, which every natural man principally seeketh therein." Here are two things to be spoken to, namely, the enjoyments of men, or what they possess, and the satisfaction which the natural man seeketh in such possessions. For the first of these, I do not believe that ever any natural man had his fill of such possessions, I mean as to the quantity of them; he never had so much of them, as to be able freely to say, It is enough. The rational soul hath a strong and insatiable appetite, and wherever it imagineth its beloved prey to be found, and filling enjoyment to be had, it is exceedingly greedy and rapacious; whether the same will ever be able to afford it or not, it matters not. The animal life is that voracious idol, not like Bel in the story, which seems only to eat up, but which doth really devour all the fat morsels, and sensual pleasures, that are sacrificed to it, and yet it is not filled therewith. The whole employment of the natural man, is nothing else, but as the Apostle elegantly describes it, Rom. xiii. 14. "To make provision for the flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof:" wherein yet, to speak the truth, he loses his labour; for he sacrifices all to an insatiable idol, and pours it into a gulf that hath neither bottom nor bounds, but swalloweth up all into its barren womb, and is rather made to thirst, than to cease from thirsting, by all that is or can be administered to it. I take that of Solomon, Eccles. i. 8. to be a clear proof, in general, of what

I affirm, "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing;" the eye of man, as little as it is, is bigger than the whole visible world, which, although it may be wearied with looking upon various objects, as the English Annotators observe upon these words, yet still desires new ones, and can drink them in without surfeiting; so that, although the acts of the eye be scant and finite, yet the lusts of the eye seem to have a kind of infinity in them. And indeed, by the insatiableness of the eye and ear; is meant the greediness and voracity of the flesh or animal life, as Mr. Cartwright hath well observed upon Prov. xxvii. 20. "Hell and destruction are never full, so the eyes of man are never satisfied;" where, by 'not being satisfied,' is meant, not having enough in quantity, as appears by the similitude in the former part of the verse. To the same sense he speaks, Eccles. iv. 8. v. 10. It would be endless to relate the monstrous and inexplicable gapings of covetous, ambitious, voluptuous, proud, vainglorious minds after their respective idols. And, indeed, I need not descend to particular instances; for I suppose never any natural man could heartily say he had enough of riches, promotions, applause, sensual delights, eloquence, policy, prowess, or victory, or of any other thing which is accommodated to the gratification of the flesh, no more than any godly soul, sojourning upon earth, could ever yet be able to say he had enough of God and eternal life. So that, in a word, I know not how to apply any description to this insatiable and devouring principle, more properly than that which the prophet makes of hell, "She enlargeth herself, and openeth her mouth without measure,

and all glory, multitude, and pomp, descend into it." I know there are of these men that pretend to have enough in quantity of these fleshly provisions; but I fear, falsely and unjustly; for, as for the rich and honourable of the earth, it is too evident, that they are still climbing higher, and grasping after more, as the great Alexander is said to have whined after more worlds, when he conceited himself to be master of all this. As for the poorer and meaner sort of people, who are as ready sometimes to lay claim to this virtue of thinking themselves to have enough, as any other people whatsoever, it is too manifest to a wise observer, that it is not a real apprehension that they have enough, but either a lowness and weakness of spirit, arising from the meanness of their education, or a downright despair of ever getting more.

But be it imagined, that the enjoyments of some natural men are enough in respect of quantity, yet still there is certainly wanting a true and sincere satisfaction of soul in such possessions; no man of all these, finds that real happiness in those things which he so vehemently hunteth after. Solomon reduces all the pleasure and contentment, that is to be found in multiplied riches, to a very pitiful sum total: "What good is there to the owners thereof, save the beholding of them with their eyes?" And, alas! what is the sight of the eye, to the satisfaction of the soul! The whole visible world is utterly too scant for, and incommensurate to, the wide and deep capacity of an immortal spirit; so that the same can no more satisfy than a less can fill a greater, which is surely impossible. Whatever is

in the world out of God, is described by the prophet, Isa. lv. 2. to be “not bread,” there is the unsuitableness; and “not to satisfy,” there is the insufficiency of it, as to the soul of man. On the other hand, the soul of man is so vastly capacious, that though it be also ever so greedy and rapacious, snatching on the right hand, and catching on the left hand, as the prophet describes the famishing people, Isa. ix. 20. yet still it is hungry and unsatisfied. Which ravenous and insatiable appetite of the sensual soul, is described by the prophet, in the similitude of a whorish woman, who prostituted herself to all comers, “and multiplieth her fornications,” yet is “unsatiable, is not, cannot be satisfied.” The soul may indeed feed, yea, and surfeit upon, but it can never satisfy itself, from any created good; nothing can ultimately determine and centre the motions of a soul, but something superior to its own essence: which, whilst it misses of, it is, as it were, divided against itself, perpetually struggling and fluctuating, and travelling in pangs, with some new design or other, to be at rest; like the old lioness, in the parable of Ezekiel, breeding up one whelp after another, to be a lion wherein to confide, but disappointed in all; or, like the poor discontented butterfly, lighting and catching every where, but sticking no where, adoring something for a god to-day, which it will be ready to fling into the fire to-morrow, after their manner of creating gods to themselves.

Neither the quantity, variety, nor duration, of any created objects can possibly fill up that large and noble capacity wherewith God hath endued the ra-

tional soul; but having departed from its centre, and not knowing how to return to its original, it wanders up and down, as it were, in a wilderness, and having an imperfect glimmering sight at something better than what itself as yet either is or hath, but not being able to attain to it, is miserably tormented, even as a man in a thirst which he cannot quench; yea, the more he runs up and down to seek water, the more is his thirst increased whilst he misses of it; so this distempered and distracted soul, whilst it seeks to quench its thirst at the creature-cistern, does but inflame it, and, in a continual pursuit of rest, becomes most restless. That every unregenerate soul is in such a distressed, weary, restless state, as I have been describing, appears most evidently by those famous gospel proclamations; one in Isa. lv. 1, 3. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;" where, by the thirsters, are meant those unfixed, unsatisfied souls, as appears by the second verse; the other in Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labour," &c. where the promise of giving rest, does plainly imply the restless state of the persons invited. There is a certain horror and anguish in sin and wickedness, even long before it be swallowed up in hell; a certain vanity and vexation folded up in all earthly enjoyments, though the same do not always sting and pierce the soul alike; so true is that famous aphorism of the prophet Isaiah, "There is no peace to the wicked."

4. "Grace takes not away this thirst of the soul after happiness and plenary satisfaction." Love and desire, and a tendency towards blessedness, are so woven into the nature of the soul, and inlaid in

the very essence of it, that she cannot possibly put them off: however, it is the work of grace to change and rectify them, as we shall see under the next head. The soul of man is a kind of immaterial fire, an inextinguishable activity, always necessarily catching at some object or other, in conjunction with which she thinks to be happy; and, therefore, if she be rent from herself and the world, and be mortified to the love of fleshly and animal lusts, she will certainly cleave to some higher and more excellent object, as will more clearly appear by and by. Grace does not stupify the soul as to its sense of its own indigency and poverty, but, indeed, makes it more abundantly sensible and importunate. There are more strong motions, and more powerful appetites in the godly soul towards its true and proper happiness, than in the ungodly and wicked. For the understanding of the regenerate soul is so enlightened, as that it doth present the will with an amiable and satisfactory object; which object, therefore, being more distinctly and perfectly apprehended, doth also apprehend, or lay hold upon, the soul, and attract her unto itself. That "the eyes are leaders in love," is most true of the eye of the soul; I mean the understanding, that first affects the heart with amorous passions. The first and fundamental error and mistake of the rational soul, seems to lie here, even in the understanding; here lies the very root of the degenerate soul's distemper; and if this were thoroughly restored and healed, so as to present the will with pure and proper ideas and representations of God, it might be hoped, that this ductile faculty would not be long before it clave

unto him entirely ; nay, it may be doubted, whether it could possibly resist the dictates of it. Now, in the regenerate soul, this faculty is repaired ; yea, I may say, that the spirit of regeneration, first of all spreads itself into the understanding, and awakens in it a sense of self-indigency, and of the perfect, all-sufficient, suitable, and satisfactory fulness of God, in whom it sees all beauty, sweetness, and loveliness, in an infinitely ineffable manner, wrapt up and contained ; which will be so far from allaying the essential thirst of the soul, and stifling its eager gaspings, that it must needs give a mighty edge and ardour to its inclinations, and put it upon a more bold and earnest contention towards this glorious object, and charm of the whole soul, into the very arms of God. Therefore, not ‘thirsting,’ in the text, must not be understood absolutely, as if grace did utterly extinguish the natural activities of the soul and its propensions ; but the regenerate and gracious soul doth not thirst in such a sense, as thirst implies a want of a suitable good, or dissatisfaction, or includes torment properly so called. In this notion of thirst, grace doth indeed quench it, as I intimated in the beginning of this discourse, and will further appear in the procedure of it. But, as to this most essential thirst, this natural desire, or vergency, of the soul after central rest and happiness, the same is so far from being extinguished, or moderated, by divine grace, that it is greatly improved, and mightily inflamed thereby. I suppose I need not enlarge upon so acknowledged a subject ; therefore, I will but present you with the instances of holy David in the Old Testament, and gracious Paul in the New.

I need not, I suppose, magnify the holy and divine frame of David's spirit, by any rhetoric of mine; God himself hath given the amplest testimony, and fairest character of him, that I remember to have been, at any time, given of any man, when he owns him for "a man after his own heart;" and what a longing, thirsting soul this was, I need do no more to demonstrate, than to turn you to some passages and professions of his own in his devout Psalms; such as Psalm xlii. 1. lxiii. 1. cxliii. 6. where he borrows the strongest inclinations that are to be found in the whole creation, to represent the devout ardours of his own soul: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.—O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.—I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land." Yea, he seems like one that would swoon away for very longing: "Hear me speedily, O Lord; my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.—I lift up my soul unto thee.—I flee unto thee," &c. The very same temper you will find in holy Paul, that chosen vessel of God, if you peruse his epistles, in all which you will meet with devout and strong breathings of the same kind; particularly, Phil. iii. 11, 12, 13, 14. where he seems to be so thirsty after a state of heavenly perfection, that he longs after, if I mistake not the meaning of the 11th verse, something that yet he knows he cannot arrive at whilst he is in this world, even the resurrection

of the dead, or such a perfect state of purity and holiness, as belongs to the children of the resurrection.

5. "The godly soul thirsteth no more after happiness in any creature, nor rests in any worldly thing, but in God alone." This particular consists also of two branches; the former and negative part whereof seems to me to contain in it the scope and meaning of our Saviour, in these words which I am now interpreting. We have already seen, that every unsanctified soul is restless, and craving, wavering, unsatisfied, inconstant to itself, and its choice. By reason of its natural activity, it is always spending itself in restless and giddy motions; but, by reason of its ignorance, and unacquaintedness with the one supreme and all-sufficient good, and the multiplicity of lower ends and objects, it is miserably distracted, and doth necessarily grapple with inevitable disturbances, in a continual unsteadiness, putting forth itself now towards one thing, anon to another, courting every thing, but matching with nothing; like a fickle lover, that is always enamoured with the last feature he saw, or a greedy merchant, that being equally in love with the pleasure of being at home, and the profit of being abroad, can stay long nowhere with any content, but has always most mind of the place where he is not.

