

A
TREATISE
OF
DELIGHTING IN GOD:

From Psalm xxxvii. 4.

DELIGHT THYSELF ALSO IN THE LORD, AND HE SHALL GIVE
THEE THE DESIRES OF THINE HEART.

In Two Parts.

CONCERNING

FIRST—THE MEANING OF THE PRECEPT,

AND

SECONDLY—THE PRACTICE OR EXERCISE OF DELIGHT
IN GOD.



TO
MY MUCH VALUED FRIENDS,
THE
MAGISTRATES AND OTHER INHABITANTS
OF
Great Torrington
IN
DEVON,
WITH THE SEVERAL WORTHY AND
RELIGIOUS PERSONS AND FAMILIES OF MY ACQUAINTANCE
IN THOSE PARTS.

IT is likely that the title of the following treatise will put many of you, my dearly esteemed friends, in mind, that sundry sermons were preached twenty years ago among you upon this subject. I had it indeed in design, to have given you some abstract of those sermons; but searching among my papers, could find none but so imperfect and broken memorials as would be of little use for that purpose. And yet being desirous to present you with somewhat that might both be a testimony of my affection, and an advantage to you: and knowing this subject was grateful to many, and affords what may be useful to all of you; I have for your sakes, applied myself to a reconsideration of it. Few passages or expressions, probably, will occur to you that you heard before; yet you will find the substance of the doctrine the same; as from so plain a text it could not well but be, whosoever should have had the handling of it. The *first part* is even altogether new, except the introductive suppositions in the beginning. Nor do I remember I then had more than one discourse to you on that subject, before the practical application of it. The *other part* contains many things formerly delivered to you, though perhaps not in the same order, much less in the same words, whereto the short notes in my hands could no way enable me.

The matter here treated of, is the very substance of religion; the first and the last; the root and the flower; both the basis and foundation, and the top and perfection of practical godliness; and which runs through the whole of it. Nor knew I therefore what to present you with, that could have in it a fitter mixture and temperament of what might be both useful and pleasant to you. As there is therefore no need, so nor do I desire you should receive the matter

here discoursed of, merely for my sake; there being so great reason it should be chiefly acceptable on higher accounts. I do very well understand your affection to me; and could easily be copious in the expression of mine to you, if I would open that sluice. But I do herein resolvedly, and upon consideration restrain myself; apprehending, that in some cases (and I may suppose it possible that in our case) a gradual mortification ought to be endeavoured of such affection as is often between those so related as you and I have been: which is no harder supposition, than that such affection may be excessive and swell beyond due bounds. So it would, if it should be accompanied with impatient resentments towards any providence or instrument, whereby it finds itself crossed, or from whence it meets with what is ungrateful to it: if it prove turbulent and disquieting to them in whom it is, or any others: or if it occasion a looking back with dis-tempered lingerings after such former things as could be but means to our great end, with the neglect of looking forward to that end itself still before us. Far be it from me, to aim at the keeping anything alive that ought to die; that is, in that degree wherein it ought so to do. But our mutual affection will be both innocent and useful, if it be suitable to mortal objects, and to persons not expecting the converse we have had together any more in this world; if also in the mean time it preserve to us a mutual interest in each others prayers; if it dispose us to such acts and apprehensions of kindness as our present circumstances can admit; and if, particularly, as it hath moved me to undertake, it may contribute any thing to your acceptance of this small labour, which is now designed for you. The subject and substance whereof, as they are none of mine, so they ought to be welcome to you, for their own sake, and his who is the prime author, though they were recommended to you by the hand of a stranger, or one whose face you never saw. They aim at the promoting of the same end which the course of my poor labours among you did (as he that knoweth all things knoweth) the serious practice of the great things of religion, which are known and least liable to question; without designing to engage you to or against any party of them that differ about circumstantial matters. They tend to let you see, that formality in any way of religion unaccompanied with life, will not serve your turn, (as it will no man's,) than which, there is nothing more empty, sapless, and void both of profit and delight.

I have reflected and considered with some satisfaction, that this hath been my way and the temper of my mind among you. Great reason I have to repent, that I have not with greater earnestness pressed upon you the known and important things wherein serious Christians do generally agree. But I repent not I have been so little engaged in the hot contests of our age, about the things wherein they differ. For, as I pretend to little light in these things (whence I could not have much confidence to fortify me unto such an undertaking;) so I must profess to have little inclination to contend about matters of that kind. Nor yet am I indifferent as to those smaller things, that

I cannot discern to be in their own nature so. But though I cannot avoid to think that course right which I have deliberately chosen therein, I do yet esteem that but a small thing upon which to ground an opinion of my excelling them that think otherwise, as if I knew more than they. For I have often recounted this seriously with myself, that of every differing party, in those circumstantial matters, I do particularly know some persons by whom I find myself much excelled in far greater things than is the matter of that difference. I cannot, it is true, thereupon say and think every thing that they do; which is impossible, since they differ from one another as well as me. And I understand well, there are other measures of truth than this or that excellent persons opinion. But I thereupon reckon I have little reason to be conceited of any advantage I have of such in point of knowledge, (even as little as he should have, that can sing or play well on a lute, of him that knows how to command armies, or govern a kingdom,) and can with the less confidence differ from them, or contend with them. Being thereby, though I cannot find that I err in these matters, constrained to have some suspicion lest I do; and to admit it possible enough, that some of them who differ from me, having much more light in greater matters, may have so in these also. Besides, that I most seriously think, humility, charity and patience, would more contribute to the composing of these lesser differences, or to the good estate of the Christian Interest under them, than the most fervent disputes and contestations. I have upon such considerations little concerned myself in contending for one way or another, while I was among you; or in censuring such as have differed from me in such notions and practices as might consist with our common great end; or as imported not manifest hostility thereto: contenting myself to follow the course that to my preponderating judgment seemed best, without stepping out of my way to jostle others.

But I cannot be so patient of *their* practical disagreement, (not only with all serious christians, but even their own judgments and consciences also,) who have no delight in God, and who take no pleasure in the very substance of religion. I have been grieved to observe that the case hath too apparently seemed so, with some among you: some have been openly profane and dissolute, and expressed more contempt of God (which you know was often insisted on the one part of the day, (from Ps. 10. 13) when I had this subject in hand the other) than delight in him. I know not how the case may be altered with such since I left you; or what blessing may have followed the endeavours of any other hand. Death I am sure will be making alterations as I have heard it hath. If these lines may be beforehand with it, may they be effectually monitory to any such that yet survive! That however this or that external form of godliness may consist with your everlasting well-being, real ungodliness and the denial of the power never can; which power stands in nothing more than in love to God or delight in him. Therefore seriously bethink yourselves, do you delight in God or no? If you do, methinks you should have some

perception of it. Surely if you delight in a friend, or some other outward comfort, you can perceive it. But if you do not, what do you think alienation from the life of God, will come to at last? It is time for you to pray and cry, and strive earnestly for a renewed heart. And if any of you do in some degree find this, yet many degrees are still lacking. You cannot delight in God, but upon that apprehension as will give you to see, you do it not enough: therefore reach forth to what is still before. I bow my knees for you all, that a living, delightful religion may flourish in your hearts and families, in the stead of those dry, withered things, worldliness, formality and strife about trifles. Which will make Torrington an Heph-zibah, a place to be delighted in; your country a pleasant region: and (if he may but hear of it) add not a little to the satisfaction and delight of

Your affectionate servant in Christ,

Who most seriously desires your true prosperity,

JOHN HOWE.

Antrim, Sept. 1, 1674.

A
TREATISE
OF
DELIGHTING IN GOD:

From Psalm xxxvii, 4.

*Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee
the desires of thine heart.*

PART I.

THE DUTY EXPLAINED; SHEWING

FIRST, THE DELECTABLE OBJECT OF DELIGHT.—SECONDLY, THE DELIGHT
TO BE TAKEN IN THAT OBJECT.

CHAP I.

I. Introduction: connection of the words: persons to whom this direction is given. II. The meaning of the precept more distinctly opened. FIRST, The delectable Object of delight considered. *First*, Absolutely. *Secondly*, Relatively. 1. As a Lord to be obeyed. 2. As a portion to be enjoyed. III. What enjoyment of God supposes. *First*, Some communication from God. *Secondly*, That however God himself is enjoyed, yet this communication is also a sort of mediate object of delight as suited to the wants of the renewed soul. IV. The nature of divine communication considered. It contains, *First*, An inwardly enlightening revelation of God himself to his people; which exceeds the common appearances made to all: 1. As it is attributed to the spirit. 2. Spoken of as a reward of their love. 3. It is much more distinct and clear. 4. It is more powerfully assuring.

I. **T**HIS psalm, by the contents of it, seems to suppose an afflicted state of good men, by the oppression of such as were, in that and other respects, very wicked; the prosperity of these wicked ones in their oppressive course; an aptness in the oppressed to impatience under the evils they suffered; and a disposition to behold, with a lingering and an envious eye, the good things which their oppressors enjoyed, and themselves wanted. Hence the composure of it is such as might be most

agreeable to these suppositions, and the fortifying of the righteous against the sin and trouble which such a state of things might prove the occasion of unto them.

This verse hath a more direct aspect on the last of these cases, or on this last mentioned thing considerable in the case, of upright men suffering under the oppression of violent and prosperous wickedness, namely, that they might hereupon be apt both to covet and envy the worldly delights of their enemies; to be desirous of their dainties, and grudge they should be theirs, who, they knew, deserved worse things: and while themselves also felt the pressure of worse, which at their hands they deserved not. What is here offered to the consideration of the sufferers, tends aptly to allay their discontent, to check and repress their inordinate desire towards inferior things; or to divert and turn it another way; as in case of bleeding to excess and danger, the way is to open a vein, and stop the course of that profusion by altering it. As if it had been said, "You have no such cause to look with displeasure or immoderate desire upon their delicacies; you may have better; better belong to you, and invite you, the Lord himself is your portion: it becomes both your state and spirit to apply yourselves to a holy delight in him; to let your souls loose, and set them at liberty, to satiate themselves, and feed unto fulness upon those undefiled and satisfying pleasures unto which you have a right; and in which you will find the loss and want of their meaner enjoyments abundantly made up unto you. You have your natural desires and cravings as well as other men; and those may be too apt to exceed their just bounds and measures; but if you take this course, they will soon become sober and moderate, such as will be satisfied with what is competent, with an indifferent allowance of the good things of this earth. And towards the Lord, let them be as vast and large as can be supposed, they can never be larger than the rule will allow; nor than the object will satisfy: the direction and obligation of the former being indeed proportioned to the immense and boundless fulness of the latter."

We need not operously inquire what sort of persons this direction is given unto. It is plain, that it is, the common duty of all to delight in God. But it cannot be the immediate duty of all. Men that know not God, and are enemies to him, have somewhat else to do first. They to whom the precept is directly meant, are the regenerate, the righteous and the upright, as the psalm itself doth plainly design them, or his own people. The most profitable way of considering these words, will be chiefly to insist on the direction given in the former part of the verse:

and then to shew towards the close, how the event promised in the latter part, will not only by virtue of the promise, but even naturally follow thereupon. The direction in the former part, gives us a plain signification of God's good pleasure, that he himself would be the great object of his people's delight: or, it is his will, that they principally delight themselves in him. Our discourse upon this subject will fall naturally into two parts: the former whereof, will concern the import, and the latter the practice of the enjoined delighting in God. Under which latter, what will be said of the latter part of the verse will fitly fall in.

II. We proceed to open more distinctly the important meaning of this precept of delighting in God. In order to this it will be necessary to treat, of the delectable object, and of the delight to be taken therein.

FIRST. The delectable Object. The general object of delight is some good, or somewhat so conceived of; with the addition of being apprehended some way present. Here it is the chief and best good, the highest and most perfect excellency. Which goodness and excellency considered as residing in God, give us a twofold notion or view of the object whereupon this delight may have its exercise, namely, absolute and relative.

First. God may be looked upon in an absolute consideration, as he is in himself, the best and most excellent Being; wherein we behold the concurrence of all perfections; the most amiable and beautiful excellencies, to an intellectual eye, that it can have any apprehension of.

Secondly. In a relative consideration, namely, as his goodness and excellency are considered, not merely as they are in himself, but also as having somehow an aspect on his creatures. For considering him as in himself the most excellent Being; if here we give our thoughts liberty of exercising themselves, we shall soon find, that hereupon he must be considered also as the first Being, the original and author of all other beings; otherwise he were not the most excellent. From whence we shall see, relation doth arise between him and his creatures that have their being from him. And besides the general relations which he beareth to them all, as the common maker, sustainer and disposer of them; observing that there are some which by their reasonable natures, are capable of government by him (in the proper sense, namely, by a law) and of blessedness in him. To these we consider him as standing in a twofold reference, in both which we are to eye and act towards him, namely, as a Lord to be obeyed, and a portion to be enjoyed, and have most delectable excellencies to take notice of in him (that require we should suitably comport

with them) answerable peculiarly to each of these considerations, in respect whereof we are to look upon him.

1. As the most excellent Lord; most delectably excellent (we take not here that title so strictly, as to intend by it mere propriety or dominion; but as to ordinary apprehension it is more commonly understood to signify also governing power, or authority founded in the other) whom we cannot but esteem worthy of all possible honour and glory; that every knee bow to him, and every tongue confess to him, that universal homage, subjection and adoration be given him for ever.

2. As the most excellent Portion, in whom all things that may render him such do concur and meet together; all desirable and imaginable riches and fulness, together with large bounty, flowing goodness every way correspondent to the wants and cravings of indigent and thirsty souls. The *former* notion of him intimates to us our obligation of duty to him: the *latter* prompts to an expectation of benefit from him. But now because by the apostacy we have injured his right in us, as our lord; forfeited our own right in him, as our Portion; and lost our immediate capacity or disposition, both to serve and enjoy him; this great breach between him and us was not otherwise to be made up but by a mediator. Unto which office and undertaking his own son, incarnate, the Word made flesh (being only fit) was designed. By him, dealing between both the distanced parties, satisfying the justice of God, overcoming the enmity of man, the difference (so far as the efficacy of his mediation doth extend) is composed. And to the reconciled, God becomes again their acknowledged both Lord and portion. His right is vindicated, theirs is restored; and both are established upon new grounds, added to those upon which they stood before. And so, as that now our actings towards God, and expectations from him, must be through the mediator. Whereupon this object of our delight, considered relatively unto us, is entirely God in Christ;—being reconciled;—“We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Rom: 5. 11.

In these several ways that have been thus briefly mentioned, may God come under our consideration. Nor are they, any of them, unapplicable or impertinent to our purpose, when we would design him the object of our delight. Yea, and surely God considered each of these ways ought to be looked on by us as a most delectable object. For it is pleasant to contemplate him, even most absolutely considered, as the most excellent Being, when we behold his glorious excellencies in themselves; that is (not with the denial, but) without the actual present con-

sideration of any advantage that may redound to us from them; as we are apt to find ourselves pleased and gratified in viewing an excellent object (suppose a stately edifice or beautiful flower), from which we expect no other benefit.

Again, if we consider him relatively; in the *former* capacity of a *Lord*, it is grateful to behold him decked with majesty, arrayed in glory, clothed with righteousness, armed with power, shining in holiness, and guiding himself with wisdom and counsel in all his administrations. Yea, and it is delightful to obey him; while we are most fully satisfied of his unexceptionable right to command us. For there is a great pleasure naturally arising to a well-tempered spirit, from the apprehended congruity or fitness of things, as that he should command and that we should obey. His right and our obligation being so undoubtedly clear and great: especially when we also consider what he commands, and find it is no hard bondage; that they are not grievous commands which he requires we be subject to; but such in the keeping whereof there is great reward; and that his ways are all pleasantness and peace.

