

MISCELLANEOUS EXTRACTS.



MEDITATION.

MEDITATION is an act by which we consider any thing closely, or wherein the soul is employed in the search or consideration of any truth. In religion it is used to signify the serious exercise of the understanding, whereby our thoughts are fixed on the observation of spiritual things, in order to practice. Mystic divines make a great difference between meditation and contemplation: the former consists in discursive acts of the soul, considering methodically and with attention the mysteries of faith, and the precepts of morality; and is performed by reflections and reasonings which leave behind them manifest impressions on the brain. The pure contemplative, they say, have no need of meditation, as seeing all things in God at a glance, and without any reflection.

I. *Meditation* is a duty which ought to be attended to by all who wish well to their spiritual interests. It ought to be *deliberate, close, and perpetual*, *Psal. cxix. 97. Psal. i. 2.—2.* The *subjects* which ought more es-

pecially to engage the Christian mind, are the works of creation, *Psal.* xix. the perfections of God, *Deut.* xxxii. 4. the excellencies, offices, characters, and works of Christ, *Heb.* xii. 2, 3. the offices and operations of the Holy Spirit, 15th and 16th ch. of *John*; the various dispensations of Providence, *Psal.* xcvi. 1, 2; the precepts, declarations, promises, &c. of God's word, *Psal.* cxix. the value, powers, and immortality of the soul, *Mark* viii. 36; the noble, beautiful, and benevolent plan of the gospel, 1 *Tim.* i. 11; the necessity of our personal interest in, and experience of its power, *John* iii. 3; the depravity of our nature, and the freedom of divine grace in choosing, adopting, justifying, and sanctifying us, 1 *Cor.* vi. 11; the shortness, worth, and swiftness of time, *James* iv. 14; the certainty of death, *Heb.* ix. 27; the resurrection and judgment to come, 1 *Cor.* xv. 50, &c. and the future state of eternal rewards and punishments, *Matt.* xxv. These are some of the most important subjects on which we should meditate.—

3. *To perform this duty aright*, we should be much in prayer, *Luke* xviii. 1; avoid a worldly spirit, 1 *John* ii. 15; beware of sloth, *Heb.* vi. 11; take heed of sensual pleasures, *James* iv. 4; watch against the devices of Satan, 1 *Pet.* v. 8; be often in re-

tirement, *Psal.* iv. 4; embrace the most favourable opportunities, the calmness of the morning, *Psal.* v. 1, 3; the solemnity of the evening, *Gen.* xxiv. 63; sabbath days, *Psal.* cxviii. 24; sacramental occasions, &c. *1 Cor.* xi. 28.—4. The *advantages* resulting from this are, improvement of the faculties of the soul, *Prov.* xvi. 22; the affections are raised to God, *Psal.* xxxix. 1, 4; an enjoyment of divine peace and felicity, *Phil.* iv. 6, 7; holiness of life is promoted, *Psal.* cxix. 59, 60; and we thereby experience a foretaste of eternal glory, *Psal.* lxxiii. 25, 26. *2 Cor.* v. 1, &c.

REVELATION.

Revelation, the act of revealing or making a thing public that was before unknown; it is also used for the discoveries made by God to his prophets, and by them to the world; and more particularly for the books of the Old and New Testaments. A revelation is, in the first place, *possible*. God may, for any thing we can certainly tell, think proper to make some discovery to his creatures which they knew not before. As he is a Being of infinite power, we may be assured he cannot be at a loss for means to

communicate his will, and that in such a manner as will sufficiently mark his own.—

2. It is *desirable*. For, whatever the light of nature could do for man before reason was depraved, it is evident that it has done little for man since. Though reason be necessary to examine the authority of divine revelation, yet, in the present state, it is incapable of giving us proper discoveries of God, the way of salvation, or of bringing us into a state of communion with God. It therefore follows,—3. That it is *necessary*. Without it we can attain to no certain knowledge of God, of Christ, of the Holy Ghost, of pardon, of justification, of sanctification, of happiness, of a future state, of rewards and punishments.—4. No revelation, as Mr. Brown observes, relative to the redemption of mankind could answer its respective ends, unless it were sufficiently marked with *internal and external evidences*. That the Bible hath internal evidence, is evident from the ideas it gives us of God's perfections, of the law of nature, of redemption, of the state of man, &c. As to its external evidence, it is easily seen by the characters of the men who composed it, the miracles wrought, its success, the fulfilment of its predictions, &c.—5. The *contents* of revelation are agreeable to reason. It is true there are some things

above the reach of reason ; but a revelation containing such things is no contradiction, as long as it is not against reason ; for if every thing be rejected which cannot be exactly comprehended, we must become unbelievers at once of almost every thing around us. The doctrines, the institutions, the threatenings, the precepts, the promises, of the Bible, are every way reasonable. The matter, form, and exhibition of revelation are consonant with reason.—6. The revelation contained in our Bible is perfectly *credible*. It is an address to the reason, judgment, and affections of men. The Old Testament abounds with the finest specimens of history, sublimity, and interesting scenes of Providence. The facts of the New Testament are supported by undoubted evidence from enemies and friends. The attestations to the early existence of Christianity are numerous from Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenæus, Justin Martyr, and Tatian, who were Christians ; and by Tacitus, Sueton, Serenus, Pliny, &c. who were Heathens.—7. The revelations contained in our Bible are *divinely inspired*. The matter, the manner, the scope, the predictions, miracles, preservation, &c. &c. all prove this.—8. Revelation is intended for *universal benefit*. It is a common objection to it, that hitherto it has