The description that our Lord gives of the unclean spirit that "is gone out of a man," seems very aptly to agree to that unclean spirit that is in man, that, being departed from God, its proper rest and habitation, walketh through dry and desert places; I

mean, empty and unsatisfying creature-enjoyments, seeking rest, but finding none. It was an accidental affliction of believers, but is the natural and necessary affliction of every unbelieving and wicked soul, to wander up and down the world destitute, afflicted, tormented. Sinful self is so multiform; and that one root, the animal life, has such a world of branches, that it is impossible to administer due nourishment to them all; and yet they are all importunate and greedy suckers too: so that he must needs have a difficult task, and a painful province, that is constrained to attend upon so many, so different, and yet all of them so impatient, and imperious masters. But I shall lose ground by thus going backward to what I spoke to under the second head, except I can make this advantage of it, to enforce that which I was going to speak of, with the greater strength and clearer evidence. The case standing thus with the unregenerate soul, as we have seen in this short review, I now say, that divine grace allays the multifarious thirst of the soul after other waters, of which it could never yet drink deep, or, if it drunk ever so deep, could not be quenched; it determines the soul to one object, which before was rent in pieces amongst many. It does not destroy any of the natural powers, nor dry up the innate vigour of the soul, as I made evident under the last head, but it takes it off from the chase of all inferior ends, and inadequate objects, setting it upon a vehement pursuit of, and causing it to spend all its powers not less vigorously, but far more rationally and satisfactorily upon, that object worthy of our love, the infinitely amiable and self-sufficient God. When the

soul hath once met with this glorious object, is once mastered with this supreme good, is by divine grace, enlarged, it cannot, with any ease, stretch itself upon the creature any more; that is too scant and insufficient for it. Certainly the soul that understands its own original, nature, and capacity, and once comes to view itself in God, will see itself too large to be bounded by the narrow confines of self, or any creature, and too free to be bound down and chained to any earthly object whatever. The world indeed may, yea, and will labour to take off the soul; "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved," that thou art so fond of him? "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" Be content, here is hay and provender; stay with me this night; let us dally and make merry together a little longer. But these Syrenian songs are sung to a deaf ear: they cannot enchant the wise and devout soul, that hath her senses rightly awakened, and exercised to discern between good and evil. Oh no, "I am sick of love," and sick of every thing that keeps me from my Beloved; and and therefore, however you may go about to defile me through fraud or force, through surprise or violence, yet I will not prostitute myself to you. The gracious soul hath now discovered the most beautiful, perfect, and lovely object, even him whose name is love itself; which glorious vision hath so blasted and withered the choicest flowers in nature's garden, that they have now no more form or comeliness, beauty or fragrancy, as to deserve to be desired; she hath tasted the pure and perfect sweetness of the fountain, which hath so imbittered all

cistern-waters, that she finds no more thirstings in herself after them; which is that which our Saviour promiseth here, “shall never thirst.” A godly soul cannot possibly be put off with any thing short of God; give him his God, or he dies; give him ever so much fair usage in the world, ever so much of earthly accommodations, they are not accommodated to her wants and thirsts, if they have not that God in them, out of whom all worldly pleasures are even irksome and unpleasant, and all fleshly ease is tedious and painful: creature-employments are but a wearisome drudgery to a soul that is acquainted with the work of angels; and creature-enjoyments, in themselves considered, are very insignificant, if not burdensome, to a mind that is feelingly possessed of the chiefest good.

But here it will be seasonable, to take into consideration a grand inquiry, namely, Whether a godly man may not be said, in some sense, to desire the creature, and how far such a person may be said to thirst after it. This I shall speak to as briefly, and yet as clearly as I can, in these four following particulars.

1. “All godly souls are not equally mortified to worldly loves, nor equally zealous and importunate lovers of God.” This is so evident, that I need not insist upon it. Abraham seems to have been as much higher and nobler in spirit than his brother Lot, as Lot was more excellent than one of the ordinary sons of Adam, I had almost said, than one of the Sodomites amongst whom he dwelt. The one leaves all the pleasant and plentiful accommodations of his native country, at the very first calling out, not

knowing whither he went, only relying upon the gracious guidance of him whom he followed; he seems to reckon all soils alike for his sojourning, and the whole habitable world as his own city and home, as appears by his readiness to break up house, and quit his present habitation, rather than interfere with the conveniences of his nephew, Gen. xiii. 9. The other preferred a fruitful soil before a faithful society, and so, in some sense, his body before his soul; and yet, as if it had not been enough to make so unadvised a choice, he rests in it too; yea, though he was so severely reprov'd by the captivity that befel him there, whereby he was not so much called, as indeed carried away thence; yet this will not loosen him from his earthly conveniences, but he returns to Sodom, and from thence he will not part till he be fired out, nay, and then also it is with much lingering and loathness, Gen. xix. 16. It is evident, I say, both from this, and many other instances which I purposely omit, that it is so, that all godly souls are not equally careless of these earthly things, nor carried out with equal ardour and intemperance, as I may call it, towards the supreme and most glorious object; of which I can assign no fitter reason than this, because they are not all equally godly. For,

2. "So far as grace prevails, and religion in the power of it acteth the soul in which it is planted, so far earthly loves decay and wither." For these two cannot stand together, the love of the world is inconsistent with the love of God: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." So far as any soul is sanctified, so far is it

mortified also to all creature-enjoyments, to all things that are only fuel for the animal life, honour, ease, victory, plenty, liberty, relations, recreations, all the entertainments and delights in this lower life, yea, and this very life itself. Earthly and heavenly loves are to each other as the two ends of a pair of balances, save that they are never found equally poizing, as the one rises, the other falls; just so much advantage as this gets, that loses. The more the sensual and self-central life thrives and prospers, and the creature is exalted, the more religion and the divine life fainteth and flaggeth in the soul: and as certainly, on the other hand, the more divine grace prevails, and the divine life flourisheth in the soul, the more all earthly objects wither away and lose their beauty, and the soul cooleth and languisheth as to its love and desire of them. So far as a regenerate soul is unregenerate, so far will she be bustling after other lovers: which regeneration will not, I conceive, be thoroughly perfected, and therefore these lustings not utterly extinguished, till this mortal put on immortality; or, as the Apostle speaks elsewhere, till “mortality be swallowed up of life.”

3. For the preventing of rash and uncharitable judging, I do affirm, that “divine and holy souls are oft mistaken by them that behold their ordinary converse and actions in the body.” They are thought sometimes to take pleasure in the creature, and to gratify the flesh, when indeed it is no such matter; but they take pleasure in the image of God, or the evidence of his fatherly love, which they contemplate therein, and do, perhaps most of

all, serve a spiritual end, and an eternal design, in those very actions which others may think are calculated, for the gratification of the animal life, and the service of the flesh. Let not the purblind world, nor the self-befriending hypocrite, be judge, and it will appear, that the truly godly soul counts nothing savoury to itself, but what represents, teaches, exhibits something of God, nothing pleasant, but what hath a tendency to him: such a soul doth not feel himself in his highest raptures, doth not taste himself in his noblest accomplishments, doth not seek himself in his most excellent performances. Be not mistaken, he doth not so much thirst after long life, riches, friends, liberty, as indeed after God in them all; these all signify nothing to him, if they bring him not nearer to his God, and conduce to his real and spiritual happiness. Yea, possibly, in his most suspected actions, and those that seem most alien from religion, and most designed to please the flesh, he may be highly spiritual and pure: so was our blessed Saviour, we know, even in his conversing with scandalous sinners, eating and drinking with publicans, and notorious offenders, however he was traduced by a proud and hypocritical generation; and so, I doubt not, is many a good Christian, according to his measure, pure as Christ was pure. When a painted hypocrite, who can guess at the temper of others no other way but by what he finds in himself, and by what he should be and do, if he were under the same circumstances, comes to be judge of the actions or disposition of one, who is transformed into the image of the divine freedom and benignity, you may

easily imagine what a perverse sentence he will pass. It needs not seem very strange, methinks, in spirituals, any more than it is in corporeals, that the most sound and healthful constitutions should, upon a lawful call, adventure themselves further than the crazy and sickly, and familiarly converse with and handle, yea, and make good work with those briars and thorns, which would prove a snare or a wound, or a pricking temptation to others. If it were possible for any man to arrive at the purity and perfection of his Saviour, and his firm and immoveable radication in true goodness, he would find himself so wholly dead to sin, and all temptations and motions thereunto, that he would be able to walk upon the most boisterous waves, without fear of being swallowed up in them, and to take up in his hands the most venomous serpent, not dreading the sting of it. However, the apprehensions and actions of more perfect and refined souls are not rashly to be judged; for they may easily be mistaken, either by the unhallowed hypocrite, or the more imperfect and impotent saint.

4. To answer yet more fully, I do affirm, that “no truly religious soul in the world doth so thirst after the creature, as to place his main happiness in it, or to seek satisfaction from it.” However, all holy souls may not be alike weaned from the world, nor equally loving of God, however the affections and actions of some may really be, and of others may seem to be too gross and fleshly, yet no one of all these, in whom this new and divine life is indeed found, doth erect a self-supremacy in his own soul, nor take his full and complete rest and happiness to

consist in any creature-communion whatsoever. Surely this, of not thirsting, is so far a consequent of true religion, as that no religious soul in the world can be content to exchange the presence of God, and acquaintance with him, for any thing, or for all things besides; or, if you will, plainly thus, no such person could be content, no, not for all the world, the glory of heaven not excepted, if it may be supposed to be wicked and ungodly: so that, by thirsting here, must not be meant some weak wishings, and fainter propensions of the soul towards created objects; for certainly there is no soul found in a body of earth, in which these are not found, no, nor yet some more lively and stronger strugglings after them, (how strong they may be in a good Christian, and yet predominated over by grace, we cannot punctually determine;) but, by thirsting here, must be meant the most quick and powerful breathings, the highest and strongest ardencies, the predominant and victorious motions and desires of the soul, which do, as it were, fold up the whole soul, and lead all its powers and faculties with it into a grateful captivity. Thus shall he thirst no more, who hath once drunk of these waters which flow forth from the presence of the Lord of life, and which the blessed Redeemer of the world is here said to give.

But, which is the latter branch of this particular, this inspired soul which we have been describing, thirsteth after his happiness in God alone, that is, in the enjoyment of him. We have already seen, that grace does not destroy the natural and essential longings of the soul after a satisfactory good, but

rather enhance them, and that the godly soul is most thirsty of all, but not with a creature-thirst, as is before proved; it remains then, that his thirsting after rest and happiness is terminated upon God alone. And so, indeed, it appears in the instances of holy men recorded in holy writ, which I have under the last head spoken something to. But to those passages and professions which I quoted out of Psal. xlii. 1, 2, &c. you may add such as Psal. iv. 6. which is the voice of every godly soul, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." Psal. xxxix. 6, 7. "Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches," &c. "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee:" where you have the different seekings and centrings of the ungodly, and of the godly soul, elegantly described. Lastly, you may, in Psal. lxxiii. 25. again view the term or end of the godly man's ambition: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Which translation of the words doth, in a lively manner, set out the godly man's end and aim, and object, and happiness, and indeed his all: or, if we translate it, perhaps more fitly, with Mollerus, yet they afford us the same doctrine, "Who will give me to be in heaven, and with thee? on earth I desire nothing."

And thus have we despatched the fifth proposition, namely, that the godly soul thirsteth no more after happiness in any creature, or rest in any worldly thing; and come to the sixth and last particular designed for the explication of this not thirsting of the religious soul, which is this:—

In the enjoyment of God, this soul is at rest, is fully satisfied. I do not mean so satisfied, as not to thirst after any more of him, as I have often hinted; but so satisfied, as to be perfectly matched with an object transcendently adequate to all its faculties, and their respective capacities; and so satisfied, as to have peace and joy, and triumph in him. To these two I will speak distinctly, and so pass on.

Now, for the better understanding of the first of these, it should be noticed, that the reasonable soul, and the faculties of it, are of a vast, large, and noble capacity. It is universally granted by all, that are not Sadducees, that the capacity of angels is very great and noble; and that the condition of the human soul is not much inferior to it, may I think, be gathered from the Psalmist's words: "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels;" which words, although the author to the epistle to the Hebrews applies them to Christ, Heb. ii. 9. and, indeed, they have a marvellous aptness to him, according to the Dutch translation, which runs thus, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, who was become a little lesser than the angels, by reason of the sufferings of death; that he should by the grace of God," &c. yet I see nothing hindering, but that they may be well applied to the excellent condition of man by creation; especially considering that many other passages of the Old Testament have a double aspect, one more ordinary and obvious, which was most clearly understood by the prophet that wrote them; the other more abstruse and mysterious, principally intended by the Spirit that inspired him, and only to be understood by the revelation of the same

Spirit: such are those passages, I conceive, which are found in Isa. vii. 14. Hosea xi. 1. interpreted by the evangelist, Matt. i. 23. and ii. 15. as also Jer. xxxi. 15. with many more. But, however it goes with that text, and whether or not the souls of men be so near of kindred to the angels, as to their own comprehensions; yet, that they are capable of a most noble and excellent happiness, and much allied to God himself, doth appear from such texts of Scripture, as do require them to be “holy, as God is holy,” to be “perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect.” Neither need it seem to any incredible, that the rational soul should be so capacious; for we are no more to judge of the angelical temper, and noble actings of the separated soul, by what we see it to be and do in this body of flesh, than one can judge of the prowess and puissance of a renowned warrior in the head of an army, by what we discern in him when he lies bound in chains, or of the power and splendour of the sun, by what we discern of it when it is eclipsed, or miserably beclouded; or, if you will, no more than we can judge of a man, by the imperfections of his childhood: for so the Apostle Paul seems to state the case, 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 11. plainly implying, that the present and future condition of the soul is comparable to the minority and adult state of a man; as if he had said, the soul, in its future and separate state, will act as much nobler than what it doth now, as the soul of the wisest and discreetest man in the world acteth more nobly than what it did when he was a child: yea, and what is still more to our present purpose, he seems clearly to intimate in the twelfth verse, that this improve-

ment shall happen, not so much by the more evident propounding of the object, as by the more ample illumination and corroboration of the faculties. In the next place, it will be easily inferred, that all created good is too scant and insufficient for this capacious spirit of man; too short a bed to stretch itself upon; nay, it cannot contract itself so, as to be accommodated to any worldly good, without pain and anguish. From both which, it will be naturally and necessarily concluded, that God alone is that adequate object which can match the soul of man, and satisfy it, as being infinitely superior and transcendent to it. The enjoyment of God is that ultimate end, and perfect good, that is only able to fix the spirit of man, which otherwise, not meeting with its match, would be tossed to and fro, and labour under perpetual disquietness, and restless fluctuations. God is that almighty goodness and sweetness, who alone is able to draw out all the appetites of the soul into himself, satisfy all its cravings, charm all its restless motions, and cause all its faculties, in the purest and most complacential manner, to conspire together to give up themselves wholly and entirely to himself.