And being considered as a *portion*, the matter is plain, that so rich and abounding fulness, where also there is so communicative an inclination, cannot but recommend him a most satisfying object of delight.

And thus we are more principally to consider him, namely rather *relatively* than *absolutely*; and that relatedness (which the state of the case requires) as now anew settled in Christ. And so, though it be very delightful to look upon him, as one that may, and is ready to become related to us, (as he is to any that will consent and agree with him upon the mediator's terms) yet it adds unspeakably to the pleasantness of this object, when we can reflect upon such characters in ourselves, as from whence we may regularly conclude, that he is actually thus related unto us. That is, that we have consented; that our relation to him immediately arises from the covenant of life and peace; that he hath entered into covenant with us, and so we are become his. It is pleasant thus to behold and serve him as *our* Lord. How great is the emphasis of these words, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus *my* Lord!" To consider not only how well he deserves the acknowledgments and subjection of all; but also to find ourselves under the chosen and gentle bonds of perpetual service, and devotedness to him, is certainly matter of very high delight and pleasure.

But how infinitely delightful is it, to view and enjoy him as *our* Portion! And this seems very pertinent to the design of this scripture; which aiming to recall and draw in the hearts of

godly persons from too earnest, and from envious lingerings after the enjoyments of worldly men (their enemies and oppressors,) propounds what may be an over-balance to the (imagined) felicity of their state; and wherein they should more than equal them in point of enjoyment. And should we single out this, as the object to be considered, God as a portion; that it might be more distinctly represented, we should have two things to take notice of that would render it most delectable, and such as wherein holy hearts may acquiese, and rest with fullest satisfaction,—the sufficiency—and the communicableness of it.

(1.) The sufficiency of it. Which cannot but be every way complete and full; it being the all-comprehensive good, which is this portion.—God all-sufficient.—The most eminent and known attributes of his Being, wherein by any issues of them they can be communicated, having an ingrediency and concurrence to the happiness of his people therein.

(2.) The communicableness thereof. Which proceeds from his bounty, more peculiarly, and his gracious inclination to do good, and make his boundless fulness overflow to the replenishing of thirsty, longing souls, whom first it had allured and caused so to long. But though the scope and order of the discourse in this psalm, did not directly seem to import more than a design of calling off the persons here spoken to, from one sort of enjoyment to another, from a meaner and more empty to a better: yet it is to be considered, that true, and the best enjoyment cannot be unaccompanied with duty; and that God is not otherwise to be enjoyed than as he is obeyed, nor indeed are the notions of him, as a Lord to be obeyed, and as a good to be enjoyed, entirely distinct; but are interwoven and do run into one another. We obey him, even in enjoying him; it being part of our enjoined duty, to set our hearts upon him, as our best and highest good. And we enjoy him in obeying him; the advantage and benefit of his government, being a real and most momentous part of that good which we enjoy from him, and in him. He is our benefactor even as he is our ruler; and is therein our ruler, as he proposes to us benefits, which he thereby binds us to accept; for even his invitations and offers, are also laws and formal bonds of duty upon us. Yea, and even the act of delight itself pitched upon him, is an act of homage, as there will be occasion hereafter to take notice.

Wherefore it will be fit to steer a larger course, than merely to consider him as a good commensurate to our partial appetites.—Which are apt to prescribe to, and limit our apprehensions to this or that particular sort of good, and tincture them with such a notion of delight, as which, if it be not false and grossly carnal,

may yet be much too narrow and unproportionable to the universal, all-comprehending good. And though we shall not here go beyond the compass of delectable good; yet as there is no good, truly so called, which is not in or from the first goodness; so indeed, nor is there any capable of being gathered up into that sum which is not delectable.

Nor therefore can the usual distribution of goodness into profitable, honest, and pleasant, bear a strict test. Only the false relishes of vitiated appetite in this corrupted state of man, have given ground for it. Otherwise to a mind and will that is not distempered, the account would be much otherwise. To a prudent mind, profitable good would be pleasant, even as it is profitable. To a just and generous mind, honest, comely good would be pleasant, even as it is honest. Nor would there need another distinction, but into the goodness of the end, which is pleasant for itself, and the goodness of the means, which is pleasant as it is honestly and decently profitable, (and otherwise it cannot be) thereunto.

III. That we may here therefore with the more advantage state the delectable good we are now to consider, it will be requisite to premise two things.

First, That all delightful enjoyment of God, supposes some communication from him. Nothing can delight us, or be enjoyed by us; whereof we do not, some way, or by some faculty or other, partake somewhat; either by our external sense, sensitive appetite, fancy, memory, mind, will; and either in a higher or lower degree, for a longer or a shorter time, according as the delight is for kind, degree or continuance which is taken therein. This is plain in itself. And in the present case therefore of delighting in God or enjoying him, some communication, or participation there must be one way or other according as the enjoyment of him is. And as the case with man now is, it is necessary he do with clearest and the most penetrative light and power, come in upon his mind and heart, scatter darkness, remove prejudice, abolish former relishes, and transfuse his own sweet savour through the soul. Proportionably therefore, to what is to be done, he communicates himself, as the event constantly shews, with all them that are ever brought to any real enjoyment of him. For we plainly see, that the same divine communication which being received, doth delight and satisfy, doth also procure, that it may be desired and received; makes it own way, attempers and frames the soul to itself; and gives it the sweet relish and savor thereof, wherein God is actually enjoyed.

Secondly, That however God himself, is truly said to be enjoyed or delighted in by holy souls; yet this communication is

also a sort of mediate object of this delight or enjoyment. These things being forelaid, it is now needful to inquire somewhat more distinctly, what that communication or communicable good is, which is the immediate matter of proper, spiritual enjoyment unto holy men in this world. Because many have that phrase of speech *enjoying God* often in their mouths, that well understand not what they mean by it; yea even divers of them that have real enjoyment of him. Unto whom, therefore though they possibly taste the thing which they cannot express or form distinct conceptions of; it might be somewhat to their advantage to have it more cleared up to their apprehension, what it is that they immediately enjoy, when they are said to enjoy God; or by what he is to be enjoyed. It is not a mere fancy (as too many profanely think, and are too apt to speak) that is the thing to be enjoyed. There have been those, who, comparing their own experience with God's promises and precepts (the rule by which he imparts and according whereto men are to expect his gracious influence) were capable of avowing it, rationally, to be some very substantial thing they have had the enjoyment of. The sobriety of their spirits, the regularity of their workings, their gracious composure, the meekness, humility, denial of self, the sensible refreshing, the mighty strength and vigour which hath accompanied such enjoyments, sufficiently proving to them that they did not hug an empty cloud, or embrace a shadow, under the name of enjoying God. Such expressions as we find in the book of Psalms (the 16. and many other) with sundry parts of scripture besides, leave us not without instance, that import nothing like flashy and flaunting bombast, no appearance of affectation, no pompous shew of vain-glory, no semblance of swelling words of vanity, but which discover a most equal, orderly, well-poized temper of mind, in conjunction with the highest delight and well pleasedness in God. That rich and unimitable fulness of living sense, could not but be from the apprehension of a real somewhat, and that, of a most excellent nature and kind, whatsoever be the notion, that may be most fitly put upon it. Nor yet is it the mere essence of God which men can be said to enjoy. For that is not communicated nor communicable. Enjoyment supposes possession. But it would be a strange language to say we possess the essence of God otherwise than relatively; which is not enough unto actual enjoyment. His mere essential presence is not enough. That renders him not enjoyed by any, for that is equally with all and every where; but all cannot be said to enjoy him.

As therefore it is a *real*, so there must be some *special* communication, by which, being received, we are truly said to en-

joy him. A *special* good it must be, not such as is common to all. For there is a communication from him that is of that extent, in as much as all live and move and have there beings in him and the whole earth is full of his goodness. But this is a good peculiar to them that are born of God : and suited to the apprehension and sense of that divine creature which is so born.

What this good is, how fully sufficient it is, and how or which way it is communicable, may be the better understood when we have considered what are the wants and cravings of this creature, or of them in whom it is formed and wrought. For when we have pitched upon the very thing itself, which they most desire (and which they can tell is it, when they hear it named, though their thoughts are not so well formed about it, as to give it the right name before) we shall then understand it to be both what will be sufficient to satisfy, and what may be communicated to that purpose. But now before that new birth take place in the spirit of man, it wants but knows not what ; craves indeterminate (who will shew us any good ?) not fixing upon any particular one that is sufficient and finite, and labouring at once, under an ignorance of the infinite ; together with a disaffection thereunto. Its wants and cravings are beyond the measure, of all finite good ; for suppose it to have never so large a share, nay could it grasp and engross the whole of it, an unsatisfiedness and desire of more would still remain. But that *more* is somewhat indeterminate and merely imaginary : an infinite nothing : an idol of fancy : a God of its own making. God it must have, but what a one he is it misapprehends, and wherein it rightly apprehends him likes and loves him not ; will by no means choose, desire, or take complacency in him. So that an unregenerate soul is, while it is such, necessarily doomed to be miserable. It cannot be happy in any inferior good, and in the supreme, it will not. What the real wants and just cravings of a man's spirit therefore are, are not to be understood by considering it in that state. And if the work of the new creature were perfected in it, it would want and crave no more ; but were satisfied fully and at perfect rest. Nor is that state so known to us as yet. Therefore they are best to be discerned in the state wherein that work is begun and hitherto unfinished ; in which it therefore desires rightly, and still continues to desire ; a state of intermingled motion and rest ; wherein delight is imperfect, and allayed by the continual mixture of yet unsatisfied desire. And yet it may be collected what it is that would be sufficient to satisfy ; because their desire is still determined to one thing, (Ps. 27. 4.) is not vagrant, wanders not after things of another kind, but is intent only upon more of the same.

Now let it be inquired of such a one what that is. We are generally told there, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord, &c. And it may be many would more shortly tell you it is God they desire, whence it would only be concluded it is God they aim to enjoy or delight in. But because this brings us but where we were; let it be further inquired, what then is your business with God, or what would you have of him? It is not, sure, to be God that you expect or seek, or to enjoy God in that sense wherein he possesses and enjoys himself. No, not by any means. It is then some communication from God, diverse from what all men have (for that they do not find apt to satisfy) which they desire and crave. And what is that? It is somewhat, as possible to be apprehended, and as distinguishable both from his incommunicable Being, and his so generally communicated bounty towards all. As if the inquiry were, what it is that I desire really to enjoy when I desire to enjoy a friend? (namely as the notion of a friend or friendship doth most properly import). That is neither to desire the impossible thing, of possessing his being as my own; nor the unsatisfying thing, the mere partaking some part of his external goods and wealth; whereof it may be he daily imparts somewhat to every beggar at his door. But it is to have his intimate acquaintance, his counsel and advice, the advantage of improving myself by his converse, and of conforming myself to his example in his imitable perfections; the assurances of his faithful, constant love and friendship, in reference to all future emergencies. A friend is really to be enjoyed in such things as these.

And in such-like is God to be enjoyed also. But with this difference, that God's communications are more immediate, more constant, more powerful and efficacious, infinitely more delightful and satisfying, in respect both of the good communicated, and the way of communication. In short then, the wants and desires of a renewed soul, the supply and satisfaction whereof it seeks from God, would ye summed up in these things.—That it may know him more fully, or have clearer apprehensions of him.—That it may become like to him, and framed more perfectly after his own holy image.—That it may be ascertained of his love and good will, that he hath those favourable inclinations towards it, which shall certainly infer his doing all that for it which its real necessities (to be estimated by his infinite wisdom) can call for. These are the things *in kind* which would satisfy it. And answerably to these we may conceive the communicable good which is the immediate object of

their enjoyment. So that, as God himself is the object which is enjoyed; this is the object by which, or in respect whereof he is enjoyable.

IV. Therefore the divine communication, or that which is communicated from God to regenerate souls wherein they are to delight themselves is now to be considered. It contains,

First, An inwardly enlightening revelation of himself to them, that they may know him more distinctly. This is a part of the one thing, would be so highly satisfying, and delightful. Shew us the father and it sufficeth us, (Joh. 14. 8.) When their desires are towards God only, it is with this aim in the first place, that they may know him, which is supposed, when that is given as an encouragement to the pursuit of this knowledge. We shall know if we follow on to know the Lord, (Hos. 6, 3.) As if it had been said; this is a thing not doubted of but taken for granted, that we would fain know the Lord; we shall, if we follow on to know the Lord. This is a dictate of pure and primitive nature to covet the knowledge of our own original, him from whom we and all things sprang. Men are herein become most unnaturally wicked when they like not to retain God in their knowledge, (Rom. 1. 28.) The new and divine nature once imparted, that is, primitive nature renewed and restored to itself, revives the desire of this knowledge. And in compliance with the present exigency of the case hath this inclination ingrafted into it, to know him (as he is now only to be comfortably known) namely, in the Mediator. I determined to know nothing among you (saith S. Paul) but Jesus Christ and him crucified, (1 Cor. 2. 2.) that is, to glory in, to make shew of, to discover myself taken with no other knowledge than this, or with none so much as this. To which purpose, he elsewhere professes to count all things loss for the excellency of this knowledge, (Phil. 3. 8.) So vehemently did desire work this way. And proportionably as it is apprehended desirable, must it be esteemed delightful also. Nor are we here to think that this desired knowledge was intended finally to terminate in the Mediator, for that the very notion of mediator resists. The name Christ is the proper name of that office, and the desire of knowing him under that name imports a desire to know him in his office, namely, as one that is to lead us to God, and restore our acquaintance with him, which was not to be recovered upon other terms. So that it is ultimately the knowledge of God that is the so much desired thing, and of Christ, as the way and our conductor to God. That is, the knowledge of God not absolutely considered alone, (though he is, even so, a very delectable object (as hath

been said;) but as he is related to us, and from whom we have great expectations, our all being comprehended in him. It cannot but be very delightful (answerably to a certain sort of delectation of which we shall have occasion to speak in its proper place) to have him before our eyes represented and revealed to us, as the all-comprehending good, and that (in the way and method whereinto things are now cast) may, at least, become our portion. He is some way, to be enjoyed even in this view. It is a thing apt to infer complacency and delight thus to look upon him. They who place felicity in contemplation, especially in the contemplation of God, are not besides the mark; if they do not circumscribe and confine it there, so as to make it stand in mere contemplation, or in an idle, and vainly curious view of so glorious an object, without any further concern about it. They will then be found to speak very agreeably to the language of holy Scripture which so frequently expresses the blessedness of the other state by seeing God. And if the act of vision be delicious, the representation of the object must have proportionable matter of delight in it. It cannot but have so, if we consider the nature of this representation; which, answerably to the sensible want and desire of such as shall be delighted there-with, must have somewhat more in it than the *common* appearances of God which offer themselves equally to the view of all men. Though it is their own as common fault, that they are destitute of the more grateful and necessary additions. That it hath more in it, is evident from God's own way of speaking of it. For we find that his revealing himself in this delectable way,

1. Is attributed to the Spirit. And as a work to be done by it when it shall be given (supposing it therefore, yet not given, and that all have it not) yea that such have it not, in such a measure as they may have it, unto this purpose; who yet truly have it, in some measure already: even as a thing peculiar to them from the unbelieving world. For it is prayed for to such as concerning whom it is said that after they believed (not before) they were sealed by the Spirit of promise, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory would give it them; and it is mentioned by a name and title proper to the end and purpose for which it is desired to be given them, namely; as the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that end and purpose being immediately expressed in or as that particle is some time used for the knowledge of him, Ephe: 1. 13. 17. 18. The eyes of their understanding being enlightened by it (which are supposed blind before) for the same purpose. By which prayer it is supposed a communicable thing; Yea and that these had some way

a right to the communication of it, or that it was a thing proper to their state, fit to be prayed for, as some way belonging to them, they being in a more immediate capacity of such revelation than others. But how incongruous had it been with such solemnity of address to make request on their behalf for that which they already sufficiently had as a thing common to all men.