been confined to few, and therefore could not come from God, who is so benevolent; but this mode of arguing will equally hold against the permission of sin, the inequalities of Providence, the dreadful evils and miseries of mankind which God could have prevented. It must be farther observed, that none deserve a revelation; that men have despised and abused the early revelations he gave to his people. This revelation, we have reason to believe, shall be made known to mankind. Already it is spreading its genuine influence. In the cold regions of the North, in the burning regions of the South, the Bible begins to be known; and, from predictions it contains, we believe the glorious sun of revelation shall shine and illuminate the whole globe.—9. The *effects* of revelation which have already taken place in the world, have been astonishing. In proportion as the Bible has been known, arts and sciences have been cultivated, peace and liberty have been diffused, civil and moral obligations have been attended to. Nations have emerged from ignorance and barbarity, whole communities have been morally reformed, unnatural practices abolished, and wise laws instituted. Its spiritual effects have been wonderful. Kings and peasants, conquerors and philosophers, the wise and

the ignorant, the rich and the poor, have been brought to the foot of the cross; yea, millions have been enlightened, improved, reformed, and made happy by its influences. Let any one deny this, and he must be an hardened, ignorant infidel, indeed. Great is the truth, and must prevail.

SABBATH.

Sabbath, in the Hebrew language, signifies rest, and is the seventh day of the week: a day appointed for religious duties, and a total cessation from work, in commemoration of God's resting on the seventh day; and likewise in memorial of the redemption of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.

Concerning the time when the sabbath was first instituted there have been different opinions. Some have maintained that the sanctification of the seventh day mentioned in *Gen. ii.* is only there spoken of by anticipation; and is to be understood of the sabbath afterwards enjoined in the wilderness; and that the historian, writing after it was instituted, there gives the *reason* of its institution; and this is supposed to be the case, as it is never mentioned during the patriarchal age. But against this sentiment it is

urged, 1. That it cannot be easily supposed that the inspired penman would have mentioned the sanctification of the seventh day amongst the primæval transactions, if such sanctification had not taken place until 2500 years afterwards.—2. That, considering Adam was restored to favour through a Mediator, and a religious service instituted, which man was required to observe, in testimony not only of his dependence on the Creator, but also of his faith and hope in the promise, it seems reasonable that an institution so grand and solemn, and so necessary to the observance of this service, should be then existent.—3. That it is no proof against its existence because it is not mentioned in the patriarchal age, no more than it is against its existence from Moses to the end of David's reign, which was near 440 years.—4. That the sabbath was mentioned as a well known solemnity before the promulgation of the law, *Exod.* xvi. 23. For the manner in which the Jews kept it, and the awful consequences of neglecting it, we refer the reader to the Old Testament, *Lev.* xxvi. 34, 35. *Neh.* xiii. 16, 18. *Jer.* xvii. 21. *Ezek.* xx. 16, 17. *Numb.* xv. 32 to 36.

Under the Christian dispensation the sabbath is altered from the seventh to the first day of the week. The arguments for the

change are these: 1. As the seventh day was observed by the Jewish church in memory of the rest of God after the works of the creation, and their deliverance from Pharaoh's tyranny, so the first day of the week has *always* been observed by the Christian church, in memory of Christ's resurrection.—2. Christ made repeated visits to his disciples on that day.—3. It is called the Lord's day, *Rev. i. 10.*—4. On this day the apostles were assembled, when the Holy Ghost came down so visibly upon them, to qualify them for the conversion of the world.—5. On this day we find St. Paul preaching at Troas, when the disciples came to break bread.—6. The directions the apostle gives to the Christians plainly allude to their religious assemblies on the first day.—9.—Pliny bears witness of the first day of the week being kept as a festival, in honour of the resurrection of Christ; and the primitive Christians kept it in the most solemn manner.

These arguments, however, are not satisfactory to some, and it must be confessed that there is no law in the New Testament concerning the first day. However, I look upon it as not so much the precise time that is universally binding, as that one day out of seven is to be regarded.

As the sabbath is of Divine institution, so it is to be kept holy unto the Lord. Numerous have been the days appointed by men for religious services; but these are not binding because of human institution. Not so the sabbath. Hence the fourth commandment is ushered in with a peculiar emphasis—“Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day.” This institution is *wise as to its ends*: That God may be worshipped; man instructed; nations benefited; and families devoted to the service of God. It is *lasting as to its duration*. The abolition of it would be unreasonable; unscriptural, *Exod. xxxi. 13*; and every way disadvantageous to the body, to society, to the soul, and even to the brute creation. It is, however, awfully violated by visiting, feasting, indolence, buying and selling, working, worldly amusements, and travelling.