Secondly, From this conjunction with omnipotent goodness, ariseth pure peace, yea, joy and triumph, to the religious soul. For the clearer understanding of this, I should premise, what some have wisely observed, that there is a natural congruity between God and the soul, she being a spiritual substance, and he being a spiritual good, only suitable to her. This seems to be evident by experience; for we see how difficult, I had almost said, impossible it is, ut-

terly to eradicate and extinguish all sense of virtue and goodness out of the soul of man; to which purpose I think our divines generally speak, when they allow of some holy relics, something of the image of God, remaining in the most degenerate souls, however all men have reduced the same to a very poor and inconsiderable spark, and many have raked that very spark under ashes too, and imprisoned that remainder of truth in unrighteousness, living according to those unnatural and foreign principles and conceptions that they have unhappily drunk in. Hence it is, I suppose, that sin and wickedness are so often styled the defilement of the soul. Now, we know, that whatsoever defileth, is adventitious and improper, and hence it is, that sin many times stings and wounds the consciences of those that take most pleasure in it, namely, being so perfectly contrary to this noble and inbred sense of the soul. Allowing, then, this natural sympathy that the soul of man hath with its Creator, it will be easy to give a philosophical account of that peace, joy, and triumph, of which the soul must needs be possessed, or rather indeed transported with, that finds and feels itself in conjunction with its centre, and in the dearest embraces of its Creator. It need not seem strange, that the soul should mightily congratulate itself in its arrival at its own haven; nay it were strange if it should not dissolve into secret joy and pleasure in the hearty entertainments of so blessed and proper a guest as God is to it; nay, indeed it were unreasonable to imagine, that the conjunction of so noble and discerning faculties, with so perfect and proper an object, should not beget the truest and sincerest delight and pleasure

imaginable. The delights of an earthly and sensual mind are filthy and dreggy, in comparison of these pleasures of the refined and purified soul; which must needs live most gracefully, triumphantly, and deliciously, when it converseth with God most intimately. Certainly, if there be any innocent and well-natured self-feeling or self-pleasing, in the world, this is it; though, indeed, to speak truly, it deserves a better name. It cannot be but that a godly soul, being in its right senses, should taste a sweetness in these pure and divine accomplishments wrought in it by the eternal Spirit of righteousness; which self-pleasing is no more blameable, than that natural pleasure, which every creature finds in the enjoyment of that which is most aptly accommodated to its necessities, and most perfective of its happiness; which pleasure, I say, ariseth in the soul from its sensible union with God in the spirit, and enjoyment of him. By which enjoyment of God, you will easily perceive that I do not mean the bare pardon of sin, or an abstract justification; for this is not the attainment that is perfective of the soul, neither could it alone, if we could suppose it alone, fill up the capacities of the soul, or make it happy, however the rapturous joys of the unprincipled hypocrite spring principally from the opinion and false apprehension of this; which, indeed, I take to be a notable, though not infallible, sign of a mercenary, low-spirited, and fleshly-minded Christian: but, by it, I mean the soul's being really regenerated into the image of God, consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and her implantation into the root Christ Jesus, by which she partakes of his divine life, power, and Spirit.

And yet, besides this, I conceive there is a more theological account to be given of these joys and pleasures which the renewed soul doth so plentifully reap, upon her return to God, from whom she had so long straggled by sin and wickedness. For the “God of hope filleth the godly soul with all peace and joy in believing:” Christ doth on purpose speak words to the hearts of his disciples, that their “joy may be full.” But whether the most benign and gracious Father of spirits doth immediately, from himself, inspire the holy soul with divine joys and pleasures, kindled, as I may say, with nothing but his own breath: or whether he bring them to his holy mountain, and into his house of prayer, and by that, or any other like means, make them joyful and of glad heart, as in the day of a solemn festival, as he hath promised to do, Isa. lvi. 7. and xxv. 6. however it be, I say, sure it is that he frequently puts a gladness into their hearts beyond that of the harvest or the vintage, and makes them to rejoice with “joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Having now unfolded the meaning of the gracious soul's not thirsting any more, I should pass to the last thing contained in the text; but finding myself oppressed in my spirit, by the consideration of this necessary consequent of true religion, when I compare the temper of Christians with it, I must crave leave to stay a little, and breathe. And what shall I breathe but a sad and bitter complaint over that low, earthly, selfish, greedy spirit, which actuateth the world at this day, yea, and the generality of professors of that sacred religion, which we call Christianity. Alas! what a company of thieves and

murderers—I mean, base and sensual loves and lusts—lodge in those very souls, who would be taken for temples consecrated to the name, and honour, and inhabitation of the eternal God, the Spirit of truth and holiness. Oh, what pity is it that the precious souls of men, yea, and of Christians, the best of men, that are all capable of so glorious liberty, so high and honourable a happiness, should be bound down under such vile and sordid lusts, feeding upon dust and gravel, to whom the hidden manna is freely offered, and God himself is ready to become a banquet! And O what a shame is it for those who profess themselves children of God, disciples of the most holy Jesus, and heirs of his pure and undefiled kingdom of heaven; for these, I say, willingly and greedily to roll themselves in filthy and brutish sensualities, to set up that on high in their souls, which was made to be under their bodies, and so to love and live as if they studied to have no affinity at all, but would be as unlike as they could to that God and Redeemer, and unfit for that inheritance! How often shall it be protested to the Christian world, by men of the greatest devotion and seriousness, that it is utterly mad, and perfectly vain, to dream of entering into the kingdom of heaven hereafter, except the kingdom of heaven enter into our souls during their union with these bodies? How long shall the Son of God, who came into the world on purpose to be the most glorious example of true and divine purity, exact and perfect self-denial and mortification; how long shall he lie by in his word, as an antiquated pattern only cut out for the apostolical ages of the world, and only suited to some few morose and me-

lancholic men? Is it not a monstrous spectacle, and to be hissed out of the world with the greatest indignation, a covetous, voluptuous, ambitious, sensual saint? With what face can we pretend to true religion, or a feeling acquaintance with God, and the things of his personal service and kingdom, whilst the continual bleatings and lowings of our souls after created good do bewray us so manifestly, and proclaim before all the world, that the beast, the brutish life, is still powerful in us? “If ye seek me,” saith Christ to his followers, as well as he did once to his persecutors, “then let these go;” let go the hold of these earthly objects, let vanish these worldly joys and toys; “withhold your throat from thirst, and your feet from being unshod,” and come follow me only, and ye shall have treasure in heaven; for “he that will not deny all for me, is not worthy of me.” Ah, sad and dreadful fall, that hath so miserably cramped this royal offspring, and made the King’s son to be a lame Mephibosheth! Ah doleful apostacy! How are the sons of the morning become children of darkness, and the heirs of heaven, vassals and drudges to earth! How is the King’s daughter unequally yoked with a churlish Nabal, that continually checketh her more divine and generous motions! “How unhappily art thou matched, O my soul!” And yet, alas! I see it is too properly a marriage; for thou hast clean forgotten “thine own people, and thy Father’s house.” Take up, Oh take up a lamentation, thou virgin, daughter of the God of Zion: sometimes indeed a virgin, but now, alas! no longer a virgin, but miserably married to an unworthy mate, that can never be able to match thy faculties,

nor maintain thee according to the grandeur of thy birth, or the necessary pomp of thy expenses, and way of living; nay, thou art become not only a miserable wife, but, in so being, thou art also a wicked adulteress, prostituting thyself to the very vilest of thy lawful husband's servants; if thou be not incestuous, it is no thank to thee, there being nothing in this world so near of kin to thee, as to make way for incest. "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return; put away thine adulteries from between thy breasts, and so shall the King yet again greatly desire thy beauty;" for so he hath promised, Jer. iii. 21. that when there shall be a voice heard upon the high places, weeping, and supplications of the children of Israel, because they have perverted their way, and forgotten the Lord their God, and the backsliding children shall return, and then he "will heal their backslidings."

CHAPTER VIII.

The term or end of religion, eternal life, considered in a double notion: First, as it signifies the essential happiness of the soul. Second, as it takes in many glorious appendixes. The noble and genuine breathings of the godly soul after, and springing up into, the former. The argument drawn from the example of Christ. Moses and Paul moderated. It ends in a serious exhortation made to Christians, to live and love more spiritually, more suitably to the nature of souls, redeemed souls, resulting from the whole discourse.

I AM now come to the last thing whereby this most noble principle is described, namely, the term or end of it; and that is said here, in the text, to be “everlasting life.” This is the highest pitch of perfection, unto which the new creature is continually growing up; which the Apostle Paul hath expressed with as much grand eloquence, as words are able to magnify it, calling it “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:” this is that unbounded ocean, which this living fountain, by so many incessant issues, and unwearied streamings, perpetually endeavours to empty itself into, or rather to embosom itself in. Now, what this is, we must confess with the Apostle John, and indeed we have more reason to make such a confession than he had, that it doth not yet appear, namely, neither fully nor distinctly: but yet, since I am thus cast upon the contemplation of it, it will be a suitable and agreeable matter to

inquire into it; and though it surpass the power and skill of all created comprehensions to take the just dimensions, and faithfully give in the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of it; yet we may attempt to walk about this heavenly Jerusalem, as the Psalmist speaks of the earthly, “and tell the towers thereof, mark her walls, consider her palaces, that we may tell it to the generation following.”

1. Then, we will consider “eternal life” in the most proper notion of it, as it implies the essential happiness of the soul; and so it is no other than the soul’s pure, perfect, and established state. By a state, I do designedly undervalue that grosser notion of a place, as that which scarcely deserves to enter into the description of such a glory, or, at best, will obtain but a very low room there: by purity, I do purposely explode that carnal ease, rest, immunity, affluence of sensual delights, accommodated only to the animal life—which last Mahometans, and the former too many professed Christians, and the Jews almost generally, dream of, and judge heaven to be. By perfection, I distinguish it from the best state, which the best men upon earth can possibly be in. So, then, I take “eternal life,” in the primary and most proper notion of it, to be the full, perfect, and everlasting enjoyment of God, communion with him, and a most blissful conformity of all the powers and faculties of the soul to that eternal goodness, truth, and love, as far as it is, or may become, capable of the communications of the Divinity. This life was, at the highest rate imaginable, purchased by our ever blessed Lord and Saviour in the days of his flesh, and here, in the text, promised to every believ-

ing soul. Now, in as much as we are ignorant both of the present capacity of our own faculties, how large they are, and much more ignorant, how much more large and ample they may be made, on purpose to receive the more rich and plentiful communications of the divine life and image, therefore can we not comprehend neither the transcendent life, happiness, and glory, nor that degree of sanctity and blessedness which the believing soul may be advanced to in another world. The Popish schoolmen do nicely dispute about the sight of God, and the love of God, to wit, in whether of these the formal blessedness of the soul consisteth, ill separating those whom God hath so firmly joined together; as if it were possible that either a blind love, or a jejune and unaffectionate speculation, could render a soul entirely happy: but it is much safer to say, that the happiness and eternal life of the soul standeth in the possession or fruition of God; and this doth necessarily import the proper perfection of every faculty. Nothing can be the formal happiness of a spirit that is either inferior or extrinsical to it; it must be something divine, and that wrought into the very nature and temper of it. I hesitate not to affirm, that if the soul of man could possibly be advanced, so as to receive adoration or divine power, yet, if it were, in the mean time, void of divine dispositions, and a god-like nature; it would be far from being glorified, and made happy as to its capacity. What health is to the body, that is holiness to the soul; which haply the Apostle alludes to, when he speaks of the spirit of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7.

2. There is another notion of "eternal life," which

some contend for, by which they mean not barely the essential happiness of the soul, but that with the addition of many suitable and glorious circumstances, —the essential happiness of the soul, as it is attended with the appendixes of a glorified body, the beholding of Christ, the amicable society of angels, freedom from temptations, the knowledge of the secrets of nature and providence, and such like: to which may be also added, though of a lower degree, open absolution, or a visible deliverance of the saints out of the overthrow of the wicked, at the conflagration of the world, power over devils, eminence of place, enjoyment of friends, and such like. Now, let us briefly consider what tendencies there are in the religious soul towards each of these. And here I must crave leave to speak jointly both of the end, and of the motion thereunto; though it may be thought that the former only falls fairly under our present consideration.