2. It is spoken of as a reward of their former love, loyalty, and obedience. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me: shall be loved of my father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him: Joh. 14. 21. Therefore is such manifestation no more to be accounted common, than the love of Christ is and keeping his commandments. It is spoken of as given discriminatingly and the grace of God admired upon that account. In the next words, Judas saith unto him, (not Iscariot, it being well understood how little covetous he was of, or qualified for such manifestations) Lord how is it, that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world? v. 22. What it hath more than common light, external or internal, answerable to the deeply resented wants, and the hearts desires of the regenerate, by which it becomes so highly pleasant and delectable to them, though it is rather to be felt than told (as it is hard to describe the very things we have only immediate sensible perception of) may yet in some degree be understood by considering.

3. It is much more distinct and clear. They are confused and dark glimmerings which other men have of the blessed God, so that the light which is in them is darkness. Mat. 6. 23. It is true that an unregenerate person may possibly have clearer acquired notions of God, and of the things of God, than those may be which are of the same kind only in some who are regenerate. So that he may, by the advantages he may have above some of the other in respect of better natural abilities, more liberal education, such circumstances of his condition as may more engage him to study and contemplation and befriend him therein, be capable of finding out more, of making fuller discoveries, and more evident deductions, and be able to discourse thence, more rationally and satisfyingly to others, even concerning God, his nature, attributes and works, than some very pious persons destitute of those advantages may be able to do. But these, though their candle give a dimmer light, than the other's, have the beams of a sun raying in upon them, that much outshines the other's candle. And though they know not so many things, nor discern the connections of things so thoroughly; yet as they do know what is most necessary to be known, so what they do know, they know better, and with a more excellent sort of know-

ledge, proportionably as whatsoever is originally and immediately divine cannot but much excel that which is merely human. *Those* do but blunder in the dark, *these* in God's own light do see light. Psal. 36. 9. And his light puts a brighter hue and aspect upon the same things, than any other representation can put upon them. Things are by it represented to the life, which to others carry with them but a faint and languid appearance, and are all covered over with nothing else but a dark and dusky shadow, so as that may be hid from the wise and prudent which is revealed to babes. Mat. 11. 25. How bright and glorious things, are divine wisdom, love, holiness, to an enlightened mind! which is therefore supposed to have a clearer discovery of them.

But it may be said, "Is there any thing apprehensible concerning these or any other matters which may not be expressed in some proposition or other? And what proposition is there which a regenerate person can assent to, but one who is not regenerate may assent to it also? what definition, so truly expressive of the natures of these things, can be thought of unto which a carnal mind may not give its approbation? what can be said or conceived so fully and truly tending to describe and clear them up but an unrenewed understanding may have the representation of the same truth so as to give entertainment to it? It is answered there are many things, to which somewhat may belong not capable of description, and whereof we have yet a most certain perception. As the different relishes of the things we taste. There are no words that will express those many peculiarities. And as to the present matter: there is somewhat belonging to the things of God (those for instance that were mentioned, his wisdom, holiness, &c.) besides the truth of the conceptions that may be formed about them; which is more clearly apprehensible to a divinely enlightened understanding than to one that is not so. As,

(1.) The beauty of those truths; which it is most delightful to behold, their lively sparkling lustre, by which they appear so amiable and lovely, to a well-tempered spirit; as to transport it with pleasure and ravish it from itself into union with them. There was somewhat else apprehensible no doubt, and apprehended by them, the inward sentiments of whose souls those words so defectively served to express, "Who is like unto thee O Lord, among the Gods, who is like thee, glorious in holiness! &c." besides the mere truth of any propositions that those words can be resolved into. And so in those, O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! &c. And those, God so loved the world; that he gave his only begotten

son, that, &c. or those: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, whereof I am chief:" or the strains of that rapturous prayer,—that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith: that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height: and to know the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. There is a certain acceptableness in some truths, necessary to their being received in the love thereof, which is peculiarly so represented to some, as that their apprehension is clear and vivid, beyond that of other men; who, however they have the representation of the *same things*, yet have not the *same representation*. Though if they be things of necessary and common concernment, it is (as was said) their own fault that they have it not. And to have yet clearer apprehensions of this sort, is what the renewed soul doth most earnestly crave, and would be proportionably delighted with.

(2.) The tendency of such truths, is much more clearly conceivable to a holy soul, than another; what their scope and aim or aspect is, which way they look, and what they drive at or lead to. I mean not what other truth they are connected with and would aptly tend to infer; but what design God hath upon us in revealing them, and what impression they ought to make upon us. To the ignorance or disregard of which tendency and design of God's revelation, it is to be attributed, that many have long the same notions of things hovering in their minds, without ever reflecting with any displeasure upon the so vastly unsuitable temper of their spirits thereto. They know it may be, such things concerning God, the tendency whereof is to draw their hearts into union with him, to transform them into his likeness, to inflame them with his love. But they still remain notwithstanding at the greatest distance, most unsuitable, averse, coldly affected towards him, yea utterly opposite and disaffected; and fall not out with themselves upon this account, have no quarrel nor dislike, take not any distaste at themselves for it. They take no notice of an incongruity and unfitness in the ill temper of their own spirits; but seem as if they thought all were very well with them, nothing amiss; and apprehend not a repugnancy in their habitual dispositions towards God to their notions of him. For a vicious prejudice blinds their eyes; their corrupt inclinacious and rotten hearts send up a malignant dark and clammy fog and vapour, and cast so black a cloud upon these bright things, that their tendency and design are not per-

ceived: that prejudice not being conceived so much against the abstract notions of the things themselves, (whence they are entertained with less reluctance) but only against the design and scope of them. Against which poisonous cloud God's own glorious revelation directs its beams, dissolves its gross consistency, scatters its darkness, as to them to whom he by special grace affords it. Whereupon, observing any remainders of the same distemper in their spirits, though it be in a considerable degree abated and lessened, they are ashamed of themselves for it, filled with confusion, yea and indignation; do loath and abhor, and could even be ready, if it were possible, to run away from themselves. And what is the reason of this so great difference? Surely somewhat appears discernible to these in God's revelation of himself which to the other doth not. They have then before their eyes a more clear prospect of the aim and scope of it. Which so far as they have it pleases them, for they like the design well, only they are displeased at themselves that they comport no more with it. And as the end therefore aimed at is desirable to them, and would be delightful (as will be shewn in its proper place) so is it to have that representation immediately offered to the view of their souls, which hath so apt and comely an aspect thereon, not merely for its own sake, but for the sake of the end itself.

Wherefore there is somewhat to be apprehended by God's representation of himself to the minds of this regenerate people, at least more clearly than by other men. Whence the work of regenerating or converting them itself, is expressed by opening their eyes, (Act. 26, 18.) For the divine communication makes its own way and enters at the eye, the soul's seeing faculty, which it doth find (as opening the eyes imports) and not now create: but finding it vitiated, and as to any right seeing of God, shut and closed up, it heals, opens and restores it as it enters. It is expressed, by turning them from darkness, to light; and from the power of Satan, (the prince of that darkness, the God of this world; who had blinded their eyes—) unto God. Which (because they cannot turn and move towards God blindfold, and that this opening their eyes is in order to their turning to God) implies, that their eyes were so distempered, blinded and sealed up, chiefly towards him. So that, though they could see other things, him they could not see; but he was invisible to their intellectual, as well as their bodily eyes. Hence also is that understanding said to be given (that is, as rectified and renewed) by which we know God; which implies it to be (wherein it is now given) somewhat superadded to the whole natural being and powers of the human soul, as in its present corrupted

state,—He hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, (1 Joh. 5, 20,) And that given recitude of understanding is by such a communication from God, as hath that aptitude and power in it to infer so happy a change. The same renewing-work is also said to be a calling of men out of darkness into his marvellous light, (1 Pet. 2, 9.) As if they were brought by it into a new world, wherein they found themselves beset with wonders, and all things were surprising to them. To which purpose is that prayer of the Psalmist (out of a just consciousness, that this work was not perfect in him, but might yet admit great additional degrees,) open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Psal. 119, 18. He supposed many undiscovered wonders, which eyes more open might yet behold in that external revelation of God's mind, which was then afforded (and which was wont in those days to go under the name of his law, though it contained histories, prophecies, and promises, as well as precepts) although he was no stranger to those records, nor little insighted into them, he yet apprehended a need of more light and better eyes; which he therefore desires. Not that God would cause a new revelation to be written, (though that he vouchsafed to do, and partly by himself, but that he might learn more out of that already extant; and that the wonderful things contained in it might be made more clear to him. Nor can we suppose him, herein, to desire to be gratified and delighted by the communication of an incommunicable thing.

4. It is more powerfully assuring, and such as is apt to beget a more certain operative belief of the things revealed. That is, being added to the means of faith men may be supposed so to have had before, it adds much to their assurance of the same things, so as to make it efficacious upon their spirits. And as well cures the doubtfulness, irresolution, and way-wardness of their minds and hearts, as the confusion and darkness of them.

It is very possible those things may be distinctly understood, which the more we understand, the more we disbelieve them through their apprehended inconsistency with themselves or or some certain truth. The delectable things of God, his own discovery procures at once, by one and the same radiation of light, both to be clearly understood, and effectually believed. Others have the word of faith without the spirit of faith. The faith therefore which they have is a carcase; not a weak only (which imports but diminished power) but a dead thing. And which hath no power at all to determine the soul and compose it to that delightful rest which such things, duly believed, would certainly infer. The most delectable truths of God and

such as most directly tend (in this apostate lapsed state of man) to give us the sweet and refreshing relishes of a just and rational joy and pleasure, are such are contained in the gospel of Christ; the things that concern our reconciliation, friendship and communion with God in him. And which are therefore wholly of immediately divine and supernatural revelation, and to be received by faith. Therefore one apostle prays for some that they might be filled with joy and peace in believing. Rom. 15, 3. And another says of others that believing they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. 1 Pet. 1, 8. The external revelation in the gospel is an apt means, to beget that faith which it is said comes by hearing. But the very notion of means importing what intervenes to the effect, between that and the principal agent, necessarily supposes such an agent; and that what is only means, cannot work the effect alone. That Agent, namely, (in this case) God himself or the Spirit, besides the means which he uses and makes effectual, must have his own influence whereby he makes them so. If a pen be a fit means or instrument to write with, it doth not therefore follow that it can write alone without a hand to move and guide it, in order whereto a motive and directive influence is imparted. In the present case, the influence is the inward enlightening overpowering communication, whereof we speak. The efficacy whereof is such, as to give the soul that peaceful rest in believing which is also most pleasant and delightful, according as the things are found to be so, which are believed. Nor doth it in order hereto work by way of enthusiastical impulsion, without any reference to the external revelation, which is rationally and aptly suitable to the working of the effect. For then, that should no way have the place so much as of means. But there being sufficient inducement to persuade that this external revelation is divine so as to procure a rational assent to the things revealed, with any man, that, having that revelation, with the account of its first confirmations, shall but use his understanding in reference thereto, and is not besotted to a party of sworn enemies to the Christian name. This inward revelation then falling in, captivates his heart to an entire unitive closure, with the great things contained in the outward one; and principally with the son of God himself, unto which union, that whole revelation is most directly subservient. Therefore it was, that when divers others (of whom it is said, and particularly of Judas, that they believed not) forsook Christ, Peter and the other apostles stuck so resolutely to him, because, we believe (say they) and are sure that thou art Christ the son of the living God; Joh. 6, 64, 69, which assurance we may then conclude was

much of another sort than that of Judas; though we cannot suppose him to have wanted a rational certainty of the same truth, sufficient to have overcome objections in his judgment: but not sufficient to overcome the contrary corrupt inclinations of his wicked heart. Therefore as the inward revelation uses not to do its work without the outward, (for I suppose we have not heard of many Christians where the gospel hath not been,) so nor is the outward revelation able, alone to beget that which, in the more eminent sense, goes in Scripture under the name of faith. It may beget that merely intellectual certainty which may prevail against all doubts and objections in a man's mind to the contrary; but not the contrary inclinations of his corrupt will. Most men's faith is but opinionative, and many men's never reaches so high as to a *rational* opinion; for *that* proceeds upon having ballanced considerations on both sides, and inclines to that part on which there seems to be the most weighty; whereas the faith (as they call it) of too many is no other thing than a merely blind and sequacious humour, grounded upon nothing but a willingness to be in the fashion; or the apprehension of disgrace with other inconveniencies, if where that is the common profession one should profess to be any thing but a Christian; or a lazy indifferency easily determinable to that part which is next at hand to be chosen; or it may be, they never having heard of another profession; which precludes any choice at all.

But admit it did arrive to a rational certainty, as it easily might with them that have with the external requisite advantages, competent understanding, patience, diligence, and impartiality to consider: that is, suppose it to proceed upon that abundant evidence which the case will admit, that the Christian doctrine hath been testified by God; and that God's testimony cannot deceive: there needs more to win and overcome men's hearts; which must be done before the things revealed in the gospel can be apprehended delectable. What can any man have greater certainty of, in a mere human way, than all men have that they must die? And yet how few are there whose spirits are formed hereby to any seriousness agreeable to that persuasion? Whatever way a man comes to be certain of any thing that hath a contrary tendency to the bent of his habitually wicked heart, he needs more than the evidence of the thing, to make it efficaciously determine his will against his former vicious course. If the matter be such as properly falls under faith; that faith grounds upon the authority of God apprehended as avouching the truth of that revelation to which we subscribe our assent. But then it is lively or languid, according as the apprehension is which we have of that avouchment.

But the apprehension which is only the product of the external revelation, even recommended by the most advantageous and convincing circumstances, is too faint to command the soul. Who amongst all the people of the Jews at Mount Horeb, could have any doubt, but the authority that avouched the law there given them was divine? And yet how boldly do they rush into idolatry, against the express letter of that law; while the sound of that dreadful voice of words which delivered it, could hardly, one would think, be well out of their ears! And though they could not doubt of God's authority, yet for all that, their frequent rebellions are plainly resolved into their infidelity. How long will this people provoke me? (Num: 14. 11.) And how long will it be before they *believe* me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? Yea they despised the pleasant land: they *believed not* his word. (Psalm 106. 24). Or what place could be left for rational doubt, with the multitudes that beheld the miracles of our Lord Jesus, but that they were God's own seal affixed purposely to the doctrine taught by him? Yet how few (though we must suppose many convinced) did heartily believe in him? A great many more did so upon a less advantageous-external revelation after his ascension. And the reason is plainly told us, the Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7. 39. And how expressly have we it from his own mouth, (after he had interpreted coming to him by believing on him. (John 6. 35.) No man can come unto me, except the father that hath sent me draw him. (ver: 44.) And afterwards having said, it is the Spirit that quickeneth; (ver: 63.) he adds, but there are some of you, that believe not, (ver: 64:) So that no man's professed assent, though as forward a professor as Judas was, there referred to, will in strict account entitle him a believer, if it be not produced by the quickening influence of the Spirit. And then repeats, therefore I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my father. (ver: 65.) And what provocation the father had to withhold that quickening Spirit, so generally, from that people, any one may see that reads their story. Upon which, by the recess of that Spirit, they are hardened to as great a miracle as formerly their Egyptian oppressors were many ages before; there being indeed no greater miracle as was said of old, than that men should not believe upon the sight of so many miracles. And this dreadful dereliction, and consequent obduration we see is referred to primitive justice as a vindictive dispensation. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him. That the saying of Esaiás the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord who hath believed our report? and to whom is

the arm of the Lord, revealed? (John 12. ver: 37. 38. Isai. 53. 1.) where it is obvious to observe, that the believing of the gospel-report owes itself to the revelation of God's arm; or requires the exerting of his power, agreeable to that of the apostle, that ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, &c. (Eph. 1. 19.) And how the arm of the Lord came not not to be revealed, or that power not to be put forth, is intimated in what follows. Therefore they could not believe because (for which Isaiah is again quoted.) he had blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, &c. (Isa. 6. 9. 10.) Which shews, that as that blinding and hardening of eyes and hearts, in some superadded degrees thereof, is the effect of a penal dereliction or retraction of God's arm for former obstinate opposition to the external revelation of the gospel; so that there is a precedent blindness and hardness, not otherwise vincibile than by the arm of the Lord; and which, it being penally withheld, will naturally grow worse and worse. And certainly that, upon the with-holding whereof, such things certainly ensue as are inconsistent with believing, must needs itself be necessary to it. All which things considered, do so plainly speak the insufficiency of a mere external revelation, and the necessity of an internal besides, unto that faith, which is the immediate spring of delight in God; that it is not needful to insist upon many plain texts of scripture besides, that fully say the same thing. As that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. (Cor. 12. 3.) And again, whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. (1 John 4. 15.) And whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. (ch. 5. 1.) Upon which words with many more of like import in the sacred volume, no sense can be put which is tolerable, and not the same with what we have above asserted.