(1.) Then, I suppose, that “eternal life,” in the first sense of it, is intended here, to wit, the essential happiness of the soul, or its perfect and everlasting enjoyment of God. For the description is here made of religion itself in the abstract, or that principle of divine life, which Christ Jesus implanted in the soul; and being so considered, it is hard to conceive how that should spring up into any of these appendant circumstances, or into any thing but the completion and perfection of itself; though the religious soul, taken in connection with them, possibly may. And, indeed, though we should allow, which we shall take into consideration under the next head, that many of those high scriptural phrases,

which are brought to describe the future condition of believing souls, do principally respect the appendixes of its essential happiness, (as a kingdom, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, an inheritance reserved, a place prepared, and the like,) yet it seems very unnatural to interpret this phrase, “life,” and “eternal life,” any otherwise than of that which I call the essential happiness of the soul: but if we interpret it of this, the sense is very fair and easy. Thus, this principle of divine life is continually endeavouring to grow up to its just altitude, to advance itself to a triumphant state, even as all other principles of life do naturally tend towards a final accomplishment, and ultimate perfection. Carnal self, or the animal life, may be indeed said to be a well of water too, poisonous water; but that springs up into a sensual life, popular applause, self-accommodations, or, if you will, in the Apostle’s phrase, into the fulfilment of the lusts of the flesh. This I speak only by way of illustrative opposition; for, to speak more properly, this corrupt principle hath in it the central force of death and hell, and is always tumbling downward; whereas this divine principle is always climbing upward: but they do both agree in this, that they both seek their own gratifications, and study to acquire their respective perfections. The everlasting and most glorious enjoyment of God is certainly most perfective of the soul; and therefore is most properly and most deservedly said to be its “eternal life,” according to that of our Saviour, John xvii. 3. Now, this “eternal life” is not a thing specifically different from religion, or the image of God, or the divine life, but in-

deed the greatest height, and the greatest possible perfection of itself: even as the sun at noon-day is not a light really distinct from what it was in the first dawns of the morning, but a different degree, and far more glorious state; which seems to be the very similitude whereby the Spirit of God illustrateth the matter in hand, Prov. iv. 18. or, as a man of perfect age is not a distinct species from a child, but much more complete and excellent in that species; to which the Apostle refers, treating of this subject, 1 Cor. xiii. 11. Man hath not two distinct kinds of happiness in the two distinct worlds, that he is made to live in; but one and the same thing is his blessedness in both, which, as I said before, must needs be the enjoyment of God. The translation made of the text is very suitable to this notion: for this divine principle is said to spring up, not unto, but into, everlasting life, *q. d.* it springs up till it be swallowed up into the perfect knowledge, love, and enjoyment of God. Even as youth is swallowed up in manhood, so this grace is swallowed up in glory, and not so much abolished, as indeed perfected.

By this phrase, the genius of true religion, and the excellent temper of the truly religious soul, is most lively described. This is the soul, that, being in some measure delivered from its unnatural bondage, and freed from its unhappy confinement, now spreads itself in God, lifts up itself to him, stretches itself upon him, is not content with a heaven merely to come, but brings down a heaven into itself, by carrying up itself unto, and after, the God of heaven. God is become great, only great in the

eye of such a Christian; he is indeed become all things to him. Whilst this principle is rightly and actually predominant in him, he knows no interest but to thrive and grow great in God; no will, but to serve the will, and comply with the mind of God; no end, but to be united to God; no business, but to display and reflect the glory and perfections of God upon the earth. The main business of his life, I say, is to serve him; the main ambition of his soul to be like to him; and his main happiness in this world to be united to him; and in the world to come to be swallowed up in him: in this world to know, and love, and rest, and delight in, and enjoy God more than all things, and in the world to come to enjoy him more so. The gladsome growings up of the tender flowers to the friendly sun, being once powerfully surprised with his precious and benign influences, and the cheerful haste with which the sympathetic needle so amorously pursues the enchanting loadstone, being once rightly touched and affected with it, do a little, though but a little, resemble and represent the motions of a spirit impregnated with this divine principle, and strongly impressed with the image and stamp of God: he puts in his hand by the hole of the door, and the bowels of the espoused soul are presently moved, yea, melted for him, Canticles v. 4. He casts the skirt of his garment, the mantle of his love, and presently the converted soul leaves all to follow him. Faith, hope, and love, are knitting and springing graces, and this eternal life is the end and perfection of them all; not that any one of them, I conceive, shall be utterly abolished, as some conclude

concerning the two former, though without good ground, I think, from the Apostle's words, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. But faith will be ripened into the most firm and undisturbed confidence, affiance, and acquiescence in God; hope will be advanced into a more cheerful, powerful, and confident expectation, having for its object the perpetuation of the soul's felicity; and love will become much more loving, and more clearly distinguishable from the imperfect longings and languishings of this present state, when it shall flower up into pure delights and complacencies, resting and glorying in the arms of its adequate, satisfactory, and eternal object. The faith of the hypocrite, and indeed his hope too, is still springing up into self-preservation, deliverance, liberty, a splendid and pompous state of the church, (that is, of his own party) or some such thing as will gratify the animal life, and there it terminates; but the faith of the sincere and religious soul springs up into eternal life; it knows no term but 'the salvation of the soul,' 1 Pet. i. 9. as his hope knows no accomplishment but a state of God-like purity and perfection, 1 John iii. 3. The mere natural man lives within himself, within a circle of his own, and cannot get out; whether he eat, or drink, or pray, or be zealous for the popular pulling down of the political Antichrist, he is still in his own circle, he is still sacrificing in all this to that great *helluo*, the animal life, as I have already made evident: but the godly soul is disinterested of self, and so is still contriving the advancement of a nobler life within itself, and moving towards God, as his supreme and all-sufficient good. Give him all that the whole world

can afford, he cannot fix, nor settle, nor centre here: God hath put into him a holy restless appetite after a higher good, which he would rather be, than what he is. I know indeed that the soul that is thus divinely free may be hindered in its flight; but it will deliver itself from the clog at length. You may choke and dam up the streamings of this fountain, perhaps, but they will burst out again; you may cast ashes upon this pure fire for a time, but it will flame out again: such a damp cannot arise, no, not from hell itself, as to extinguish it. The Philistines, I remember, stopped the wells of water which Abraham had digged in Gerar, “and filled them with earth,” Gen. xxvi. 15. But this well of water, which God diggeth in the holy and humble soul, cannot be stopped, neither by the devil, that king of Gerar, that is, of wanderings, Job i. 7. nor by any of his servants, but it will find vent upward: though you endeavour to fill it with earth, which indeed is the likeliest to choke it, though you cast the dust and gravel of earthly pleasures, profits, or preferments into it, yet it is a well of living water, and will work its passage out. The hungerings of the godly soul are not, cannot be satisfied, till it come to feed upon the hidden manna, nor its thirstings quenched, till it come to be swallowed up in the unbounded ocean of life and love.

But I find I cannot divide “springing up” from “eternal life,” nor pursue the term of religion, but I must also take in the motion of the religious soul, whereby he pursues it, which I have already handled in my discourse; therefore I will quit this head, and take a short view of the second.

(2.) The secondary and more improper notion of "eternal life," I mentioned, was that which takes in the circumstances or appendixes of it. And here we must needs allow, that the Holy Scriptures do openly avouch some of these circumstances, as those especially of the first class that I named, of some of which it seems to make great account; and possibly the Scripture may somewhere or other imply all the rest, even those of the inferior rank. Again, we will allow, that many of those phrases which the Scripture uses to describe the blessed state of the other world, do principally respect these appendixes of the soul's essential happiness; such perhaps are the "crown of righteousness" mentioned by the Apostle Paul. "The prize of the high calling," mentioned by the same Apostle. "The house which is from heaven." "A kingdom, an incorruptible inheritance, a place prepared, mansions, a reward, praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 7. And that "glory, honour, and peace," spoken of by the Apostle, Rom. ii. 10. These are all Scripture descriptions of the other state, and I suppose we may grant them to have a peculiar reference to this secondary essential happiness of the soul: though I know not any necessity there is to be so liberal in our concessions; for it may be fairly said concerning all, or most of them, that the design of these phrases is not so much to establish this less proper notion, or to point out the circumstances of the glorified state, as to insinuate how much more ample and glorious the state shall be than this in which we now are; as a prize is looked upon as somewhat more excellent than what

is done or expended to acquire it, (it must needs be so esteemed by runners or wrestlers); a kingdom is a more glorious state than that of subjection, and an inheritance is incomparably more ample than the pension that is allowed the heir in his minority.

But these things being conceded, it doth not appear how far, or under what notion, the religious soul, as such, doth spring up into these additional glories, and thirst after them. I know there are many that speak very highly of these appendixes, and allow the godly soul a very high and irrespective valuation of them; and this they principally infer from the examples of Christ himself, as also of Moses and Paul. Give me leave, therefore, to suggest something, not to enervate, but to moderate, the argument drawn from these persons; and after that, I shall briefly lay down what I conceive to be most scriptural and rational in this matter.

1. As for the example of Christ, it seems to make not much for them in this matter. For however the text is very plain, that “for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross;” and this joy seems plainly to be his session “at the right hand of God.” Yet, if by this joy we understand a more full and glorious possession of God, and a more excellent exaltation of his human nature, to a more free fruition of the divine, then it cannot be applied to any thing but the springing up of the gracious soul into its essential happiness; which I have already contended for, as being the proper genius of such a soul: or if by this joy and throne we understand the power that Christ foresaw he should be vested with, of leading captivity captive, trampling

under feet the powers of hell and darkness, and procuring gifts for men, which seems to me to be most likely, then it belongs not at all to men, neither can this example be exhibited for imitation.

As for the instance of Moses, who is said to have had "respect to the recompense of the reward." It is not yet granted, that that "recompense of reward" relates principally to these appendants of the soul's essential happiness, neither can it, I suppose, be evinced: but, though I should also allow that, which I incline to do, yet all that can be inferred from it, is but a respect that Moses had, as our translation well renders it, or some account which he in his sufferings made of this recompense; which was a very warrantable contemplation.

The Apostle Paul, indeed, doth openly profess that he looked for, and desired, the coming of Christ from heaven, upon the account of that glorious body which he would then clothe him with, and so he might, and yet not desire it principally and primarily, but secondarily, and with reference.

And this leads me to the general answer that I was preparing to give, which is this. Some of these circumstances which I have named, especially that of the glorified body, may be reduced to the essential happiness of the soul, or included in it, so that the soul could not otherwise be perfectly happy. It is the opinion of all divines, I think, that a Christian is not completely happy, till he consist of a soul and body both glorified. And, indeed, considering the dear affection, and essential aptitude, that God hath planted in the human soul for a body, we cannot well conceive how she should be perfectly

happy without one: and this earthly body is, alas! an unequal yoke-fellow, in which she is half stifled, and rather buried, than conveniently lodged; so that it seems necessary, even to her essential happiness, that she should have some more heavenly and glorious body, wherein she may commodiously and pleasantly exert her innate powers, and whereby she may express herself in a spiritual and nobler manner, suitable to her own natural dignity and vigour, and to her infinitely amiable, and most beloved object.

Concerning the rest of the circumstances which cannot be thus reduced, I conceive that such of them as are necessary to the essential happiness of the soul, by way of subserviency, may be eyed, and desired, and thirsted after, secondarily, under this motion only, as they are subservient to that essential blessedness. I confess I do not understand under what other notion a religious soul can lift up itself to them; I mean, not so far forth as it is holy and religious, and acts suitably to that divine principle which the Father of spirits, or rather the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath implanted in it. And if there be any other circumstance which cannot be reduced to one of these kinds, I suppose it may be reckoned amongst the objects and gratifications of the animal life, and not to make up any part of the godly man's heaven, or that eternal life which religion springs up into: for I easily imagine, that a fleshly fancy may verily be mightily ravished with the desire of such a heaven as is suitable to it; and that a mere animal man may be as heartily desirous to be in such a kingdom of God, as he hath shaped out to himself, as he is utterly unwilling that the

true kingdom of God, such as the Apostle describes, Rom. xiv. 17. consisting in "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," should be in him. If our continual cry be after safety, self-preservation, liberty, redemption, and deliverance from those things only that oppress and grieve our fleshly interest, and our thirstings principally terminated in knowledge, though it be of God himself, freedom from condemnation, power over devils, yea, or any visible pomp, glory, or splendour, though it be of ever so ethereal and heavenly a nature, what do we more than others? what is all this more than may naturally spring up from the animal life, and may be ultimately resolved into carnal itself?