In short, faith is a part of homage paid to the authority of the great God; which is to be estimated sincere, according as it answers the end, for which the things to be believed were revealed. That end is not to beget only the notion of those things, as truths that are to be lodged in the mind, and go no further; as if they were to be understood true only that they might be so understood; but that the person might accordingly have his spirit formed, and might shape the course of his whole conversation; therefore is it called the obedience of faith: and the same word which is wont to be rendered unbelief, signifies disobedience, obstinacy, unpersuadableness; being from a theme which (as is known) signifies to persuade. So that this homage

is then truly given to the eternal God, when his revelation is complied with and submitted to, according to the true intent and purpose of it. Which that it may be, requires that his Spirit urge the soul with his authority, and overpower it into an awful subjection thereto. The soul being so disjointed by the apostacy that its own faculties keep not (in reference to the things of God) their natural order to one another, further than as a holy rectitude is renewed in them by the Holy Ghost. Therefore is it necessary, that the enlightening communication which he transmits into it, be not only so clear, as to scatter the darkness that beclouded the mind, but so penetrating, as to strike and pierce the heart, to dissolve and relax its stiff and frozen rigour, and render it capable of a new mould and frame. In order whereto, "God that (at first) commanded the light to shine out of darkness, is said to have shined into the hearts" of them, namely, whom he renews, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2. Cor. 4. 6.) And as they to whom this communication of God is in some degree afforded, do hereupon apprehend how necessary it was to them that it should be afforded; and be such as they now find it, (which they apprehended not before), so they perceive it to be delightful also, as well as necessary. And finding it yet given into them but in an imperfect degree, their continual cravings are still for more. And having tasted hereby, how gracious the Lord is; as new-born-babes, they desire it, as sincere milk, that they may grow thereby. (1. Pet. 2. 2. 3.) They hereby come to know God and the things of God with savour. And wisdom having entered into their hearts, knowledge is pleasant to their soul. (Prov. 2. 10.) Whereby, as every renewed taste provokes in them new desire, all such renewed desires dispose them unto further and more satisfying delight. They sensibly discern the difference between their former dry and sapless notions of God, and the lively-spirited apprehensions which they now have. They can in some measure understand the reason why the apostle should in such a rapture speak of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; and why he should so triumphingly give thanks to God for the manifestation of the savour of his knowledge in every place. (2. Cor. 2. 14.) They can perceive there was good sense in those words, as they have a more quick and judicious perception of the fragrancy of that knowledge; it is to them a refreshing, vital, quickening perfume, (v. 16.) as the word there, and before imports, most cheeringly odoriferous, the savour of life to life, lively in itself, and to them. So full of life, as to beget and transmit it; and replenish their souls therewith: so as they might feel

life thence working in all their powers. A revelation of God, that is of such a nature, cannot but be highly delectable ;

(1.) In respect of the matter revealed, God himself especially (if not yet testifying himself to be, yet at least willing in Christ to become) our God ; in such a way, and upon such terms as is expressed in the Gospel. A more particular mention of the things (contained in this revelation) that are more apt to beget delight and feed it, is purposely deferred till we come to press and enforce the duty itself.

(2.) In respect of the immediate way and manner of revelation, with so much facility continually coming in from time to time, upon the soul, according as it is found ready by a dutiful compliance to admit it, and doth lie open to it. For otherwise, a fatherly severity, is most fitly expressed in with-holding it at some times.

(3.) In respect of the life and vigour which it carries with it, whereby it is experienced to be a vital light : and that it is indeed (as is said) life, which is the light of men. (Joh. 1. 4.) Dull, sluggish, ineffectual notions of such things can have little, comparatively, of delectation in them.

(4.) In respect of the design and tendency of the revelation, discernible at the same time, to draw the soul into union with God ; and that there may be a continual intercourse between him and it. Not that it might have a transient glance of so lovely an object, and no more. When once it apprehends God hath made this light shine in upon me, not to amuse me, but here he fixes it as a lamp to guide me, in a stated course of communion with him. How pleasant is it to think he will be known for this blessed purpose ! Now a communication of God including a revelation of him apt to beget such a knowledge, cannot be without much matter of delight.

CHAP. II.

I. The subject of communication from God continued, which is shewn to contain in it. *Secondly*, A transforming impression of his Image; by the removal of such dispositions as are correct, and the setting of such as are gracious. II. This communication of his Image shewn to be delightful as it rectifies the soul. *First*, Towards God himself, and towards Christ, *Secondly*, Towards men. *Thirdly*, Towards themselves. *Fourthly*, Towards this and the other world.

I. **T**HIS communication of God himself to his people shewn to contain in it.

Secondly, A transforming impression of his image. This yet more fully answers the inquiry when a person is said to enjoy God; what doth he immediately enjoy? or whereby is he said to enjoy God? what doth God communicate or transmit, by which he may be said to be enjoyed? He communicates his own living likeness, the very image of himself; not the idea or likeness only by which he is known, though it must be confessed that the knowledge of him if he be known to be what he truly is, must suppose a true likeness of him offered to the mind, and formed there. But this of which we now speak, is not a merely representative but a real image. The product of the former it is, as is sufficiently to be collected from what hath been said. For that appears to be not a mere airy, spiritless, ineffectual thing, as the notion of God, and of all divine matters is with the most, but as hath been said, operative, penetrating, efficacious, apt to beget suitable impressions upon the heart, and wholly transform the soul. The effect of it then is, this transformative impression itself; by which the soul becomes another thing than it was; a new creature; old things being done away, and all things made new. 2 Cor. 5, 17. In respect of this, it is said to be born of God. This is the new man which after God is said to be created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; the divine nature participated; the seed of God; the ἀρχή, the prime and most excellent part of his creatures. Eph. 5. 2 Pet. 1. 1 Joh. 3. Jam. 1.

Concerning this likeness, and the satisfyingness of it, in its perfect state, though much hath been discoursed elsewhere; it will be requisite to say somewhat here also, that may bear a

more direct reference to the present imperfect state of the regenerate in this world. That communication of God which must be supposed afforded them, in order to their delighting in him, could signify little to that purpose, if, with deformed and diseased souls they were only to look upon a very lovely object; still themselves remaining what they were. Nor doth it delight them only as it is apprehended apt and aiming to work a happy change in them; but as it doth it or hath in part done it. As like an active, quick flame it passes through their souls, searches, melts them, burns up their dross, makes them a new lump or mass, and forms them for God's own use and converse.

God is proposed unto our communion and fellowship under the name of light. But such a light (it appears) as whereby we that were darkness do also become light in the (Lord, 1 Joh. 1, 5, 6,) as elsewhere it is expressed. That, as he is the Father of lights, we may appear the children of such a Father, and walk accordingly, that is, as children of light. (Eph. 5, 8.) For we are presently told that if we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have a mutual fellowship, (1 Joh. 1. 6, 7) that is, God and we. It is needful then, that we have that apprehension of him. And he therefore by solemn message makes that declaration of himself that he is light, this then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and with him is no darkness at all, that is, the most pure, holy, excellent, glorious Being. But for what purpose are we to have that apprehension? We are told by the apostle for what; he there makes that declaration with that design, that we might be entered into the same fellowship in which he was already: for that end therefore we are to have this apprehension. But inasmuch as he immediately adds, that yet while we converse in darkness, we lie, if we pretend to that fellowship: it is manifest, that this discovery of God and our suitable apprehensions are no further serviceable to their end, than bringing us into fellowship with him; than as by his beams in begets us into his own likeness herein: and that, so far as our capacity and present state admit, we be truly in a degree made pure, bright, shining, excellent creatures, resembling our maker, and being a second time formed after the image of him that created us.

The gospel is the formative instrument in this work, as it was said to be the instrument or means of our intellectual illumination. The new creature is said to be begotten of the word of God; and the divine nature to be communicated through the exceeding great and precious promises, which discovering God's gracious nature and favourable inclination towards us,

are an apt means (but no more than a means) to render us well-natured (not cross, thwarting, contrary) unto him. Faith admits the gospel-discovery into the soul, and of an external word without, makes it become an ingrafted word; the word of Christ dwelling richly in us: and so gives it the advantage of becoming thus mightily operative; for unto them only who believe is it the power of God to salvation. And being received, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, it works effectually in them that believe. To them who believe it not, it signifies nothing; it is to them an empty sound, or only as a tale that is told. And inasmuch as the gospel-revelation is the instrument of this impression; by it the impression must be measured, with it must it agree. Which revelation being expressive of the nature of God, and of his mind and will in reference to us; the impression cannot but be agreeable to that revelation; but it must also carry in it the resemblance and likeness of God himself; for the gospel-revelation is God's seal; the stamp upon it is a model of his image. Whence therefore the soul sealed therewith, bears on it at once the signature both of the author and the instrument. But because our best and surest way of forming true and right apprehensions of God, is to attend and guide ourselves by the representation that is there made of him (for it were useless and in vain, if letting our thoughts work at random without reference to it, we might conceive as fitly of God and his mind concerning us, as by the direction and guidance of it;) therefore are we to aim at conformity to God as he is there represented. For that is the proper likeness to him we are to inquire after (and which only could be impressed by his gospel) that is expressed and represented there. 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. (2 Cor. 3, 18.) It is by the glory of the Lord shining through that glass, that we are changed. And the image whereinto we are changed is the same image that is to be seen in that glass. For there God hath provided, that such a representation of himself and of his mind should appear, as is most suitable to our case and state, and which it most concerned us to have the view and the image of. That represents him in his imitable excellencies; and shews what he is towards us, what his counsels, determinations, and constitutions are concerning us, and hereupon shews, what we should be, or what temper of spirit becomes us in reference to such a revelation. And such, when we receive this his impressive communication, he really makes us thereby become. And then is it that it will be found most highly delectable. A heart formed according to the revelation of God in Christ, and cast into the mould of the gospel (as is the import of the apostle's

words, Rom. 6, 17,—Ye have obeyed from the heart the doctrine, into the type or frame whereof ye were delivered) hath a spring of pleasure in itself. Not of perfect unmixed pleasure; for there is much yet remaining, that cannot but be very displeasing and offensive to such as have learned no longer to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, and have senses exercised to discern betwixt good and evil. And indeed by the same vital principle the soul is made capable both of the sweetest delights and the quickest sense of pain; while it was dead it was sensible of neither.

Nor is it an original spring. Whatever it hath that is good and pleasant comes from a higher head and is communicated. But the communication remains not in this heart as in a dead receptacle, but creates the soul where it is a living spring itself. The Lord shall satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and as a spring of water whose waters fail not. (Isa. 58, 11.) After which it follows, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, &c. v. 14. So though the waters that are so pleasantly refreshing to holy souls are given by Christ; yet he himself tells us, they shall be in him to whom they are given a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Joh: 4. 14. Whence also the good man is said to be satisfied from himself, (Pro. 14, 14.) And the mouth of the righteous to be a well of life, (Pro. 10, 11.) that is, to others, much more must his heart be so to himself. Nor indeed can there be a vainer or more absurd design and expectation, than to aim immediately at delights and joys, without ever looking after that transforming, purifying, quickening communication from God, in which he is to be enjoyed; which is apparently, the most prejudicial and dangerous mistake, the practical error (and so much the worse therefore) of many persons of much pretence to religion, that dream and boast of nothing less than raptures and transports, having never yet known or felt what the work of regeneration or the new creature means. And having only got some notions of God and Christ, that tickle their fancies without ever changing their hearts, these go for divine enjoyments. Others somewhat awakened and convinced but not renewed, though they do not pretend already to have, yet do (from the same mistaken apprehension) as vainly seek and catch at joys and sweetnesses; while their unsanctified hearts do yet lie steeped in the gall of bitterness. And they wonder and complain, that they feel not in themselves the delights whereof they find Scripture sometimes make mention, while in the mean time they expect and snatch at them in that preposterous impossible way, as to abstract them

from the things themselves, wherein the pleasure and delight lie. They would have delight without the delectable good, that must immediately afford and yield it; or without foregoing noisome evils that resist and hinder it; which therefore makes it necessary to treat the more largely of the delightful communication, by which only intervening souls are capable of delighting in God.

And as to this branch of it, the vital sanctifying transforming influence, whereby the soul is wrought to a conformity to the gospel; if we take a somewhat more distinct view of it, we shall find, it cannot but have in it abundant matter of delight. In the general, the thing here to be communicated, is a universal rectitude of temper and dispositions, including—the removal of such as are sinful and corrupt; and—the settlement of such as are holy and gracious;—both to be measured and estimated, as to their good or evil, by the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now surely that must be a blessed and delightful state (and it is that towards which this divine communication gradually tends) wherein a wretched soul, that was lost in the impurities of sin, shall be stripped and unclothed of all the pravity, perverse inclinations, corrupt affections which the gospel of Christ condemns; and invested with all the parts of that purity, that gracious and holy frame which that gospel recommends. For as the former carry in them matter of certain vexation and anguish which it is hereby freed from; so the latter manifestly carry in themselves matter of unspeakable delight and pleasure, which it hereby partakes. And by the same degrees by which this divine communication infers the latter of these, it expels the former. By the same degrees by which any are made partakers of the divine nature, they escape the corruptions which are in the world through lust. And that we may be here a little more particular, without descending into the innumerable particulars which might be severally spoken of upon this occasion; we shall only consider this heart-rectifying communication, in reference to some of the more principal things, towards which the spirit of man may be either perversely, or duly and aright inclined; that we may see what matter of delight it infers and brings with it. In order whereto it must be considered, that wherein it is transforming, it is also enlivening; and therefore furnishes the soul, with the power of spiritual sensation; whereby it comes to apprehend its former temper, as very grievous and detestable; not only being entire and undiminished, but even the relics of it which do yet remain; and proportionably, the holy frame to be introduced as highly covetable and to be infinitely desired.

II. Which being supposed, it must needs be very delightful to such a soul, to feel itself in part rectified, and to expect it further in its temper and inclinations,

First, Towards God, towards whom it was most disinclined: that is, both towards him as its end, and towards Christ as its way to him.

1. As to himself its end. It finds upon reflection, it was dead towards God, without motion towards him, without inclination, all its powers bent and set quite another way; so that to persuade it to begin a course of holy motion towards God, was a like thing as to persuade a stone to fly upwards. It could not trust the original truth, nor love the sovereign good, nor obey the supreme authority. Its course was nothing else but continual recession from him, towards whom it should have been continually pressing forward with all its might. It was wont to say to him, in whom was its life and all its hope, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" was utterly alienated from the life of God, and did choose to live as without him in the world. And although it still remain thus in too great a degree, yet as it abhors this as a hateful way of living, and desires it may be otherwise; so is it sensibly delightful that it doth in some degree perceive a change; that now it can find itself returning into its right and natural state of subordination to God. Which while it was out of it, laid that claim to it, that its dislocation was uneasy, and it could have no rest; though it was not aware what the matter was with it, and could never thoroughly apprehend, that it ought (much less could desire or aim) to return. And if in returning, and its continual course afterwards (which ought to be but a continuing return and moving back towards God,) there be much cause for the exercise of repentance; the disposition whereto is a part of that new nature now communicated; yet even such relentings as are due and suitable upon this account are not unpleasant. There is pleasure mingled with such tears, and with those mournings which are not without hope, and which flow naturally and without force, from a living principle within, as waters from their still-freshly springing fountain. When the soul finds itself unbound and set at liberty; when it can freely pour out itself to God, dissolve kindly and melt before him; it doth it with regret only at what it hath done and been, not at what it is now doing, except that it can do it no more; affecting even to be infinite herein, while it yet sees it must be confined within some bounds. It loves to lie in the dust and abase itself; and is pleased with the humiliation, contrition and brokenness of heart which repentance towards God includes in it. So that as God is delighted with this sacrifice, so it is with the offering of it up to him.

Many men apprehend a certain sweetness in revenge; such a one finds it only in this just revenge upon himself. How unexpressible pleasure accompanies its devoting itself to God, when bemoaning itself, and returning with weeping and supplication, it says, "Now lo I come to thee, thou art the Lord my God. I have brought thee back thine own, what I had sacrilegiously alienated and stolen away, the heart which was gone astray, that hath been so long a vagabond and fugitive from thy blessed presence, service and communion. Take now the soul which thou hast made; possess thy own right; enter upon it, stamp it with the entire impression of thine own seal, and mark it for thine. Other Lords shall no more have dominion. What have I to do any more with the idols wherewith I was wont to provoke thee to jealousy? I will now make mention of thy name, and of thine only. I bind myself to thee in everlasting bonds, in a covenant never to be forgotten." In doing this the soul finds great delight, for

(1.) The self-denial which is included in this transaction, hath no little pleasure in it. When the soul freely quits all pretence to itself, and by its own consent passes into his, now acknowledged right; disclaims itself, and all its own former interests, inclinations and ends, and is resolved to be to him and to no other. When this is done *unreservedly*, without any intention of retaining or keeping back any thing from him; *absolutely*, and without making any conditions of its own, but only agreeing to and thankfully accepting his; *peremptorily* and without hesitation, and without halting between two opinions, "Shall I? or shall I not?" (as if it were ready in the same breath to retract and undo its own act) how doth it now rejoice to feel itself offer willingly! They that have life and sense about them, can tell there is pleasure in all this. And the oftner repetition is made hereof (so it be done with life, not with trifling formality) they so often renew the relishes with themselves of the same pleasure.

(2.) Continued commerce with God, agreeable to the tenour of that league and covenant struck with him, how pleasant and delightful is it! to be a friend of God, an associate of the most high, a domestic, no more a stranger, a foreigner, but of his own household, to live wholly upon the plentiful provisions, and under the happy order and government of his family, to have a heart to seek all from him, and lay out all for him! How great is the pleasure of trust, of living free from care; that is, of any thing, but how to please and honour him in a cheerful unsolicitous dependence, expecting from him our daily bread, believing he will not let our souls famish; that while they hunger and thirst after righteousness they shall be filled; that

they shall be sustained with the bread and waters of life; that when they hunger, he will feed them with hidden manna, and with the fruits that grow on the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God; that when they thirst he will give water, and add milk and honey without money; without price. And for the body not to doubt, but he that feeds ravens and clothes lilies will feed and clothe them. To be so taken up in seeking his kingdom and righteousness, as freely to leave it to him to add the other things as he sees fit; to take no thought for tomorrow; to have a heart framed herein according to divine precept; not to be encumbered or kept in an anxious suspense by the thoughts and fears of what may fall out, by which many suffer the same affliction a thousand times over, which God would have them suffer but once; a firm repose on the goodness of providence, and its sure and never-erring wisdom; a steady persuasion, that our heavenly Father knows what we have need of, and what it is fittest for us to want, to suffer or enjoy; how delightful a life do these make! and how agreeable to one born of God, his own son and heir of all things; as being joint heirs with Christ, and claiming by that large grant, that says all things are yours; only that in minority it is better to have a wise father's allowance, than be our own carvers.

[1.] To live in the fear of God, is not without its pleasure. It composes the soul, expels the vanity which is not without vexation, represses exorbitant motions, checks unruly passions, keeps all within in a pleasant peaceful calm; is health to the navel, and marrow to the bones.

[2.] To live in his love, is delight itself, or a tendency towards it. The disposition whereto being communicated from God, and a part of the holy new creature derived from him; is also part of the (secondary or subservient) delectable object. As the light that serves unto vision is partly (as the mediate object) somewhat of what I see, and doth partly, as a principle, actuate and concur with the faculty in the act of seeing. And as the blessed God himself is both the first principle and ultimate object of that and other gracious acts*: therefore it cannot but be pleasant to the soul, to perceive that powerful influ-

* And how rationally men may be said at the same time to love, delight in and enjoy the amiable or delectable object, and therewith also love their own love, enjoy their own fruition, or delight in their own delight; enough is said by some school-men. Nor indeed can it be conceived how the soul can continue to love or delight in any thing but it must be so. For while it perseveres, every latter act justifies the former, and takes complacency therein, but all as directed towards such an object.

ence from God stirring in it, by which it is disposed to design and pitch upon him as the great object of its highest delight, unto whom it laboured under so vile and wicked an aversion heretofore. Yea though it yet have no certain persuasion of a present interest in him, yet this disposition of heart towards him, and that it finds it could satisfyingly rest in him as its best good upon supposition it had such an interest, the very strivings and contentions of the soul towards him upon this account, are not without a present pleasure : as we behold with an intermixed desire and delight a grateful object which we would enjoy, but do not yet know whether we can compass or not. To be in that temper of soul, as to resolve, “ Him I will seek and pursue, him I will study to please and serve, and spend my strength and life in serving him (which is to live in his love) though I yet know not whether he will accept, or how he will deal with me !” this cannot but have a certain sensible delectation in it.

[3.] To live in a stated habitual subjection to him as the Lord of our lives, how pleasant is it ! to have learned to obey ; to be accustomed to the yoke ; to taste and prove the goodness and acceptableness of his will through an effectual transformation in the renewal of our minds ; to be by the law of the spirit of life made free from the law of sin and death ; to be able to speak it as the undisguised sense of our hearts, “ Because thy law is holy, therefore thy servant loveth it ; to reckon it a royal law of liberty, so as to account ourselves so much the more free, by how much we are the more thus bound ; when we affect to be prescribed to, and are become patient of government, not apt to chafe at the bridle, or spurn and kick at the boundaries that hem us in : this is a temper that hath not more of duty in it than it hath of delight. There is such a thing as delighting in the law of God, according to the inward man, when there is yet a difficulty in suppressing and keeping under inordinate rebellious workings of corrupt nature ; unto which there is no desire an indulgence should be given, by having the law attempered to them, but severity rather used to reduce them to a conformity to the law : so will it be, if the law become a heart impression ; when it can once be truly said, thy law is in my heart, it will be also with the same sincerity said, I delight to do thy will, O God. (Ps. 40.)

[4.] The continual exercise of good conscience towards God, hath great pleasure in it. Hereby our way and course is continually reviewed, and we pass censures upon ourselves, and upon that account survey our own works. And by how much the more carefully and often this is done, so much the more delectable it will be : that is, the more approvable we shall find them upon review. For we shall order our course

the more warily, as we reckon upon undergoing an inquisition and search ; wherein an apprehensive serious heart well understands it is not itself to be the supreme judge. How blessed an imitation might there here be of the blessed God himself, who we find beheld his six days works, and lo they were all very good ; whereupon follows his delightful day of rest ; so we shall, in some degree of conformity to him, finding our works to be in that sort good, as that he will by gracious indulgence accept them as such, have our own sabbath, a sweet and peaceful rest in our own spirits. Though we can pretend no higher than sincerity only, yet how sweet are the reflections of a well-instructed conscience upon that ! when our hearts reproach us not, and we resolve they shall not as long as we live ; we are conscious to ourselves of no base designs, we propose nothing to ourselves wherein we apprehend cause to decline God's eye ; we walk in the light, and are seeking no darkness or shadow of death, where (as workers of iniquity) we may hide ourselves from him ; can implore him as an assistant, and appeal to him as a judge in reference to our daily affairs and wonted course ; is this without pleasure ! This is our rejoicing, saith the apostle, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation, &c. (2. Cor. 1. 12.) And thus to converse with God, and him whom we daily design to glorify and serve, and whom we expect daily in some measure, and fully and finally before it be long, to enjoy, is certainly throughout a way of pleasantness and peace. How delectable then is the soul rectifying communication from God, whereby, being before so disaffected, it becomes now so well inclined towards him in all these respects. But because the exigency of the case did require (by reason of sin that had cut of the intercourse) that there should be a mediator to open the way and renew the former out-worn friendship ; therefore it was also necessary that so the soul might duly move towards God, it should be rightly framed and disposed also towards him.

2 We are therefore to consider too, how delectable this communication must be, as it aright disposes the heart towards Christ, our way to God. For towards him we must understand it to have been most obstinately and inflexibly averse ; and that, therefore a mighty communication of power was necessary to set it right here. Unto that part of religion which is natural ; there was so much of an advantage before-hand, as that there was an old foundation to build upon. There are some notions of God left, not only concerning his existence, but his nature and attributes, many of them : and from the apprehension what he was, it was in some measure discernible what we should have been,

and ought yet to be towards him; and from thence many checks and rebukes of conscience wherein it was found to be otherwise: so that here was somewhat in nature to be wrought upon, as to this part of religion. But as to that part which respects the Mediator, this was a frame wholly to be raised up from the ground. There were no principles immediately and directly inclining to take part with the gospel; but all to be implanted anew. The way that God would take to bring back souls to him being so infinitely above all human thought. And therefore, though to a considering Pagan it would not sound strangely, that God ought to be trusted, feared, loved, &c. yet even to such the gospel of Christ was foolishness. Besides, that this way of dealing with men was not only unknown and unimaginable to them, not so much as once thought of, or to be guest at; but the tendency and aspect of it (when it should come to be made known) was such as that it could not but find the temper of men's spirits most strongly opposite, not merely ignorant, but prejudiced and highly disaffected. For this course most directly tended to take men quite off from their old bottom; to stoop and humble, and even bring them to nothing; to stain the pride of their glory, and lay them down in the dust as abject wretches, in themselves fit for nothing, but to be trampled on and crushed by the foot of divine revenge. Suppose a man to have admitted a conviction from the light of his own mind or conscience that he was a sinner, and had offended his maker, incurred his just displeasure, and made himself liable to his punishing justice; It would yet have been a hard matter to make him believe it altogether impossible to him, to do any thing to remedy the matter, and restore himself to divine favour and acceptance. He would naturally be inclined to think; why admit the case be so, he should easily find out a way to make God amends. He would recount with himself all his own natural excellencies, and think himself very capable of doing some great thing, that should more than expiate his offence, and make recompence abundantly for any wrong that he had done. But when the gospel shall come and tell him he hath deserved eternal wrath, that his sin is inexpressible, but by everlasting sufferings, or what is of equal value; that here is one (the eternal Son of God) who became a man like himself, and thereupon a voluntary sacrifice, to make atonement for the transgression of men; that God will never accept another sacrifice, for the sins of men than his, nor ever any service at their hands, but for his sake; that him now revealed to them they must receive, rely upon, and trust to wholly, or perish without mercy; yea, and that he hath put the government over them, into his hands, laid it on his shoulders, and to him they must subject themselves as their Ruler and Judge the great

Arbiter of life and death to them and all men ; that they are to be entirely devoted to him as long as they live, as their Redeemer and Lord ; in him as they are to have righteousness and strength so to him they must pay all possible homage and subjection, to him their knees must bow, and their tongues confess ; they must receive the law from his mouth ; be prescribed to by him, comply with his will, though never so much to the crossing of their own ; and though notwithstanding, they must know they can deserve nothing by it ; that so vile and worthless miscreants they are become that God will never have to do with them upon other terms.

When this shall appear the state of the case, and it comes to be apprehended, "Then must I yield myself a greater transgressor than ever I thought, and an undone, impotent, helpless wretch ? I shall thus make nothing of myself ; and what must all my natural or acquired excellencies go just for nothing ? and a person of such worth and accomplishments as I, be thus brought down into the dust ? yea and besides, to be brought under such bonds, and profess to owe myself so entirely to a Redeemer, that I must for ever live after his will and pleasure, and no more at my own ; and can never hope, if I take a liberty to indulge myself besides the allowance of his rules, that I can ever make any amends for such transgression by any thing that I can do. So that by taking his gift (of my pardon and life) upon such terms, I shall sell my liberty, and render myself a perfect slave to his will and pleasure for ever." Here now cannot but be a strong stream to be striven against and most vehement counter-strivings of the haughty and licentious spirit of man. So that it is not strange it should be said by our Saviour, no man can come to me except my father draw him. And that the exceeding greatness of my power, according to the workings of the mightiest power in any case, should be put forth upon them that believe. Therefore are men in Christ by creative power only ; if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. (2. Cor. 5. 15.) He is new made ; if he be in him. And this aversion being so deeply natural, will still in a degree remain (while any thing of corrupt nature remains) in the hearts of even the regenerate themselves.

Therefore a continual exertion of the same power will be ever requisite to hold souls to Christ, and retain them in their station in him. He that establisheth us with you in Christ, is God (2. Cor. 1. 21.) as though he had said it is only a God that can do this. Therefore how is God admired and adored upon this single account. Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, Rom. 16. 25. (this was indeed a great secret to

the lapsed world,)—To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. ver. 27. But as the heart-rectifying communication from God, in this matter, is such as carries mighty power with it, so it doth proportionable pleasure, when it hath overcome, and (to the pitch of sincerity) set the soul right in this thing. How delectable is it to receive the Son of God, when the heart is made willing in the day of his power! when his cords take hold of the soul, and draw it to him! what pleasure is there in the consenting, self-resigning act and disposition!

(1.) It is most highly delightful to receive him, and give up ourselves to him as our full suitable good, so exactly answering all the exigencies of our distressed case; when sensibly apprehending the true state of it, the soul cries out, “None but Christ”, and finds him present, waiting only for consent, readily offering himself, “Here I am, take me, thy Jesus, thy help, thy life” How overcomingly pleasant is this to a soul that feels its distress, and perceives itself ready to perish; yea and that daily sees itself perishing, were it not for him. How pleasant, when in the time of love he finds the poor soul in its blood, and says to it, live; clothes it, decks it, makes it perfect through his own comeliness tenders himself to it, unto it taken off the dunghill, cast out in the most loathsome deplorable plight; and enters the marriage covenant with it, (we need not be squeamish or shy to to speak after God himself, so representing this matter) overcomes by his own mercy and goodness, and prevails with a sinful creature to accept him. How gladly doth it throw off every thing of its own, that it may entirely possess him and be possessed by him. Here is the joy of a nuptial solemnity, or the joy of espousals. “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.” While as yet this transaction is not distinctly reflected on, (as when possibly afterwards it is, there may great difficulties and doubts arise, whether all were rightly done, or yet be on its own part, yea or no) if however it be truly done, in the very doing itself and the same continuing disposition there is a sensible and inseparable delight. I say in the same disposition as often as by any repeated acts of the same kind, it expresses and shews itself: that is, as often as this covenant is renewed (whether with solemnity or more occasionally) though the relation arising thence be not in the same instant considered or reflected on, nor the sincerity of the act itself, which is necessary thereto: yet that very consent itself, if it be sincere, hath a secret joy accompanying it; and the soul feels the gratefulness and pleasure of its own act, though it do not for the present examine and take a view of it. For it is now from a principle of life, embracing and drawing into union with itself an object that is all life and good-

ness, and sweetness; which therefore sheds its own delightful savour and fragrancy through the soul, while it is in the mean time acting only upon the object directly, and not reflecting upon its own act, or considering in that very instant what will be consequential thereupon. But if withal it do consider, (as that consideration cannot be far off, though it cannot consider every thing at once) that it is receiving him that is to bring it to God, who is able to do it, (even to save to the uttermost all that will come to God by him) who is intent upon that design, and did in the midst of dying agonies breathe forth his soul in the prosecution of it, and with whom God requires it to unite for this very purpose; this cannot but add unspeakably to the delightfulness of this transaction, and of this effusion of the Holy Ghost, in the virtue whereof the thing is done, how often soever it be seriously done; as our case and state require that it be very often.