Wherefore, as a result from the whole discourse, especially from this last part of it, let me earnestly entreat of all the professors of this holy religion, which the blessed Messiah, Christ Jesus, hath so dearly bought for the world, and so clearly revealed in it, not to value themselves by any thing which the power of natural self-love may exert or desire, perform or expect, nor by any thing below the image of God, and the internal and transforming manifestations of Christ Jesus in them; the perfection of which is eternal life, in the most proper and true notion of it. I know that I have often suggested the same lesson in this short treatise, but I know also, that I can never inculcate it often enough; nay, the eloquence of angels is not sufficient to imprint it upon the hearts of men. Possibly it may startle some hypocritical professors, and carnal gossellers, (God grant it may effectually!) and make the ears of many that hear it to tingle, but yet I

will proclaim it, "It is possible for a man to desire not only the things of this world, which St. James speaks of, (James iv. 3.) but even heaven itself, to consume it upon his lusts; and he may as truly be making provision for the flesh to fulfil it in the lust thereof, in longing after a kind of self-salvation, as in eating, and drinking, and rising up to play." Certainly a true Christian spirit, rightly invigorated and actuated by this divine and potent principle, Christian religion, cannot look upon heaven as merely future, or as something perfectly distinct from him; but he eyes it as life, eternal life, the perfection of the purest and divinest life communicable to a soul, and is daily thirsting after it, or rather, as it is in the text, "growing up into it." I know that heaven is sometimes called a rest, in opposition to the dissatisfaction of the uncentred and unbelieving soul; but, in opposition to a sluggish, inert, and dormant rest, it is here said to be life, eternal life. Let us show ourselves to be living Christians, by springing up into the utmost consummation of life: let it appear that Christ Jesus, the Prince of life, who was manifested on purpose "to take away our sins," hath not only covered our shame, and, as it were, embalmed our dead souls, to keep them from putrefaction, and strewed them with the flowers of his merits, to take away their noisome smell from the nostrils of his Father, but hath truly advanced, reinstated, and made the souls flourish that sin had so miserably degraded and deflowered. Deliver yourselves, O immortal souls! from all those unsuitable and unseemly cares, studies, and joys; from all those low and particular ends and lusts, which do

not only pinch and straiten, but even debase and degrade you. Let it not be said, that the king of Sodom made Abraham rich ; that your main delight, happiness, and contentment, is derived from any prosperous, plentiful, peaceable, pompous state, any thing that may be called a self-accommodation, either in the world that now is, or that which is to come ; but from the righteousness of faith, and your vital union with the Father and the Son ; to whom, in the unity of the Spirit, be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

ON

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

ON

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

1 JOHN I. 3.

*“ Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son
Jesus Christ.”*

THESE words express the way of a Christian's living, and that kind of converse whereby a good man is distinguished from all other men.

A good man is not differenced from other men by any thing without him, any church privileges which are common to hypocrites and sincere Christians ; any external visible performances, in which the disciples of the Pharisees may be more abundant and more specious than the disciples of Christ, much less by any corporeal or temporal enjoyment or ornament, strength, beauty, riches, descent, &c. nor by any carnal relation, though it were to Abraham, as the Jews boasted of their father Abraham, but by something internal, substantial, by a relation to God. The character of a good man must be drawn from his correspondence to the chief good, and the happiness of a soul must be judged of by its relation to life, and love, and blessed-

ness itself. Things external, corporeal, temporal, make some difference amongst men, but it is but nominal and titular in comparison: by these, men are said to be rich or poor, noble or ignoble; but men are really and substantially differenced by the relation that they have to God: by this they are good or bad, godly or wicked. This is the most certain and proper note of a good man, namely, communion with God: in all other things he may be like other men, but in this he differs from and excels them all. This is a character proper or peculiar to them; for it agrees to every good man, to none but a good man, and always to him, as we shall see hereafter. The ground of my discourse, then, shall be this short and plain proposition, namely,

“A godly man hath communion with God.”

In order to the more distinct handling hereof, I must premise a few things briefly.

1. “That the gracious and loving God made nothing miserable of all that he made.” There are no slaves born in this great house of the world. He made all things out of himself, and he hath no idea of evil in himself, so that it was not possible that he should make any thing evil or miserable. Every thing was good, Gen. i. and so, in some sense, happy. He was free to make the world, but making it, he could not make it evil or miserable. Every thing is the product of Almighty love and goodness.

2. “The happiness of every creature consists in its acting agreeably to that nature that God gave it, and those ends which he propounded to it, and suitably to those laws which he gave them;” which laws were contrived with the greatest suitableness to those

natures, and subserviency to those ends. Every creature is in its kind happy, whilst it acts agreeably to that nature which the wise Creator implanted in it; as the sun runs its race without ceasing, and rejoices so to do, and is, in some sense, happy in so doing. Departing from that nature it becomes miserable, as the earth bringing forth briers and thorns, instead of those good fruits which it was appointed to bring forth, is said to be cursed, Gen. iii. 17, 18.

3. "The happiness of the creature is higher or lower, greater or lesser, according as it comes nearer to God, or is further off from him," according as it receives more or less from him, according to what communion it hath with him. The life and happiness of the sun is much lower than that of a man, because it cannot enjoy such high and excellent communications from, or communion with God, as man doth.

4. "There can be no communion without likeness." The sun shines upon a stone wall, as well as upon man, but a stone wall has no communion with the sun, because it hath no eyes to see the light of it as man hath, nor can receive the benign influences of its heat as the herbs do. A log of wood lieth in the water as well as the fish, but it hath no communion with the water, nor receives any advantage by it as the fish doth. God is present, according to his infinite essence, with the devils, as with the angels, but they have no likeness in nature to him, and so no communion with him, as these have.

5. "God hath given a more large and excellent capacity to man, than to any other of his creatures

upon earth.” God hath endued man with reason, and so made him capable of a higher life, and a more excellent communion with his Maker than all the rest. Of all sublunary creatures, the rational soul only is capable to know, love, serve, enjoy, imitate God, and so to have a glorious communion with him. The sun, in all its glory and brightness, is not so excellent a being as any soul of man, upon this account. And although man, by his fall, lost his actual communion with God, yet he is a reasonable creature still: he hath not lost his capacity of receiving influences from him, and enjoying communion with him. The world, when it is at the darkest, is yet capable of being enlightened.

6. “When the nature of man is, by divine grace, healed of its distemperedness, and restored to its former rectitude, to act suitably to the end for which it was made, and to spend itself upon its proper object, then man comes to have a right communion with God, and to be happy.” All rational souls are capable of holding communion with God, but all do not hold communion with him; but they that express the purity and holiness of the divine life, that know God, and live like him, these are his children, Matt. v. 15. and those only do rightly and really converse with him. When the Spirit of God informs these rational souls, and communicates the strength of a divine life through them, and stamps the lively impressions of divine perfections upon them, rendering our hearts, wills, and ways, conformable to that glorious pattern, that infinite good, then do we enjoy a proper communion with him, and are truly blessed; though we are not completely blessed, till

this conformity be perfected according to what those souls are, or may be capable of.

This is the true and proper notion of man's communion with God, and relation to him, which we cannot fully describe, till we more fully enjoy. That soul that truly lives and feeds upon God, does taste more than it can tell; and yet it can tell this, that this is the most high, excellent, noble, glorious life in the whole world.

This communion, as also the intimateness and closeness of it, are described variously in the Holy Scriptures, by the similitude of members being in the body. Of branches being in the vine. By being formed according to God's image, changed into his image. By God's dwelling in the soul, and the soul in him. By Christ's being formed in the soul. By the soul's having Christ. By Christ's supping with the soul, and the soul with him. Because nothing is more our own, nor more one with us, than that which we eat and drink, being incorporated into us; therefore is this spiritual communion between God and the godly soul, oft-times in Scripture described by our eating and drinking with him. Thus God was pleased to allow his people under the law, when they had offered up a part of their beasts in sacrifice to him, to sit down and feast upon the rest, as a token of that familiarity and oneness that was between him and them. By the like action, our Saviour shadowed out the same mystery, when, in the sacrament of his Supper, he appointed them to sit down to eat and drink with him, to intimate their feeding upon him, and most close communion with him: yea, the state of glory,

which is the most perfect communion with God, is thus shadowed out too, Matt. viii. 11. Rev. xix. 9. And, which is worth noting, I think the sacramental eating and drinking hath some reference to that most intimate communion of the saints with God in glory. Our Saviour himself seems to imply as much in that speech of his, Luke xxii. 30. "That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom :'' in which words he seems plainly to allude to the sacramental eating and drinking which he had a little before instituted. Which makes some to believe that that gesture is to be retained in that ordinance, which is most proper and usual to express familiarity and communion ; and to take away that gesture, is to destroy one great end of our Saviour, in appointing this Supper, which was to represent that familiar communion which is between himself and every believing soul. I will not here examine the validity of their argument, which, possibly, if pressed home, might introduce a rudeness into the worship of God, under pretence of familiarity : but it seems very plain, that the nature of that ordinance doth shadow out the intimate communion between God and a godly soul.

I have already, in part, prevented myself, and showed you wherein the soul's communion with God consists : but yet, to give you a more distinct knowledge of this great mystery, I shall unfold it in these three following particulars.

1. "A godly soul hath communion with God in his attributes." When the soul of man is moulded and formed into a resemblance of the divine nature, then hath it a true fellowship with him. Now, this

communion with God in his attributes is to be seen two ways.

1st, “When the soul is, in its measure, according to the capacity of a creature, all that which God is.” This is the communion which the angels have with God. Their beholding the face of God, is not to be understood of a mere speculation, or an idle gazing upon a deity; but they see him, by receiving his image upon themselves, and reflecting his glory and brightness; they partake of the goodness, purity, holiness, wisdom, righteousness of God, which makes them such glorious spirits; and the want of this makes the other, whom we call devils, to be what they are. Thus, godly men shall have communion with God, they shall see God. Yea, thus they have communion with him in some measure: they do not only see God in the world, as the devils do, nor see him in the Word, as many hypocritical and wicked men do, but they see him in themselves, in the frame of their own souls, they find themselves moulded into his image, and a resemblance of him drawn upon them. This is a beatifical vision of God, true and real, though not full and complete. This is set out in Scripture, by being “holy, as God is holy,” “perfect, as God is perfect.” This our Saviour exhorts us to seek after, “Take my yoke upon you, learn of me; for I am meek and lowly;” and the Apostle, “Be ye followers of God, as dear children.” When the nature and perfections of God, his holiness, goodness, righteousness, wisdom, &c. are copied out upon our natures, and the same spirit is in us, which was in Christ Jesus, then have we a true communion with God, which blessed com-

munion, when the soul becomes all that which God is, is by a conformity of nature.

2dly, “ When the soul, in its actions as a creature, doth rightly answer to the attributes of the Creator.” As when the soul doth answer the goodness of God with suitable affections of love and joy, and delight ; when the soul doth correspond to the sovereignty and wisdom of God by the acts of self-denial and resignation ; doth converse with the righteousness of God by patience and a holy acquiescence. When the soul doth rightly exert those acts which are proper and suitable to the nature of God, then it may be said to hold communion with him in his attributes ; when the actions and motions of the soul do correspond to the divine nature and attributes. Now, this suitableness of the soul, I mean especially with reference to the incommunicable attributes of God, where there is no place for imitation, though it hold good in the rest also.

2. “ A godly soul hath communion with God in his word.” To read, profess, or hear the word, is not to hold a real communion with God therein : many do so that are strangers to God : a man may read my letters, and yet correspond with my enemy. That son, in the gospel, that heard his father’s command, and answered, “ I go, Sir,” but went not, had no right communion with his paternal authority. But when the soul is ennobled into such a frame as this word doth require, then it holds communion with God in his word ; for example, when the soul puts forth those acts of humiliation, holy fear and reverence, godly trembling, which do suit the nature of a divine threatening, when the soul answers the

command of God with suitable resolutions, repentings, reformations, and real obedience, when it entertains the promise with suitable acts of holy delight, joy, refreshment, recumbency, and acquiesces in the same, then doth it truly converse with God in his Word.

3. "A godly soul hath communion with God in his works." And that is, when the soul doth answer the several providences of God with suitable and pertinent affections and dispositions. The godly soul doth not only eye and observe the hand of God in all things that fall out, but doth comply with those providences, and is moulded into that frame, and put upon those duties, which such providences do call for. Then doth the soul rightly hold communion with God in his works, when it is humbled under humbling providences, is refreshed, strengthened, and grows up under prosperous providences, as they did, Acts ix. 31. who having rest given them, were edified, comforted, multiplied, &c. When the soul doth rightly comport with every providence, and the will is moulded into the will of God, then do we hold communion with him in his works. This theme is large, because the works of God are manifold, of creation, redemption, preservation, works towards other men, and towards ourselves, both towards our outward and inward man. A godly soul hath communion with God in all these; in the sense that I named even now, though perhaps not equally in all, yet sincerely and truly.

By what hath been said, you understand that right fellowship with God is not a bare communion of names. To have the name of God called upon us,

and to be called Christians, or the people of God, or to name the name of God, to profess it, to cry, Lord, Lord, doth not make any one really and truly the better man, doth not make a soul rightly happy. It is not enough to cry, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," with those in Jer. i. 4. to make our "boast in the law," with those in Rom. ii. 23. to call ourselves "the children of Abraham," as the Jews did in John the Baptist's time, Matt. iii. 9. These privileges and professions are extrinsic to the soul, and do nothing to the true ennobling of it. But right fellowship with God is a communion of hearts and natures, of will and affections, of interest and ends; to have one heart and will, the same interest and ends with God, is to be truly godly: a God-like man is the only godly man; a Christ-like nature brought into the soul, doth only denominate a man a true Christian. It is not speaking together, but loving and living together, that brings God and the soul into one: "I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me." And thus, I suppose, you have a fair account why the Apostle James, chap. ii. does so much prefer works before faith, (for indeed faith is nothing worth, save only that faith which joins the soul to the object, and makes the thing believed one's own,) as also, why the Apostle Paul prefers love before a faith of miracles, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. Though, indeed, a justifying faith is the most miraculous, that faith which unites the soul and God together is more excellent, and, indeed, more miraculous than the faith that removes mountains. When I consider the proper happiness and perfection of a soul, and the nature of this true

blissful communion with God, I cannot but wonder how it is possible, that men should take their communion with God to consist in an overly acquaintance with him, profession of him, performances to him. I am confident it is not possible, that men should have any true feeling of happiness in such acquaintance, no more than a man can be really filled with the seeing or craving of meat which he eats not.

Before I apply the doctrine, give me leave to lay down some rules or positions, tending further to explain and clear it.

1. This must be held, which I touched upon before, that “there can be no communion between God and man, but by a likeness of nature, a new, a divine principle implanted in the soul.” A beast hath no communion with a man, because reason, the ground of such communion, is wanting. Of all the creatures, there was none found that could be a meet help for Adam, that could be taken into the human society, till Eve was made, who was a human person. So, neither can there be any conjunction of the soul with God, but by oneness of spirit, “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.”

2. “There can be no communion with God but by a Mediator,” no Mediator but Christ Jesus, who is God-man. “Two cannot walk together,” nor hold communion, “except they be agreed; and there can be no agreement made between God and man but by Christ Jesus. Therefore it is said, “Our communion is with the Father and the Son,” with the Father by the Son: and faith, whereby the soul and God are united, is still said to be “faith in Christ,” as we find in the Scriptures.

3. "There can be no perfect communion with God in this life." Our communion with heaven, whilst we are upon earth, is imperfect; our resemblance to God is scant and dark in comparison of what it shall be. We know but in part, love but in part, enjoy but in part; we are but in part holy and happy. There can be no perfect communion with God, till there be a perfect reconciliation of natures as well as persons; and that cannot be whilst there is any thing unlike to God in the soul, whilst any impure thing dwells in the soul which cannot truly close with God, nor God with that. The Holy Spirit can never suffer any defiled thing to unite itself with it: "It is not lawful for any impure thing to mix itself with pure divinity," saith Socrates the heathen. "What communion hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" saith the Apostle; and so far as a righteous man is in any part unrighteous, so far is he a stranger to God. The unregenerate part of a regenerate man hath no more communion with God than a wicked man, than the devil himself hath; no more than darkness hath with light.

4. "Our communion with God must be distinguished from the sense and feeling of it." Many have run upon sad miscarriages, (and those indeed extremes,) whilst they place communion with God in the sense and feeling of it, in raptures of joy, extacies and transports of soul; which, indeed, if they be real, are not so much it, as the flower of it, something resulting and separable from it. Communion with God cannot be lost in a saint, for then he is no saint; for it is the proper characteristic of a saint to have communion with God; and a saint under

desertion, hath communion with God even then as really, though not so feelingly, as at any other time, so far as he is sanctified. But the sense of this communion may be very much, if not altogether lost, and oftentimes is lost.

5. “A soul’s communion with God cannot be interrupted by any local mutations.” It is a spiritual conjunction, and is not violated by any confinement; the walls of a prison cannot separate God and the godly soul; banishment cannot drive a soul from God. The blessed angels, those ministering spirits, when they are despatched into the utmost ends of the world upon the service of God, are even then beholding the face of God, and do enjoy as intimate communion with him as ever. The case is the same with all godly souls, whose communion with God does not depend upon any local situation; it is not thousands of miles that can beget a distance between God and the soul. Indeed nothing but sin does it, or can do it. “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God;” nothing but sin is contrary to this divine fellowship, and so nothing but that can interrupt this spiritual society. To speak properly, sin does not so much cause the soul’s distance from God, as itself is that distance. Man and wife remain one, though at a hundred miles’ distance; and believing souls do maintain a certain spiritual communion one with another, though in several parts of the world. The society and communion of godly souls one with another, so far as it is spiritual, cannot be interrupted by bodily distance; much less, then, the fellowship of God with the godly soul, who carries about with

him, and in him, a divine nature, the image of God, a holy, God-like disposition whithersoever he goes.

6. "This communion with God, which I have been speaking of, is much better than all outward acts and enjoyments, duties and ordinances whatsoever, though they be ever so many or specious." God himself long since decided this matter, that a broken and contrite heart is better than all sacrifices, Psalm li. 17. that "to obey was better than sacrifice," 1 Sam. xv. 22. that "mercy was better than sacrifice," Hosea vi. 6. that "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God," was to be preferred before "thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil," Micah vi. 7, 8. It holds, in reference to gospel duties, though they may seem more spiritual than the oblations of the law. A real soul-communion with God, a communion of hearts and natures, of wills and affections, of interests and ends, is infinitely more excellent than all hearing, praying, celebration of sabbaths or sacraments, James v. 25. as the end is more excellent than the means: for so stands the case between them.

Yea, I will add, (though some proud and wanton spirits have made strange work with it, yet) it is a sure and most excellent doctrine, that this spiritual communion is a continual sabbath, (a sabbath of communion is much better than a sabbath of rest;) this is the sabbath that the angels and saints in heaven keep, though they know no such thing as a first day in the week, have no reading, preaching, or praying, amongst them. This is a continual praying, and effectual way of praying in silence. A

right active appropriating faith, does virtually contain a prayer in it; right believing is powerful praying. The knees, eyes, and tongues, bear the least share in prayer, the whole of the work lies upon the soul, and particularly upon faith in the soul, which is indeed the life and soul of prayer. Faith can pray without words; but the most elegant words, the phrase of angels, is not worthy to be called prayer without faith. I speak not so much of faith inditing a prayer, or giving life to it, as of its being virtually prayer, if not something more; for, indeed, faith is a real bringing down of that God, and drawing in of those influences into the soul, which prayer only looks up for.

Communion with God is a continual fast; it is that spiritual and most excellent way of fasting, whereby the soul, emptying itself of itself, and all self-fulness, self-sufficiency, self-confidence, receives of the fulness of God alone, and is filled therewith. A soul communing rightly with God, is a soul emptied of, and, as it were, fasting from itself; which is the most excellent way of fasting.

It is a continual thanksgiving; and indeed the best way of thanksgiving in the world. To render up ourselves to God purely and entirely, to reflect the glory of God in a holy and God-like temper, is a real and living thank-offering. This is that hallelujah, so much spoken of, which the angels and saints in glory do sing perpetually: what other adjunct of it there may be, I will not here dispute.

This communion of hearts and wills is a constant and most excellent celebration of sacraments. The soul that is really baptized into the Spirit of the

Lord Jesus, and feeds upon God, and is one with him, keeps a continual sacrament; without which, the sacramental eating and drinking is but a jejune and dry devotion. In a word, it is not possible for any thing that is extrinsical to the soul to make it happy; but the soul that is advanced into the noble state of communion with God, is made partaker of a new nature, and is truly happy.

Nay, further, I will add, that this communion with God is not only better than all duties and ordinances, but even better than all revelations, evidences, discoveries that can be made or given to the soul from without; a manifestation of God, that is, of a divine life in the soul, is much better than such a manifestation as Moses had of his glory in the cleft of the rock, *Exod. xxxiv.* Many think, O if they might but be assured of the love of God, of the pardon of sin, of an interest in Christ, they should be happy! why, I will tell you, if you had a voice from heaven, saying that ye were the beloved children of God, as Christ had; an angel sent from God to tell you that ye were beloved and highly favoured of God, as his mother Mary had, yet were communion with God to be preferred before these: for these things could not make a soul happy without real communion with God, but communion with God can and doth make a soul happy without these: and to this purpose, I suppose, I may apply that famous speech of our Saviour's by way of allusion, "It is more blessed to give, than to receive," to give up one's self, one's heart, will, interests, and affections, to God, than to receive any external discoveries and manifestations from him. Why do we

so earnestly seek after signs from without us, of God's presence with us, as if there were any thing better or more desirable to the soul than Emmanuel, God with us, or, as the Apostle speaks, "Christ in us the hope of glory?" He that desires any other evidence of grace, but more grace, does not only light up a candle to see the sun by, but indeed he acts like one that thinks there is something better than God himself; though I do not say that all do think so who are covetous of such manifestations. But this I will say, and you may do well to meditate upon it, that holy longings after a true and spiritual communion with God, do certainly spring from a divine principle in the soul; whereas a thirst after assurance of God's love, and reconciliation of our persons with him, may be only the fruit of self-love and interest.—"Let me die the death of the righteous!" you know whose wish it was.

7. "Though communion with God do concern the whole soul, and all the faculties, affections, and motions of it," (it is God's spreading his influences, and exercising his sovereignty over all the powers of the soul, and their mutual spending of themselves upon him, and conforming to him,) "yet the great acts of the soul, whereby it chiefly holds communion with God, are loving and believing." Love is the joining and knitting of the soul to God; faith is the soul's labouring after more intimate conjunction with him, a drawing in influences from him, and participations of him into the soul. We may say that faith fetches in supplies from heaven, and love enjoys them; faith draws in sweetness and virtue from Christ, and love feeds upon it. Certainly these

two eminent graces grow, live, and thrive together, and are inseparable companions. It is somewhat difficult to distinguish them, or to assign to each his proper place and work in the soul; they seem mutually to act, and to be mutually acted by each other: perhaps the Apostle might have respect to this mystery, when he speaks so doubtfully, Gal. v. 6. "Faith which worketh by love," which words may signify either 'faith acting by love,' or 'faith acted by love.' We know, indeed, that in the state of perfect communion, which we call glory, love shall abide and flourish more abundantly, and there shall be no room for faith there, as to the principal act of it; but which of them hath the greater part in maintaining our communion with God in this world, is not easy, nor indeed needful to determine. The godly soul is the most proper temple wherein God dwelleth, according to that, "Ye are the temple of the living God:" faith and love are the Jachin and Boaz, the two great pillars which keep up the soul as a temple; take away these and it remains a soul indeed, but the soul does not remain a temple to the Lord. In a word, these two are the soul's principal handmaids which she useth about this blessed guest; faith goes out and brings him in, and love entertains him; by faith she finds him whom she seeks, and by love she kisses him whom she finds, as the spouse is described, Cant. viii. 1.