(2.) And to receive him as our Lord, (which is joined with that other capacity wherein we receive him, namely, of a Jesus or Saviour; as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, (Col. 2. 6.) This also, and the heart subduing influence that disposes to it, is most highly delectable. When the soul, that was so stoutly averse, and that once said within itself, "I will not have him to reign over me," is brought freely to yield; and with sincere, loyal resolutions and affections devotes itself to him, consents to his government, submits its neck and shoulder to his yoke and burden; says to him with an ungainsaying heart, as its full sense, "Now thou Lord of my life and hope, who hast so long striven with me, so often and earnestly pressed me hereto, so variously dealt with me, to make me understand thy merciful design, and who seekest to rule with no other aim or intent, but that thou mightest save; and who hast founded thy dominion in thy blood, and didst die and revive and rise again that thou mightest be Lord of the living and dead, and therefore my Lord; accept now a self-resigning soul; I make a free surrender of myself, I bow and submit to thy sovereign power, I fall at the footstool of thy throne, thou Prince of the kings of the earth, who hast loved sinners, and washed them from their sins in thy blood; glory in thy conquest, thou hast overcome, I will from henceforth be no longer mine own, but thine; I am ready to receive thy commands, to do thy will, to serve thy interests, to sacrifice my all to thy name and honour; my whole life and being are for ever thine." I say (as before) there is pleasure in the very doing this itself, as often as it is sincerely done; and it adds hereto, if it be more distinctly considered, it is no mean or any way undeserving person to whom this homage is paid, and obligation taken on unto future obedience. "He is the brightness

of the Fathers glory, the express image of his person, the heir of all things, and who sustains all things by the word of his power: it is he whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace: it is he to whom all power is given both in heaven and earth, and (more especially) power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given him; it is he who spoiled principalities and powers and made an open shew of them; he whom because when he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, he humbled himself, made himself of no reputation, took on him the form of a servant, became obedient to death, the Father hath therefore highly exalted, and given him a name above every name, that at his name every knee should bow; and of whom, when he brought him (his first-born) into the world, he said, "Let all the angels of God worship him."

And such a one he is, whose temper is all goodness and sweetness. Tell Sion, thy King cometh meek and lowly. He came into this world drawn down only by his own pity and love, beholding the desolations and ruins that were wrought in it every where. Sin universally reigning, and death by sin, and spreading its dark shadow, and a dreadful cloud over all the earth: In which darkness the prince thereof was ruling and leading men captive at his will; having drawn them off from the blessed God their life, and sunk them into a deep oblivion of their own original: and disaffection to their true happiness that could only be found there. This great Lord and Prince of life and peace came down on purpose to be the Restorer of souls, to repair the desolations and ruins of many generations. He came full of grace and truth, and hath scattered blessings over the world wheresoever he came; hath infinitely obliged all that ever knew him; and is he in whom all the nations of the earth must be blessed, Who then, would not with joy swear fealty to him, and take pleasure to do him homage? Who would not recount with delight the unexpressible felicity of living under the governing power of such a one?

And if the tenour and scope of all his laws and constitutions be viewed over, what will they be found, but obligations upon men to be happy; how easy his yoke, how light his burden; what is the frame of his kingdom, or whereof doth it consist but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost? And who would not now say, "This Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. (Psal. 97.1.) Why should it not be triumphingly said among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth, that the world also shall be established, that it cannot be moved: let the heavens rejoice,

and the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the fields rejoice and all that is therein, and all the trees of the wood rejoice! It is plain, that be the matter of joy here what it will, be there never so much cause of exultation and glorying in him, the righteousness and peace which his kingdom promises, never actually take place, nor the joy that is connected therewith, till the Holy Ghost dispose and form men's spirits thereto. (Rom. 14. 17.) For all this is but mere dream and idle talk to those who hear only of these things, and feel not that vital influence insinuating itself, that may give the living sense and savour of them. And we may rather expect seas and fields, beasts and trees, to sing his triumphant song, and chant his praises, than those men whose hearts are not attuned to his government, and who are yet under the dominion of another Lord, not being yet by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, made free from the law of sin and death. (Rom. 8. 2.) But where this is effectually done, how large matter of most rational pleasure do they find here; while there is nothing in that whole system of laws by which he governs, that is either vain, unequal or unpleasant, or upon any account grievous? only this is not the estimate of distempered spirits, or of any other than them in whose hearts his law is written, and who because they love him, keep his commandments. (John 15. 10.) Unto love his commands are most connatural; for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; they are not grievous, (John 5. 3.) that is, by the *meiosis* which some do reasonably enough apprehend in those words, they are joyous, delightful, pleasant, but to them only who being born of God, have overcome the world. This holy influence and communication of God, is therefore grateful, and contributes not a little to delight in this respect, that thereby men's spirits are rectified and set right towards God, namely, both towards the Creator and Redeemer.

Secondly. As hereby they are rectified towards men, having the universal law of love wrought deep into their hearts; being filled with all goodness, righteousness, meekness, mercifulness; apt to do no wrong, to bear any, to pity and help the distressed, to love enemies, and as there is opportunity, to do good to all, especially to them that are of the household of faith. We must understand in this, as well as in the other parts of that stamp which the spirit of God puts on the souls of men, that the impression corresponds and answers to the seal, (as hath been said) the inward communication to the outward revelation of God's will; and so we find the matter is: for as divine precepts require this should be the temper of men's spirits, so the very things that compose and make up that blessed temper, are said to be the

fruits of his own Spirit; the fruit of the Spirit is peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, &c. (Gal. 5. 22. 23.) And again, the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness and truth. (Eph. 5. 9.) Now hath not that soul a spring of pleasure within itself, that is in these respects as God would have it be? that is conscious to itself of nothing but righteousness, goodness, benignity, candour towards any man, and is in all things acted by a spirit of love, that suffereth long, and is kind, that envieth not, that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and never faileth. (1. Cor. 13. 4-8.) That so equally poises and acts a man's spirit, that he carries seemly and suitably towards all men, takes pleasure in the best; in the saints and excellent ones of the earth hath all his delight; and is no worse affected, than to wish them better, even towards the very worst; neither envies the greatest, nor despises the meanest; neither is revengeful towards them that injure him, nor unthankful to them that oblige him; that is apt to learn of good men, and to teach the bad, by observing and giving the most imitable example; that is not undutiful to superiors, nor morose and unconvertible towards equals; that lives not to himself; is a common good to all within the sphere through which his activity can extend itself; that doth good with inclination, from the steady propension of his own will, and an implanted principle of goodness. It is evident, God hath formed such a man's spirit unto delight of the purest kind, and the best sort of pleasure; unto which they who are strangers, banish it from their own breasts, by the resistance and grief they give his blessed Spirit, thereby making it a stranger there; and by harbouring in their own bosoms their own tormentors, the pride, the wrath, the envy, the malice, the revengefulness, the bitterness of spirit, which as they render them uneasy and intolerable to all that are about them, so most of all to themselves; and which while they prey wherever they range abroad, yet still bite most keenly and tormentingly that heart itself wherein they are bred; as poisonous vipers gnawing the bowels which inclose them.

Thirdly. Towards themselves: which also may be considered distinctly; for though all the good qualifications we can mention or think of, do redound to a man's self, and turn to his own advantage, repose and delight, (which it is the design of all this discourse to shew,) yet there are some that more directly terminate on a man's self, wherein the rectitude we now speak of doth in great part consist. When we are obliged to love others, as ourselves, it supposes not only an allowable, but a

laudable self-love. Men shall praise thee when thou dost well to thyself. Before this right spirit be renewed in a man, he doth not only wound himself, by blows that are reflected on him, and hurt at the rebound, but by many a direct stroke; or he lets the wounds fester and corrupt, to the cure whereof he should with all diligence directly apply himself. How unpropitious and cruel to themselves are unholy persons! what wastes and desolations do they commit and make in their own souls, by breaking the order God and nature did at first set and establish there? dethroning their own reason and judgment, which ought to bear sway and govern within them. This banishes delight, and drives it far away from them. They see what is fittest for them to do and seek, and run a quite counter-course. What storms do they hereby raise in their own bosoms! What a torture is it, when a man's own light and knowledge bear a standing testimony against him, and hold him under a continual doom! How ill-disposed are men towards themselves, when they wholly neglect themselves in one kind, when they too much mind and seek themselves in another; when they too little understand themselves, so as not to put a true value on themselves, but do either disesteem themselves, as to their more noble part, in respect of that common excellency which belongs to them with all other men; or do over-magnify themselves, and are conceited and too well opinioned of themselves, in respect of any peculiar excellency wherein they imagine they outstrip others? how ill do they treat themselves in their self-indulgence, their gratifying their own sensual inclination, with the greatest danger and damage to their souls: when they care not at what expence they make provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof; what unkind usage do they find at their own hands, when they cherish and countenance desires which they cannot gratify and raise to themselves expectations of things not within their own power, which being disappointed turn into so many furies, and in that shape take a sharp revenge upon their own hearts? when they exercise no authority and dominion over themselves, preserve not the liberty due to what should both be itself free, and should command the rest in them; enslave themselves to vile and ignominious lusts and passions, put out their own eyes, and grind blindfold to the basest and most tyrannical lords, their own sordid humours and base, mean appetites; when though they serve more rigorous task-masters than the Israelites in Egypt did, and are more sorely beaten by them when their tale is not fulfilled for want of materials, yet groan not because of their hard bondage, nor affect liberty? This gracious communication from God, sets all things in a good degree right within: so that where there was nothing before, but hor-

rid and hellish darkness, disorder and confusion, there now shines a mild, pleasant, cheerful light, that infers regularity, purity and peace.

1. How great is the pleasure that arises from self-denial (wherein we do, duly and as we ought, deny ourselves) not only as it is an act of duty towards God (of which before) but as it is an act of justice and mercy towards our own souls! That is, wherein we make a just and true estimate of ourselves, do esteem basely of ourselves; wherein we are become base and vile: and wherein there is any thing of real value and excellency in our own beings, we value it only upon that account, and in that subordination wherein it is truly valuable! How pleasant, when we have learned to forsake and abandon ourselves, when we are not apt to magnify and applaud, to trust or love, to seek and serve ourselves unduly, and are only inclined to own, to cleave and stick to ourselves, wherein and so far as we ought! when that idol self is no longer maintained within us, at the dear expence of our peace, comfort, safety, and eternal hope; an idol that engrossed the whole substance of our souls, that exhausted and devoured the strength and vigour of our spirits, which it doth not maintain, and cannot repair; which consumes our time, which keeps all our powers and faculties in a continual exercise and hurry; to make a costly, a vain, an unlawful provision for it! How great is the ease and pleasure which we feel, in being delivered from that soul-wasting monster, that was fed and sustained at a dearer rate, and with more costly sacrifices and repasts than can be paralleled by either sacred or other history; that hath made more desolation in the souls of men, than ever was made in their towns and cities, where idols were served by only human sacrifices, or monstrous creatures satiated with only such refectations; or where the lives and safety of the most were to be bought out by the constant successive tribute of the blood of not a few! that hath devoured more, and preyed more cruelly upon human lives than Moloch, or the Minotaur! When this monstrous idol is destroyed and trodden down, what a jubilee doth it make, what songs of triumph and praise doth it furnish and supply to the poor soul, now delivered and redeemed from death and bondage! How much more easy and reasonable a service is it (when once the grace of God and their own experience give men to understand it) to study to please him than themselves? when they feel themselves dead to their former Lord and service, and only alive to God, through Jesus Christ! when sin no longer reigns in their mortal bodies, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof; when they no more yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but have yielded themselves unto God, as those that are alive from

the dead, &c. when being made free from sin, they are become servants unto righteousness! (Rom. 6. 11. 12. 18.) The law of the Spirit of life of Christ Jesus having made me free from the law of sin! (Rom. 8. 2.) What an ease is it to the spirit of a man, when he hath not himself to seek and serve and care for in any unlawful disallowed sense; when he finds not himself necessitated or urged by his own imperious fleshly inclinations so to do; when he perceives himself by a prevailing better principle counterpoised, and the weight and bias of his own spirit incline him quite another way; when he finds he hath nothing left him to do, but to serve God, to know his will and do it, and is disburdened of all unnecessary care for himself: that which is necessary being part of his duty, and is therefore done on purpose only for God: and that which is unnecessary and forbidden (which part only was burdensome) being supplied by (what hath the greatest ease and pleasure in it imaginable) trust and self-resignation to his pleasure and will whose we wholly are? what life is pleasant, if this be not! surely wherein it is attained to, it is most pleasant; and hither this gracious heart-rectifying communication is gradually tending.

2. How great is the pleasure that arises from self-government! when that governs in us which should govern, and that is subject and obeys which should obey; when a man's mind is completely furnished with directive practical principles, and his heart is so framed that it is capable of being prescribed to, is patient of restraints and direction, easily obeys the reign and follows the ducture of an enlightened well-instructed mind; when the order is maintained between the superior faculties and the inferior, and there are no contentious murmurs of ungovernable appetitions and passions against the law of the mind. It is true, that where this holy rectitude doth but in a degree take place, there will be many conflicts, but those conflicts are in order to victory: and how joyful and glorious is the triumph upon that victory! when the soul enters upon its *ἐπινύμιον*, its thanksgiving song, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" how happy a state is that (wherein at some times it is here attained) when there are now no tumults within! The wicked (which is the very import of their name) are as a troubled sea, that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Here is no governing principle in any power; no sceptre, no trident to check and allay the rage of those waters. But when his power goes forth in the soul, whose very word, winds and seas obey, how peaceful and pleasant a calm doth ensue! Now is a man restored to himself, and is again in his right mind. He is truly now said to enjoy himself, and upon the best terms; that is, he enjoys himself in and under God. He

is (in a due subordination) master of himself. He possesses his own soul; that one piece of holy rectitude, patience, enables him to do so. In your patience possess ye your souls. (Luk. 21. 19.) Patience is a part of fortitude, an ability to suffer. He that is in this respect impotent of himself, not able to suffer, is a perfect slave; not a slave only to the vicious wills and humours of other men, in whose power he apprehends it is to befriend or hurt him; but first and chiefly to his own; he is not master of his own judgment, reason, and conscience but he prostitutes all in the first place, to his own inordinate self-love, his avarice, his fear, and consequently to the pleasure of other men, (which upon no other terms and inducements is base and vile towards any man, were the matter in itself never so right, and the obedience as due to them as can be supposed) whereas if he could suffer, he retained his mastery over himself, and were, under God, within his own power. Upon this with other grounds, is joyfulness (Col. 1. 11.) a companion of patience; how much more is it so (if to this one part) to the whole frame of that holy rectitude whereby a man's spirit is composed to a due order within itself; when there is a universal sobriety (or soundness of mind, as the word that uses to express sobriety signifies) a continency and dominion of one's self; and the soul is no longer hurried to and fro, and even outed of itself, by undue desires, fears, angers, sorrows, &c. nor vexed by the absence of and its perverse inaptitude and indisposition to those which it well knows are due; when it finds itself at liberty from the exactions of an unsubdued flesh, and for the kindly and genuine operations and exercises of the divine life. When it is in good measure freed from the rackings and tortures that naturally accompany the habitual contrariety of an ungovernable heart to a convinced judgment and conscience; and is no longer held in pain, by such continual self-upbraidings; thou art, and affectest to be, what thou knowest thou shouldest not; and neither art, nor doest, nor canst desire or endure to be, or do, what thou very well knowest thou shouldest. In that case the soul is throughout disjointed, and continually grating upon itself. And the ease and pleasure which it finds by this happy change much resembles that which a man's body, being in such a case, feels, when every dislocated bone is brought back and well settled in its own proper place and order again. How resentingly doth the Psalmist acknowledge divine goodness in this! He restoreth my soul: and leadeth me in paths of of righteousness, for his names sake; (Ps. 23. 3.) as if he had said, "Now I can walk and act as a sound man, and the paths of righteousness are become pleasant and delectable to me, which before I declined, or wherein I halt and maimed

soul was unable to move a step." Now is heard the voice of joy and gladness when the bones which were disordered and broken rejoice. (Psal. 51. 8.)