8. "The communion that is between God and the godly soul is altogether different from that communion that is between creatures." Here I might show you how it exceeds and excels that, in many respects: but I shall not insist upon any of those

particulars, nor indeed upon any of those many differences that are between them, save only upon this one: the communion that is between creature and creature is perfect in its kind, and so, consequently, gives mutual satisfaction; I mean, it terminates the expectations, so that nothing remains to be enjoyed in them more than what is enjoyed. The creature is shallow, and soon is fathomed, we soon come to the bottom of it: a finite can grasp a finite being, and enjoy it, as I may say, all at once. A man may come so near to his friend, that he can come no nearer, enjoy him as fully as he is capable to enjoy, or the other to be enjoyed: created sweetness may be exhausted to the very bottom. But the soul's communion with God does not give it any such satisfaction, though indeed, in some sense, it gives a satisfaction of a much higher and more excellent kind. I told you before, that the soul's communion with God is imperfect in this life; and therefore it must needs follow, that it cannot satisfy; that is, not terminate and fill up the desires of it. Communion with God is maintained by faith and love, which proves it to be very sweet; but it also admits of hope, which proves it to be not satisfactory; for where there is yet any place left for hope, there is no full or satisfactory enjoyment. This may serve as a certain note, whereby to judge of the truth of that communion with God; it is not glutting to the soul, but will certainly manifest itself in incessant hungering, poor in the midst of riches; the soul is in the midst of plenty, and yet cries out, as if it were ready to starve for want. When I consider the temper of some perfectionists, who cry down

duties and ordinances, as low and unprofitable rudiments, and boast of their full and inaccessionable attainments, and compare it with the temper of the great Apostle, who did not reckon that he had attained, but still followed after that he might apprehend, who forgot the things that were behind, and reached forth unto those things that were before, pressing towards the mark, &c. I am ready to cry out, either this man is not an Apostle, or these men are not Apostles; but an Apostle he was, and had very intimate communion with his Lord; and therefore, I confess, I cannot allow these men so high a place, in my opinion, as they have in their own. God is infinite; and, therefore, though the soul be ever grasping, yet it can never comprehend; and yet the soul finds him to be infinitely good, and so cannot cease grasping at him neither. The godly soul sees that there is yet much more to be enjoyed of God, and in him; and, therefore, though it be very near to him, yet cries out, and complains of its distance from him;—‘Oh when shall I come and appear before him!’ though it be united to him, yet it longs to be yet more one with him still, to be in a closer conjunction. The godly soul forgets, with Paul, what it hath received, not through disingenuity and unthankfulness, but through a holy ardour and covetousness: all that he hath of God seems little, because there is yet so much to be had. Though the godly soul do drink of the fountain, yet that is not enough, it would lie down by it; though it do lie down by it, yet it is not satisfied neither, except it may bathe itself, and even be swallowed up therein. Behold a paradox! the godly soul is most thirsty,

though, according to Christ's promise, it thirst no more: it is most restless, though, according to his promise, it have rest. It is proper to God alone to rest in his love, for the creature cannot in this imperfect state: by this we know that we are not yet in heaven; for it is a state of perfect rest, not sloth, or cessation, but satisfaction. Faith is the fever of the soul, rendering it more thirsty by how much the more it drinks in of the water of life, the living streams that flow forth from the throne of God and of the Lamb. As the waters of the sanctuary are described by the prophet, growing deeper and deeper, Ezek. xlvii. so hope, which is the soul's appetite, grows larger and larger, and cannot be satisfied till the soul's capacity be filled up.

The doctrinal part being thus briefly despatched, it will be easy to infer some things by way of corollary. I shall content myself with three only amongst many.

1. "All wicked men are strangers to God." We know, indeed, that God, according to his infinite essence, is present with all his creatures; not only men, but even devils too, have their being in him: he hath spread his omnipotence, as the foundation whereupon the whole creation doth stand; he reared up the world in himself, and in him it doth subsist at this day. However angels and men have sadly fallen from God, yet they may be truly said to live in him still; and although all wicked souls do straggle off from God, as to their dispositions and affections, ingrafting themselves into another stock by sin and wickedness, yet they cannot possibly straggle from him as to their subsistence, as the

Apostle teaches the Athenian philosophers, "He is not far from every one of us," though few feel after him or find him. And it may be truly said, in some sense, that all the creatures, yea, the very worst of them, have a communion with God; all partake of him; no creature hath any thing of its own really distinct from him. Every thing that hath a being, hath a relation to that infinite and supreme being; and every living thing may be rightly said to have communion with him who is life itself. And all those several excellencies that are in the creatures, flow out from God, who hath impressed various prints of his own beauty and perfection upon every thing that he hath made. God's making of a thing is no other than the communicating of himself thereunto. And, therefore, when you look into the world, do not view any creature in the narrow point of its own being, but in the unbounded essence of God, and therein love and admire it. But, upon the immortal soul of man, God hath copied out his divine perfections more clearly and gloriously, than upon any other creature in this world. God could not make a rational soul, without communicating of his own infinite wisdom, power, life, freedom to it; so that there is more of the divine nature to be seen in the understanding and will of any one man, than in the whole fabric of heaven and earth.

Notwithstanding this, wicked men are strangers to God. They live and move in God indeed, but they know it not, they consider it not; they act as if they had no dependence upon him, no relation to him. Though they have some kind of communion with God, as creatures, yet this makes them not at

all happy: for they are departed from God in their affections and dispositions; they have degenerated from that subserviency and subordination to the divine will, which is the proper perfection of the creature, and are “alienated from the life of God,” as the Apostle speaks. It is not the soul’s moving in God, that makes it truly and happily nigh unto him, but its moving towards God, as the chief object, and according to the will of God, as the chiefest rule; and therefore wicked men, who pitch upon other objects, and walk by other laws, even the lusts and ordinances of their own flesh and fancy, are properly strangers to God, and miserable. He is not properly said to know God, who hath a notion of him formed in his head, but he whose heart and will is moulded into a conformity to God, and a delight in him; so that a wicked man, though he know, and believe, and tremble, as much as any of the devils, yet not loving nor delighting in God, as his chiefest good, not being conformed to his image, as the highest and purest perfection, may be truly said to be estranged from him; which is a state of hell, and death, and darkness. This is the man, who, though not in words, yet, interpretatively, and really, saith unto God, “Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways,” with them in Job xxi. 14. These do really exempt themselves from the dominion of Christ, and do really, though not audibly, say with them in the gospel, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” However men pretend, and boast of their relation to, and acquaintance with God, certainly all that live a mere sensual life, nonconformists to the image of God,

are truly said to be strangers to him, and in a state of non-communion with him, 1 John i. 6. 2 Cor. vi. 14.

2. “The life of a true Christian is the most high and noble life in the world;” it exceeds the life of all other men, even of the greatest men. The character that is here given of the godly man is the highest that can be given of any man, or indeed of any creature. It is the highest glory and excellency of the creature, to partake of the life of God, of the perfections of the Creator; and such is the description that the Spirit of God here makes of the godly man. What an unreasonable and senseless reproach is that which this wicked world doth cast upon religion, calling it a low and despicable thing; and upon religious and godly men, calling them low-spirited, puny people. Can a man be better spirited, than with the Spirit of God? Can any thing more truly ennoble a soul than a divine nature? Can a man be raised any higher than unto heaven itself? So noble is the godly soul. “The way of life is above to the wise;” and, consequently, all wicked men lead a low life, and are bound under chains of death and darkness: the righteous man is of a high and divine original, born of God, born from above; and therefore is more excellent than his neighbour, than any of his neighbours, even a king himself being judge, Prov. xii. 26. What a hellish baseness is that sinful gallantry of spirit, what a brutishness is that sensuality of living, which the degenerate sons of Adam do so much magnify! True goodness and excellency of spirit must be measured by the proportion that it bears to the

supreme good, the infinite pattern of all perfection. What excellent persons were those renowned saints of old, of whom the Apostle says, that "the world was not worthy," however they were thought not worthy to live in the world. What a noble and generous spirit of true Christian valour, patience, meekness, contempt of the world, and self-denial, was that, which was to be seen in the blessed apostles, however they were esteemed as the filth and sweepings of the world, the "offscouring of all things?" To which of the noble, wise, mighty men of the world, as such, did God ever say, These are the men that have fellowship with me, these are the men that lead a noble and divine life?" No, no, "not many noble are called;" and when they are called, they are made more noble than ever they were by birth or descent, by places of preferment or command. The life of every wicked man, of what rank soever he be in the world, is but a low life, a life in most things common to the very beasts with him; if the main of his business and delight be to eat, and drink, and work, and sleep, and enjoy sensual pleasures, what doth he? what enjoyeth he more than the beasts that perish? But the life of the meanest soul, that hath true and spiritual communion with God, is a life common to him with the blessed angels, those sons of the morning, the flower of the whole creation. That life which hath self for its centre, must needs be a penurious, and indeed a painful life: for how can the soul of man possibly feed to the full upon such spare diet, such scant fare as it finds at home? Nay, indeed, how can it choose but be in pain and torture, whilst it stretch-

eth itself upon self-sufficiency, or creature-fulness, which is not at all commensurate to it? But the soul that rightly stretches and spends all its faculties upon the infinite and blessed God, finds all its capacities filled up to the brim with that fountain of goodness, and itself perfectly matched with a suitable and satisfactory object. This is the true and only nobleness of spirit, when all the powers and faculties of this immortal soul are exalted and advanced into a true and vital sympathy and communion with the chiefest good, formed according to his will, conformed to his image.

And O that wisdom might be more “justified of her children!” O that the life of God did but clearly manifest itself, and shine forth in the lives of those that call themselves godly! Alas, that ever God himself should suffer reproach, by reason of the low-spiritedness and laziness of his servants! For this cause is religion evil spoken of. The Lord awake and enable us to express and show forth the divine life with all power and vigour, to live as high as the calling wherewith we are called, and so roll away this reproach!

3. “The life of a Christian is not a heavy sluggish thing, but active and vigorous,” as the phrase ‘communion with God,’ imports. Religion is a communication of life and vigour from Him, who is life itself; which makes the truly God-like soul to be quick and powerful in its motions. Every thing is by so much the swifter and stronger in its motions, by how much the nearer it is to its centre, as philosophy tells us. Certainly by how much the nearer any man is gotten to God, who is the centre

of souls, by so much the more does he covet after more intimate communion with him, and the more eagerly lay hold upon him. Communion does necessarily imply re-action or reflection: the soul that receives of God, and his fulness, will certainly be emptying itself into him again. Communion, in the very force of the phrase, implies a mutualness; we cannot suppose a soul partaking of God, but it must needs mutually render up itself to him again. There can be no commerce nor correspondence without returns: but what return can the godly soul make unto God? Why, it renders up its whole self to him. Faith is a giving grace as well as a receiving, it gives the soul back to Christ, as well as takes Christ into the soul; it draws in strength and grace from God, and reciprocally spends the whole powers of the soul upon him. The happiness of a godly soul doth not consist in cessation and rest; the soul itself being a powerful and active being, the happiness of it, the very rest of it, must also be active and vigorous. Where there is communion, there must needs be quick and lively returns, reciprocations, reflections, and correspondencies; the drawings of God are answered with the soul's running. The motion of Christ's fingers begets a motion in the Christian's soul: "My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him." These are the divine and harmonious responses which are made and maintained in the godly soul, the temple of the living God. O shake off that lazy and drowsy spirit, which hath so benumbed many in this cold and stupid age of the world; work out your salva-

tion with care and diligence. If your religion be nothing but a spiritual kind of sleep, your heaven will prove to be nothing but a pleasant kind of dream.

Communion with God speaks something divine, active, vigorous. The life of a Christian doth not consist only in cessation from evil, reformation from sin, or dying thereunto; mortification is but one part of regeneration. It is the conceit, and, I doubt, the deceit, of many nominal Christians, that if they can but keep up an indifferent even spirit and conversation, free from gross and scandalous sins, from day to day, they are happy enough: their utmost ambition is to be innocent and harmless. This, indeed, is necessary and praise-worthy; but surely the happiness of a soul lies higher: thus happy are all the creatures that keep in the station, and keep up the order, prescribed them of God: thus happy is the sun in the firmament, running his race continually, and never departing from the office which is assigned to it. But the soul of man is capable of a higher kind of happiness, namely, communion with God; which is, when the faculties thereof being awakened, refined, and acted by the Spirit of God, do reciprocally act, and spend themselves upon him, longing to be perfectly swallowed up in him, and to be all that which God himself is, as far as the creature is capable to drink in the perfections of the Creator, and become one with his Maker. This is that truly noble and divine life, which is here called communion with God, which the high-spirited and generous soul labours yet more and more to be growing up into, and perfected in. Keep your-

selves, with David, from your iniquities; it is something to be freed from the guilt and power of sin, but there is somewhat higher than this, a more excellent attainment, a more divine accomplishment: go on, therefore, with the same David, and aspire after this pure and blissful state, this heaven upon earth, waiting for the more ample and glorious manifestations of God to you, and in you, more than they that watch for the morning, as he did. This inference was only of instruction, but the sweetness and needfulness of the subject almost prevails with me to turn it into an earnest exhortation, but that I would not prevent myself. Therefore, I proceed to the next way of improving this doctrine, which shall be by way of conviction or reprehension.