3. How great is the joy and pleasure of self-activity! when the soul is not moved by foreign, improper motives, but finds itself to move freely from an implanted principle of life, that acts it forward in right and plain paths; when it doth, with its own full consent, what it is convinced it ought without being forcibly dragged or violently imposed upon; and is (not a weak, ineffectual, or only self-judging, but) a powerful governing vital law to itself.

4. How great pleasure arises from a constant, diligent self-inspection! when a man's spirit dwells within itself, resides at home, seeks not itself abroad; remains within its own bounds, is intent upon itself; watches over its own motions as its proper charge; is formed to a compliance with that precept, keep thy heart with all diligence. (Prov. 4. 23.) And upon that consideration, as seriously weighing that thence are the issues of life, all vital acts and operations whatsoever will savour of the root and principle from whence they proceed, and be as the heart is; good and pure if that be so; if otherwise corrupt and naught. To have a spirit habituated to the business of its own province and territory; its eyes, not with the fools in the ends of the earth, but inward upon itself. Hence his own vineyard is best kept; when the sluggard's (that neglects himself) is wholly over-run with thorns and briars, that cover the face thereof. How forlorn and comfortless a spectacle hath such a man of his own soul! The horror whereof is only avoided by (the more hopeless course of) turning off his eye; as conscious how ill entertainment is there to be met with. Therefore are such, strangers at home; and are afraid to converse with themselves; are better acquainted with the affairs of France and Spain, or at least of this and that and the other neighbour, than those of their own souls. And the more things at home are neglected the worse they grow. Poverty and desolation come upon them as an armed man; that (in this case) waste and make havock without resistance. And herein lies much of the heart-rectifying work and power of grace, in disposing and setting the heart so far right towards itself, as that it may first have the patience to look inward, and then the pleasure which will afterwards arise, most naturally, thence. The great aversion hereto of misgiving hearts is not otherwise overcome. But when it is; how do all things flourish under such a one's careful, self-reflecting eye! That soul is as a watered garden. Thither it can invite his presence who is altogether made up of delights, to come and eat his pleasant fruits. And now, retirement and

solitude become delectable : and a man delightfully associates with himself ; singles out himself to be his own companion, as finding another always stepping in ; so that he is never less alone than when alone. How unspeakable a happiness is this, when the great Mediator that undertook to reconcile God to the soul, shall thus have also reconciled it to itself ! When it shall be considered, how dreadful the case is, when a man's wickedness hath transformed him into a Magor-Missabib, compassed him with affrightments, made him a terror to himself ; it may then be understood how grateful a change it is when he is reformed into a son of peace, and made a delight to himself ; when he can recreate himself, and refresh his tired eye, overcharged with beholding the sad things that every where come in view from a world lost in wickedness, by looking into God's own plantation within himself ; and considering it under that notion only, he doth not look upon himself with an eye of pride ; as he doth not upon others with that of disdain. He beholds with a sort of self-complacency what God hath wrought and done there, not with self arrogance ; as knowing there is a self too, upon which he hath still reason to look with abhorrence and self-loathing. And though there be now incorporated with him a better self, yet that was not of himself. He well understands who made him differ, not only from others but from himself ; and put him into that capacity of saying that I am not I, I am not who or what I was before. And the more he is used to such self reflection, the more pleasant it becomes to him ; that is, if he confine not his eye too much, to the dark side of his own soul ; and do look to the more lightsome side with that remembrance (as before) that whatsoever he is, that is good and grateful to behold, he is by grace. He thus grows familiar with himself, and the sight mends as it is oftener beheld ; and while it is not observed always to do so. Yea, though things look many times sadly and sometimes dubiously ; that however, doth but occasion the accomplishment of a more diligent search, which engages to more earnest labour and strugglings with God and with himself, which labour is recompenced with a following fruit and pleasure : yea, and God is invoked not only for redress, but for further search. When such persons fear lest they have been too indulgent and partial towards themselves, and lest they have not made so strict a scrutiny as the case may possibly require ; then the request is, " Search and try me, O Lord, see if there be any way of wickedness in me." And here the sincerity which appears in that self-suspicion, and jealousy, over their own souls, is not without its grateful relishes, and a secret delight insinuates and mingles with the appeal which such a soul makes to him, whose eye is

a flame of fire, searches hearts and tries reins. Add it is some pleasure, however, to find that disposition in their own souls, that they are thoroughly willing to know themselves, and desire not to shun and decline the search of that fiery flaming eye. Thus then upon all accounts this divine communication is delectable, as it tends to rectify men's dispositions towards themselves, and to set them right in their inclinations and posture in reference to their own souls. We may add,

Fourthly. It contributes much to the matter of delight, as it sets men's spirits right in their dispositions towards this and the other world; the present and future state of things. How great a work is necessary to be done in this respect, wherein things are so monstrously out of course; and men become thereby not strangers only to true delight and pleasure, but even incapable of any such relishes till the matter be redressed! How vitiated and unexercised are men's senses as to these things, and unable to discern between good and evil! Their grosser sense is utterly incompetent, and a spiritual more refined sense is wanting; therefore do they judge and choose and love, and pursue only as that most incompetent and injudicious principle doth direct, that is appealed to in all cases: all their measures are taken from thence; and that only is called good, which to their sensual imagination, tinctured by the earthliness and carnality of their hearts, appears so; that evil, of which the same principle doth so pronounce; according hereto is the whole bent and inclination of their souls. And they are only influenced and governed by the powers of this sensible world; this present evil world, the fashion whereof (yea it and the lusts thereof together) are passing away. And the things of the world to come have no power with them; no motives from thence signify any thing. They are only steered in their whole course by the apprehension they have of advantages or disadvantages in reference to their present secular concerns. They love this world, and the things of this world; mind earthly things, and are not startled when they are so plainly told, that men of this character have not the love of the father in them, and are enemies to the cross of Christ, and that their end will be destruction. It is a death to them to think of dying; not from the fear of what may ensue (they have atheism enough to stifle such fear), but from the love of their earthly stations, and that vile earthly body in which they dwell.

But how delightful a thing is the change which this rectifying communication makes! how pleasant to live in this world as a pilgrim and stranger, seeking still the better, the heavenly country! to behold the various inticements which are here offered to view, at sometimes without inclination towards them;

the frightful aspect and appearance of things at other times without commotion ; is not this delectable ? to dwell apart from this world in the midst of it ; in the secret of the almighty (Psal. 91. 1). under his pavillion, (Psal. 27. 6.) as one of his hidden ones, with-drawn from the communion of this world to his own communion ; so severed and cut off from this world, as not to partake in the spirit of it, or be acted thereby : but by another, a greater and more mighty, as well as a purer and more holy Spirit ; greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (1. Joh. 4. 4.) And again, we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God. (1. Cor. 2. 12.) Which things the divine Spirit disposes the soul to, and unites it with, when it disinclines and disjoins it from this world and the things thereof ; and thereby discovers this soul to be quite of another community from that of this world, namely, of a heavenly community, unto which those better and more excellent things do lie in common, as their portion and inheritance. What matter of joy and glorying is it ; when one is crucified to this world ; and this world to him ; (Gal. 6. 14.) when the world appears to him a crucified thing, that is, an accursed, hateful, detestable thing, (which is one notion of crucified) such a thing as he can despise and hate ; which he is as little apt to be fond of, as one would be of a loathsome carcase hanging upon an ignominious cross : and when he can feel himself crucified towards it, that is dead (another notion of it) disinclined without sense, breath, pulse, motion, or appetite ; not so dead as to be without any kind of life, but without that base, low, sordid kind of life by which he lived to it, and in its converses and embraces. So much of delectation doth this infer, as even to endear the very cross itself (that hateful horrid thing) by which it is effected. But that carries a farther signification with it, to be fetched more expressly from other scriptures ; the cross is itself rendered amiable, and a thing to be gloried in, to be looked on with delight and pleasure, upon the account of the design and end of that tragedy which was acted thereon ; within which design (being executed and accomplished) this happy effect is included. We elsewhere find the apostle expressing his vehement desire to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and (in order thereto) the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death. (Phil. 3. 10.) But what did he lastly aim at in this ? the next words more fully speak out (what he first mentioned) the power of his resurrection to be the thing chiefly in his eye, and that he desired (what he adds) the fellowship of his sufferings &c. as a means unto that end, though it seemed a

sharp and painful means ; if by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead ; (ver. 11.) as if he should say, I care not what I undergo, not the sufferings even of a painful crucifixion itself, or that my worldly earthly self do suffer conformably to the sufferings of my crucified Lord ; I matter not by what so severe method the thing be brought about, if by any means it may be brought about, that I may know the power of his resurrection so feelingly, as to attain also the resurrection of the dead. And what was that ? No doubt to attain a state (which he confesses he had not yet perfectly attained, but was in pursuit of) suitable to his relation and union with a risen Jesus : union with him supposes a being risen with him ; if ye then be risen with Christ. (Col. 1. 3.) It is taken as a granted thing, that they that are his are risen with him. And what state and temper of spirit would be suitable to that supposition, the next words shew, "Seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection (or mind) on the things above, not on the things on earth." Then follows the method in which they were brought to the capacity of doing so ; for ye are dead. Their professed relation to Christ did suppose them risen, and did therefore first suppose them dead. Now if they would do suitably to what their profession imported, this was it they had to do ; to abstract their minds and hearts from the things of this earth, and place them upon the things of a higher region. And (as it is afterwards expressed in this same context which we were considering before) to have our conversation, or citizenship, in heaven, whence we look for the Saviour, (Phil. 3. 20.) This is, as our chief interests and privileges are above, to have our thoughts and the powers of our souls chiefly exercised upon that blessed and glorious state, which state is the prize (mentioned above) of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (ver. 14.) It being the scope and import of his call unto us, and the very design of his sufferings on the cross, to draw up a people from earth to heaven ; whence therefore they that under this call do still mind earthly things, are said to be enemies to the cross of Christ ; (ver. 18. 19.) the great incongruity whereof the apostle even resents with tears as he there testifies. And it was in this, that he was for his part so willing to comply with the design of the cross, that he made do difficulty to endure all the hardship and dolour of it, that he might attain this glorious fruit and gain which he reckoned should accrue to him from it ; even more of a raised heavenly mind, which signified it to be strongly bent that way already ; when no mortifications were reckoned too severe to be undergone in order thereto.

And here therefore this, soul-rectifying influence must be understood to have been proportionably strong.

Hence also it was that we find him groaning as one under a pressure or heavy weight to be clothed upon with the heavenly house : and to have mortality swallowed up of life. (2. Cor. 5. v. 4. 5.) because God had wrought him to this self same thing so bent and determined his spirit was towards the blessedness of the future state (which seems the most natural contexture of discourse here, though some others have understood it otherwise) as that, though he could bear patiently the delay, he could not but desire most earnestly to be there. And we see how the temper of the primitive Christians was, as to this, and the other world, in those days when the Spirit was plentifully poured out. They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods knowing in themselves, they had in heaven a far better and an enduring substance. Heaven signified much with them, and this world very little. They looked not to the things that were seen and temporal, but to the things unseen and eternal. (2. Cor. 4. 18.) as those former worthies did, whose minds and hearts, being set right by faith, which is the substance of the things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11.) They lived as pilgrims and strangers on earth, despised the pleasures, riches and honours of it ; endured all manner of hardships and tortures in it, not accepting deliverance, because they were taken up in the pursuit of the better country ; had respect to the recompence of reward ; and expected a part in the better resurrection. And is it not a delightful thing to the spirit of a man when he is sensibly disentangled, and at liberty from the cares, desires, griefs and fears that were wont to enwrap his heart ? when he finds his weights and clogs fallen off, that depressed him, the bonds and snares loosed which bound him down to this earth ; and feels himself ascending and moving upwards ; out of that darkness, stupidity and death that possessed his soul, into that upper region of light, purity and peace, unto which his spirit is still gradually more and more connaturalized day by day ? When heaven in respect of the pure holiness, the calm serenity the rest and blessedness of it, is now grown familiar to him, and his very element ?

We see then, that in all these mentioned respects this gracious communication, wherein it is rectifying, and tends to settle the soul in that frame which it ought to be in, and which is most proper and natural to it ; therein it is also most delightful, and carries highest matter of pleasure in it.

CHAP. III

I. The Characters of divine communication ; which are, *First*, Generative. *Secondly*, Nutritive. *Thirdly*, Sanative. *Fourthly*, Corroborative. II. A twofold mistake arising from not knowing or not considering this way of enjoying God. III. Doubts or objections to which this discourse is liable, considered and answered. IV. The subject resumed, and divine communication shewn to contain in it, *Thirdly*, A manifestation of God's love to the soul in particular. 1. What it is not. 2. Remarks on the manner of its communication. 3 The necessity of seeking and attaining it. 4. The delight which it affords. 5. To be understood with caution.

I. **WE** proceed to sum up the whole account of this divine communication by shewing what are its peculiar characters.

First, It is generative, and begets the soul to a new, a divine life; makes it of a sluggish, stupid, dead thing (as it was towards all heavenly and divine matters) living and sprightly, full of active life and vigour. Life we say is sweet, it is in itself a pleasant thing. This mean, bodily life itself is so; if we do but consider it, and allow ourselves to taste and enjoy the pleasure of it. As for instance, that this and that limb and member is not a dead lump, that we feel life freshly sprouting and springing in every part, it not this delightful? How much more the life of the soul! especially this so excellent and sublime kind of life! And it is the radical principle of all other consequent pleasure, that by which we are capable thereof: every thing is sapless and without savour to the dead. How pleasant operations and fruitions doth the divine life render a person capable of!

Secondly, It is nutritive. Souls are nourished by the same thing by which they are begotten, by the same divine influence. As a generative virtue is wont to be attributed to the sun, so it cherishes also its own productions. The beams of that Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4. 2.) make them that fear God grow up as calves in the stall, fill them with marrow and fatness, cause them to flourish as the cedars of Lebanon. And is not that delightful to be increased daily with the increases of God? fed with heavenly hidden manna, angels food; and thereby

(though we need not here speak distinctly of these) to receive at once both nourishment and growth?