1. Our fellowship *is*—it reproves them that can take up with a *shall be*—a heaven to come. I am now speaking, not to the worst of men, whose very souls are swallowed up in sensual enjoyments, and imprisoned in their senses; for these men either think of no heaven at all, or else they place their heaven and happiness in the enjoyment of themselves, or of the creature. Nor yet do I speak to those men who, being persuaded of a future state, do indeed wish for a heaven to come; but then it is a poor kind of low and earthly heaven, consisting in ease, rest, safety, freedom from troubles or torments, which is the best happiness which most men understand, the highest heaven that any carnal mind can see or soar up to. But I am speaking to a better and finer sort of souls than these, that are verily possessed with a sense of a pure and spiritual heaven

in the world to come; yea, they are so overpowered with the foresight of it, as that they do earnestly expect and wish for it; yea, the hopes of it do sustain and strengthen their hearts under the manifold temptations and persecutions of this present world; they are so verily persuaded of the truth of it, and of their own title to it too, that they are content to abide this long and disconsolate night of dimness, and anguish, and frightfulness, merely in expectation of the dawning of that day, that clear and bright day, of their glorious and everlasting redemption. And herein I am far from blaming them, nay, I must needs commend their magnanimous faith, and self-denial. But, in the mean time, they dwell too much upon heaven, as a future state, and comfort themselves only in a happiness to come, not longing and labouring to find a heaven opened within themselves, a beginning of eternal bliss brought into themselves; they are too well content with a certain reversion, and do not eagerly enough endeavour after present possession, to be actually instated in so much of the inheritance of souls as may fall to their share even in this lower world; this slothful temper and inactivity I do condemn wherever it is found, yea, though it be in my own soul. Every thing in the world, by a natural principle, thirsts after its proper rest, and a happiness suitable to the nature of it; no creature can be content, though it may be constrained, to be at a distance from its centre, but is still carried out towards its own perfection. And why, then, should a godly soul, who is God's only new creature in the world, be content with a state of imperfections? Why should not he as eagerly covet, and as ear-

nestly pursue, the most intimate and close communion and conjunction with his God, as they do with their respective centres? Can any earthly, sensual, unregenerate man, be content with an inheritance in reversion, so as to suspend his minding and following of the world till hereafter? Can any ambitious spirit, who places his main happiness and contentment in popular estimation and worldly greatness, be content to stand gazing at preferments? will he be willing to sit still, and wait till they drop into his mouth? No, no; there is a raging thirst in the soul, which will not suffer it to be at rest, but is still awakening and provoking all the powers of the whole man, till they arise and fetch in water to quench it. And therefore we read of men making haste to be rich, and hastening after another god; which eager and ardent passions towards earthly objects, you may see lively described in the instances of Ahab, Amnon, and Haman, in the Holy Scriptures. And is there any reason to be given, why that new nature and divine principle, which God putteth into regenerate souls, should not carry them as hastily and forcibly to a present fruition of their proper object and happiness, (so far as at present it may be enjoyed,) as that corrupt and degenerate nature doth hurry on those, in whom it ruleth, towards the satisfaction of their beastly lusts? Divines speak sometimes of making heaven and eternal life present to ourselves, and say that this is the work of faith; which is a high and excellent doctrine, but, I doubt, not thoroughly understood by ordinary Christians. To make heaven present to one's self, is not merely to insist upon a state of future happiness in frequent

meditations, to think much of it, neither is this that noble employment of saving faith; but the life and power of faith is most eminently exerted in drawing in participations of life and grace from Christ, and in a real bringing down of God and heaven into the soul. The truth is, heaven is a state of perfect communion with God, a state of love, joy, peace, purity, freedom, and as far as any soul is in such a state upon earth, so far he is above the earth, and may be said to be in heaven. Therefore, a right active soul, that truly understands his proper and spiritual heaven and happiness; so far as he is thus active and sensible, cannot be content to stay for all his happiness till the world to come, cannot be content to be unhappy, no, not for an hour, but is still growing up in God, and springing up into everlasting life.

2. It reprehends those that make a stir about the kingdom of Christ in the world, and men's being brought into the communion of the church, but advance not his kingdom in their own souls, nor long to have their own souls advanced into that noble state of communion with "the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." There is, doubtless, a generation of such popular Christians, who, being strangers to the life, and power, and spirit of true religion, do endeavour to pass off themselves on the world, and commend themselves to the charity of their brethren, by a pretended zeal for the kingdom of Christ in the world, and the glorious manifestation of it, as they speak. I know, indeed, that it is worthy the cares, and prayers, and utmost diligence of every serious Christian, to spread and propagate the knowledge of

the gospel, to pour out the ointment of Christ's name far and near. A more pure and spiritual administration of all gospel ordinances throughout the world is highly desirable; yea, and I think an indifferent and careless disposition towards the worship of God argues much of an earthly and atheistical mind. But I fear that kingdom of Christ, and those glorious manifestations and discoveries which are so much pretended to by many, if they should be thoroughly examined, would be, at length, resolved into nothing else but the advancement of some one party or interest above all the rest, or the exchanging of an old form and dress of religion for a new one; and that this zeal would be found little better than the blazings of self-love, a fire kindled not by a coal from the altar, but by a spark of their own. But, be it so, that this disposition of theirs is sincere and spiritual; should not this charity begin at home? The most proper kingdom of Christ is that whereby he ruleth in the hearts of men; the most excellent worship is when the soul itself becomes a temple for the living God to dwell in, and to receive and reflect the manifestations of his glory; when a fire of divine love is kindled in it, and therein it doth offer up, not bulls and goats, no, nor prayers and meditations, so much as itself unto God; which is a reasonable service, as the Apostle speaks, far more glorious than either the Mosaical or Evangelical dispensation, if you consider it in the letter only. Whatever men may pretend, no man can be truly and rightly studious of the advancement of the kingdom of God in the world, that hath not first felt the mighty power and blessed effects of it in his own soul. Commu-

nion with the church is only so far to be valued, as it is in order to a real and spiritual communion with God; which communion with God, if we do indeed sincerely wish to others, we shall more abundantly labour to promote in ourselves. I cannot believe that he doth heartily seek the happiness of others, who himself sits still, and is content to be miserable, especially when their happiness and his is one and the same.

3. It condemns them as not Christians, whose fellowship is only with their fellow-creatures. We have seen that is the character, the distinguishing character of a godly man, to have fellowship with God. It must needs follow, then, that those degenerate souls that rise no higher than the world, that converse only with self or any other creature, are verily strangers to true Christianity, whatever their confidence or presumption may be. Christians, tell not me what you profess of Christ, what you believe of the gospel, what orthodox opinions you hold, what an honest party you side with, how many and specious duties you perform, no, nor what hopes or wishes you have of going to heaven; but, tell me, where is your principal communion; what do you mainly mind, follow, converse with; what pattern do you conform to; what rule do you live by; what object do you ultimately aim at? The whole world of worldly men doth hasten after another god, as the Psalmist phrases it, though not all after the same god: they spend their souls, indeed, upon various objects, and use different methods to obtain rest, but yet all their happiness and contentment is ultimately resolved into creature-communion. That dreadful sentence, which the Apostle delivers univer-

sally concerning all men, is to be limited to all wicked men only, and of them it is undoubtedly true: "All seek their own, and none the things of Jesus Christ." And, of all these, that of the Psalmist's "many" is to be understood: "There be many that say, Who will show us any good?" that is, any creature-good, as the words following do explain it. All unregenerate souls are bound up in the creature, some creature or other; and therefore the noblest of them, whatever boasting they may make, is low and ignoble; their main converse is but with their fellow-creatures, and indeed creatures much inferior to themselves: "Corn and wine," says the Psalmist; "earthly things," says the Apostle,—"who mind earthly things." In a word, though it be true what the Apostle says in one place, that all men in the world do live in God, yet it is also true, that most of men, as the same Apostle speaks elsewhere, do "live without God in the world," have their hearts staked down to one creature or other, and so fall short of this honourable character which the Apostle here gives of godly men: "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

And now I shall conclude the remainder of this discourse, with a humble request, and earnest exhortation.

"Reckon not upon any happiness below this communion." There are many things which a Christian may take to be comforts; but only one, this one, that he ought to take to be the happiness of his life. I design not to speak any thing to the prejudice of natural or civil ornaments or accomplishments, much

less to the disparagement of any of those endowments or employments which are, in a sense, spiritual, commonly called gifts and duties: but, I must confess, it is one of the great wonders of the world to me, to see such a noble and intelligent being, as the soul of man is, attending to, and pursuing after, things either extrinsical or inferior to itself, in the mean time carelessly forgetting, or wilfully rejecting, its main happiness, principal end, and proper perfection. As for those sensual persons, those mere animals, whose souls are incarnate in their senses, and seem to perform no higher office in the world than the souls of beasts, that is, to carry about their bodies; who value themselves by their bodies, or, which is baser, by the apparel that clothes them, or the estates that feed them: I shall not now trouble myself about them, but leave them to be chastised by Seneca or Plutarch, or indeed any ordinary philosopher. I shall rather apply myself a little to a sort of higher spirited people, whom by a condescension of charity we call Christians, who, valuing themselves by external professions, privileges, performances, may indeed be said to be somewhat more scrupulous and curious, but no less mistaken than the former: for if the grosser sort of sensualists do deny, and professedly abjure their own reason, and the finer sort of hypocrites do more cunningly bribe theirs, each method amounts to no more than a cheat, and both parties will be alike miserable, save that the latter will be somewhat more tormented in missing a happiness which he looked and hoped for. It is not proper to my present discourse, to speak so highly and honourably of these externals of Christianity,

nor to press them so zealously, as I do at all times when I have occasion ; for I verily value all ordinances of Christ, and duties of God's worship, at a high rate ; nay, I know not any serious and truly godly soul in the world, but is of this same opinion with me ; but, I must confess, I think it is one of the greatest and most pernicious cheats in the world, for men to feed upon the dish instead of the meat, to place their happiness in those things which God hath only appointed to be means to convey it. This was the great destruction of the Jewish church ; by this they perished : thus they are every where described in Scripture, as a people resting in their privileges and performances, boasting of their sacrifices and temple-service ; they made account of a strange kind of flesh-pleasing heaven, something distinct from them, and reserved for them, to be given them by way of reward for the righteousness which themselves had wrought by the power of their own free-will (which free-will, they say, is an effect of man's fall, but they make it a cause of man's rise ; for now he can purchase and merit a happiness, which happiness is also more illustrious than that given of mere grace ;) which righteousness, if we look either into their own writings, or God's writings concerning them, we shall find was nothing else but a strict observance of the precepts of the law, according to the letter and external dispensation of it. Such a low and legal spirit was generally found amongst the Jews ; I wish the greatest part of us, who are in profession and name evangelical, be not found as truly legal in spirit and temper as they were. If we cry the gospel of Christ, the gospel of Christ,

with the same spirit, as they cried, "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," our confidence will as surely betray us into final misery as theirs did. True, indeed, prayers, sacraments, sermons, are somewhat finer words than the old obsolete ones, the law, sacrifices, ceremonies; but, alas! they are but words; at least they are not God's, no more fit to terminate our devotions and affections than these. I beseech you, therefore, Christians, be not mistaken in this matter. True Christianity is not a notion, but a nature; that is not religion which is wrapped up in books, or laid up in men's brains, but it is laid in the very constitution of the soul, a new principle implanted by God, in the highest powers of the soul, refining and spiritualizing all the faculties thereof, and rendering them as like to God himself, as such a creature can resemble its Creator. It is a truth, as clear as the sun is clear, that nothing can make a soul truly happy, but what is wrought into the nature of it, and that must be somewhat more excellent than itself, and that can be nothing less than something divine, even the image of the blessed God. If you be Christians, in deed and in truth, value all the ordinances of God, and the duties of the Christian religion, but value not yourselves by these, your happiness by these. Attend upon them all for the maintaining and increasing of real fellowship with God; for though these be not it, yet they are the way wherein it pleases God to give it. Drink the sincere milk of the word, but let it be only with a holy design of growing thereby, of growing up into God, and a divine life. Away with those low and base thoughts of happiness; the happiness of a

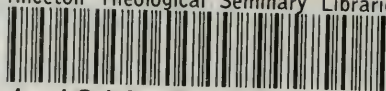
soul is a high and excellent, indeed a divine thing; it is in some sense common to God and the soul; God is happy in himself alone, and the soul can only be happy in him. What contentment, what real happiness, Christian, can the rising of thy party in the world, or the rising of thy name in the country, bring thee, if, in the mean time, thou thyself harbourest any carnal will, self-interest that doth rise up in opposition to the pure and perfect will and nature of God? how art thou happy in thy prayers, if thou cast sin out of thy mouth, and, in the mean time, a fountain of iniquity be springing up in thy heart! What avails it towards a state of perfection, to be of the most orthodox opinions, the most honest society, the fairest profession, the most popular and sanctimonious form, or the most plausible performances either, the soul being, in the mean time, alienated from the life of God, and feeding upon some earthly trash or other, which destroys the native powers and vigour of it, and keeps it under a perpetual languor? even just so much as a silken stocking upon a gouty leg, or a princely diadem upon an aching head, avails towards a state of ease and soundness and good temperature of body. Let nothing limit your ambition, but a state of God-like perfection, let nothing set bounds to your loving and longing souls, but a real fruition of God himself; nay, let not that bound them neither, but the more you enjoy, see, and taste, the more let your love be strengthened, after the manner of fire, which, the more it is fed, the more hungry and devouring it grows. In a word, let nothing satisfy you lower than the highest character that can be given of mor-

tal man, to be men “after God’s own heart,” to have God dwelling in you, to be filled with his fullness, to have this real and excellent “communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” To whom be all honour, praise, and glory, for ever and ever !

FINIS.



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