Thirdly, It is sanative, and virtually contains all the fruits in it which are for the healing of the nations; when the soul grows distempered, it restores it, and is both sustaining and remedying to it. How great is the pleasure of health and soundness! of ease to broken bones! of relief to a sick and fainting heart! so it is often (for in the present state the cure is not perfect, and relapses are frequent) with the soul in which the life of God hath begun to settle and diffuse itself, till his influence repair and renew it; and when it doth so, how pleasant is it to find a heart made sound in his statutes! and to perceive a new working in it, the Spirit of love, power and a sound mind! (2 Tim. 1, 17.) So pleasant that it occasions a triumph (even when the outward man is perishing) if it be found that the inward is renewed day by day.

Fourthly, It is corroborative and strengthening; confirms resolutions, and establishes the heart. Hereby they who have felt this quickening, cherishing, healing virtue are also strengthened with might (namely, by the Spirit) in the inner man; so that they hold on their way, and being of clean hands, grow stronger and stronger. (Job 17. 9.) They go from strength to strength; (Psal. 84, 7.) and do not so much spend, as increase it by going forward. For the way itself of the Lord is strength to the upright. (Prov. 10. 29.) He provides that fresh recruits shall still spring up to them in their way. For all their supplies are of him, and are acknowledged to be so; in as much as by waiting upon the Lord they renew strength and mount up with wings as eagles, run without weariness, and walk without fainting. (Isa. 40. 31.) And this increasing strength cannot be without a proportionably increasing delight. How pleasantly doth the strong man rejoice to run his race! and enterprize even difficult and hazardous things! By this strength doth the regenerate man perform the ordinary duties belonging to his holy profession; by it he encounters difficulties, combats and conquers enemies, bears heavy and afflicting pressures, and none of these without some intermingled pleasure. For even that exercise of this strength which is likely to be least accompanied with pleasure, the suffering of sharp and smarting afflictions, hath many times much of this grateful mixture; and can only be expected to have it in this way of gracious communication, as the depending sufferers shall be strengthened with all might according to the glorious power of God, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness. (Col. 1. 11.)

God is therefore to be enjoyed and delighted in by this

delectable communication intervening, by which he now frames the soul according to his own image, and gives a heart after his own heart, that is, such as is suitable to him, and as he would have it be. And this way only is any one in a possibility to delight in God, by having a good frame of spirit communicated to him, and inwrought in him; I mean never without this, and in a great measure by it. Then is he in a happy state, when God hath by his own Spirit made him what by his word he requires him to be. Now is he composed to delights and blessedness, being by the same workmanship created in Christ Jesus both to good works and to the best of enjoyments. How happy is that soul in whom the true matter of delight is become an implanted thing! that is what it should be, and should be nothing (such is the constitution of gospel-rules and precepts) but what most truly makes for its own content, delight, and rest! whose own temper is now in some sort become to it both a law and a reward! Surely this is one great part of what an enlightened apprehensive soul would most earnestly desire and crave, or would be the genuine breathings of a sincerely gracious heart. "O that I were more like God! more perfectly framed according to his holy will!" And must therefore be, in great part, a thing apt to afford it delight and rest; as hath been already inculcated before.

II. But yet this natural consequence is little understood. And the common ignorance or inadvertency of this, hath made it necessary to insist the more largely (though but little hath been said in respect of what might) on this part of the delectable communication wherein God offers himself to his people's enjoyment. For from the not-knowing, or not considering of this way of enjoying him, this twofold mistake (the one of very dangerous, the other of uncomfortable importance and tendency) hath arisen.

First, That some have thought they have enjoyed God when they have not; have only had their imaginations somewhat gratified, by certain, either false or ineffectual notions of him. In which they have rested, and placed the sum of their religion and happiness. Never aiming, in the mean time, to have their spirits reformed according to that pure and holy image and exemplar which he hath represented in the gospel of his Son; the impression whereof, is Christ formed in us.

Secondly, That others have thought they have not enjoyed God when they have; supposing there was no enjoyment of him, but what consisted in the rapturous transporting apprehension and persuasion of his particular love to them; and slightly overlooking all that work he hath wrought in their

souls, as if it were nothing to be accounted of, not allowing themselves to reflect on any thing in themselves, but what was still amiss; and vainly seeking with much anxiety and complaint what they have, while they will not take notice that they have it, nor apply themselves to improve the already implanted principles that are, in themselves, apt to yield fruits of so pleasant relish. It was upon this account requisite to discover and labour somewhat to magnify the intrinsical delightfulness of religion itself; and to put the more of note and remark upon a well tempered spirit, even in point of delectableness and the matter of pleasure it hath in it, by how much it is with too many, on one account or another, a neglected thing.

III. There is only somewhat of doubt, or objection that may possibly lie in the minds of some against the scope and drift of this discourse; which it will be needful we endeavour to remove before we proceed to what is further contained in this gracious communication: As,

First, It may be said, "Doth not all this tend to bring us, instead of delighting in God, to delight in ourselves? to make us become our own center and rest? And how can the relishable sweetness of gracious principles and dispositions signify God's being to be enjoyed or delighted in? For what, are these things God?" To this I only say:

1. That such holy dispositions as they are not God so nor are they, in strictness of speech, ourselves. And how absurd were it, to call every thing ourselves that is in us! And how self-contradicting then were the very objection! for that would make delighting in God and in ourselves directly all one; and so the fault which it causlesly pretends to find, it would really commit. It is true, that improperly holy dispositions are said to make up another self in us, a new man, according as corrupt and sinful principles and dispositions do make also a self, the old man. But then it is also to be remembered that with no greater impropriety they are capable of bearing the name of God; as the image of any thing frequently doth the name of the thing which it represents, or the work of its author: and they are expressly called, Christ formed in us; and is not he God? They are called the Spirit; for when we are cautioned not to quench the Spirit, how can that be understood of the eternal uncreated Spirit himself? And the very thing produced (not merely the productive influence) in the work of regeneration is expressly called by that name (as it is no such strange thing for the effect to carry the name of its cause;) that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. (Joh. 3. 6.) There is Spirit begetting, and spirit begotten. And the spirit begotten, as it must be distinguished from its cause, the Spirit of God; so it

must from the subject wherein the effect is wrought, our own spirits; for they sure are not produced by the regenerating work. Yea, and when God is said to dwell in them that dwell in love, and that are humble and contrite; somewhat else is thereby signified to be indwelling there, than the mere being of God; for otherwise the privilege of such were no greater than of all other men and things. And what else is it, but somewhat communicated and imparted immediately from God to such? (else how by dwelling in love, do they dwell in God?) which because dwelling imports permanency, cannot be a transient influence only, but some settled abiding effect, a consistent frame and temper of spirit, maintained by his continually renewed influence; and therefore it would be very unreasonably said, that the representing this as delectable is a calling us off from God to delight in ourselves. For if this communication be not itself, in strict propriety, God, it were as great impropriety to say it were ourselves. Again,

2. It hath a great deal more affinity with God than with us. We are it is true, the subjects of it; but it is his immediate production and very likeness, a divine nature, no human thing. Therefore if here our delight were to terminate, it were more proper to call it delighting in God, than in ourselves; but

3. It is neither said nor meant, that here our delight is to terminate; but that hereby we are to delight in God, and so that our delight is to terminate in him.

4. When we are said to enjoy God, I inquire, is any thing communicated to us, or no? If not, we have no enjoyment; if any thing be, what is it? God's essence? that is impossible and horrid to think, as hath been said. And we need not repeat, that when we can tell what it is to enjoy a friend, without partaking his essence, whose communications are so incomparably more remote, mediate, resistible; it is less difficult to conceive, how God is to be enjoyed by his communications.

Secondly. It may be again said; "But if God be thus to be delighted in, how can delighting in him be upon such terms our duty? for is it our duty that he communicate himself in this way to us?" Let any that object thus, only study the meaning of those precepts; Keep yourselves in the love of God. Continue in his goodness. Be ye filled with the Spirit. Walk in the Spirit. And if they can think them to signify any thing they will not be to seek for an answer. But to this more hereafter; when from the delightful object, we come to treat of actual delighting in it.

Thirdly. But some may say, "It were indeed to be acknowledged, that such a temper of spirit once communicated, were indeed very delightful; but where is it to be found? And to

state the matter of delight so much in what is to be sought in ourselves, is to reduce the whole business of delighting in God, to an impossibility, or to nothing: so little appearing of this temper, and so much of the contrary, as gives much cause of doubt, whether there be any thing to be rejoiced in or no. And what then? Are we to suspend the exercise of this duty till we have gotten the difficult case resolved! (which may be all our time). Is there a real thorough work of God upon my soul or no? For how can I rejoice in that whereof I have yet a doubt, whether it be what it seems or no?" I answer,

1. It is plain, they that really have nothing of this communication from God, cannot take delight in it (otherwise than as hoped for). But,

2. Would we therefore have such to please themselves and be satisfied without it; and delight in their distance and estrangement from God; and while there is no intercourse between him and them? And shall this be called too delighting in God? Surely somewhat else than delight belongs to their states.

3. But for such as really have it, that which hath been designed to be evinced, is, that it is delectable in itself; and therefore they cannot be without any taste or relish of pleasure therein: while yet some doubt touching the sincerity and truth thereof doth yet remain; though such doubt (but more their imperfect reception of this communication, and neglect to look after further degrees of it) cannot but render their delight comparatively little. Nor hath it been designed to speak hitherto of what delight the regenerate in this way actually have, but what they may have; and what matter of delight God's heart-rectifying communication doth in the nature of it contain; that is, supposing it were imparted and received, so as actually to have formed the soul according to the gospel-revelation. And if it were so in a more eminent measure and degree, it were then in itself so delectable, as without the assurance of our future safe and happy state (though that, in that case, is not likely to be in a comfortable degree wanting), that is, not by it only, but by itself, without the present constant necessary concurrence thereof, to afford unspeakable pleasure to that soul in which it hath place. So that the getting of assurance is not the only thing to be done in order to a person's delighting in God; of which more hereafter is intended to be said in the directive part.

IV. But though that be not the only thing, yet it is a very great thing; and being superadded, makes a great addition to the matter of delight: therefore we further say, this divine communication is delectable as it includes in it,

Thirdly. The manifestation of God's love to the soul in particular : but it may be necessary here,

1. To inquire what it is not. We do not hereby intend an enthusiastic assurance ; or such a testification of the love of God to the soul, as excludes any reference to his external revelation and exercise of our own enlightened reason and judgment thereupon ; or wherein these are of no use, nor have subservience thereto. But as in the other parts of the divine communication, his external revelation hath the place of an instrument whereby he effects the work inwardly done upon the mind and heart, and of a rule or measure whereby we are to judge of it ; so we are to account it is, as to this part of it also ; that is, he inwardly testifies and manifests the same thing which is virtually contained in his gospel-revelation, considered in that reference and aspect which it hath on the present state of the soul. For that outward revelation must needs be understood to signify diversly to particular persons, as their state may be diverse ; as when it says the things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, God hath prepared for them that love him. (1. Cor. 2. 9.) To a person that doth indeed truly love God, it virtually says, " All these things are prepared for thee." To one that doth not love God, it can only be understood to say, " All these things may be thine, that is, if thou shalt love him ; if thou do not, thou hast no part in them." But in as much as a conditional promise when the condition is performed, is equivalent to an absolute ; these words do as truly import this sense to one that loves God, these things are thine, as if they were directed to it in particular : as truly, I say, supposing the person do truly love God, but not so clearly or with that evidence. For this truth, (supposing it a truth) I do sincerely love God, is not so evident as this, that such preparation is made for them that do : for this is expressly contained in the word of God ; the other is not so, but to be collected only by self-inspection, and observation of the bent and tenour of my spirit and way God-ward ; yet however, the evidence of truth admits of degrees, truth itself doth not. All things that are true, are equally true. And therefore, when it is said, so great things are prepared for them that love God ; it is as truly said, they are prepared for this man who loves God, as this or that particular lover of God is contained in the general notion of a lover of him. And then, as that public declaration says not to any, these things are prepared for you, whether you love God or no, or otherwise than as they come under that common notion of lovers of God ; this inward manifestation is also so accommodate to that, as that it says not another thing, but the same ; that is, nothing that contradicts (and indeed no more than is virtually contained

in) the other ; or it applies what is generally said of the lovers of God to this particular lover of him as such ; that is, enabling him to discern himself a lover of him, impresses this truth powerfully upon the heart, these great preparations belong to thee, as thou art such a one.

We speak not here of what God can do, but what he doth. Who can doubt but as God can, if he please, imprint on the mind the whole system of necessary truth, and on the heart the entire frame of holiness, without the help of an external revelation ; so he can imprint this particular persuasion also without any outward means ? Nor do we speak of what he more rarely doth, but of what he doth ordinarily ; or what his more usual course and way of proceeding is, in dealing with the spirits of men. The supreme power binds not its own hands. We may be sure, the inward testimony of the Spirit never is opposite to the outward testimony of his gospel (which is the Spirit's testimony also) ; and therefore it never says to an unholy man, an enemy to God, thou art in a reconciled and pardoned state. But we cannot be sure he never speaks or suggests things to the spirits of men but by the external testimony so as to make use of that as the means of informing them with what he hath to impart ; nay, we know he sometimes hath imparted things (as to prophets and the sacred pen-men) without any external means, and (no doubt) excited suitable affections in them, to the import of the things imparted and made known. Nor do I believe it can ever be proved, that he never doth immediately testify his own special love to holy souls without the intervention of some part of his external word, made use of as a present instrument to that purpose, or that he always doth it, in the way of methodical reasoning therefrom.

Nor do I think that the experience of christians can signify much to the deciding of the matter. For besides that this, or that, or a third person's experience cannot conclude any thing against a fourth's ; and the way of arguing were very infirm, what one or two or a thousand, or even the greater part of serious christians (even such as have attained to some satisfying evidence of their own good estate) have not found, that nowhere is to be found : besides that I say, it is likely that few can distinctly tell how it hath been with them in this matter ; that is, what way or method hath been taken with them in begetting a present persuasion at this or that time of God's peculiar love to them. His dealings with persons (even the same persons at divers times) may be so various ; his illapses and coming in upon them at some times may have been so sudden and surprising ; the motions of thoughts are so quick ; the observation or animadversion persons usually have of what is trans-

acted in their own spirits is so indistinct; and they may be so much taken up with the thing itself, as less to mind the way and order of doing it, that we may suppose little is to be gathered thence towards the settling of a stated rule in this case. Nor is the matter of such moment, that we need either be curious in inquiring or positive in determining about it; that principle being once supposed and firmly stuck to;—that he never says any thing in this matter by his Spirit to the hearts of men, repugnant to what the same Spirit hath said in his word; or, that he doth not say a new or a diverse thing from what he hath said there for their assurance: that is, that he never testifies to any person by his Spirit that he is accepted and beloved of him, who may at the same time be concluded by his publickly-extant constitutions in his word to be in a state of non-acceptance and disfavour; or concerning whom the same thing (namely, his acceptance) might not be concluded by his word, if it were duly applied to his case. Hereby the most momentous danger in this matter is avoided; for if that principle be forelaid, enough is done to preclude the vain boasts of such as may be apt to pretend highly to great manifestations of divine love, while they carry with them manifest proofs of an unsanctified heart, and are under the power of unmortified, reigning sin. That principle admitted, will convince that their boasted manifestations, do only manifest their own ignorance, pride and vanity; or proceed only from their heated imagination, or (the worse cause) satanical illusion, designed to lull them asleep in sin, and the more easily to lead them blind-fold to perdition. And this is the main concernment about which we need to be solicitous in this matter: which being provided for; as it is difficult, so it is not necessary to determine, whether the Spirit do always not only testify according to the external revelation, but by it also; and so only as to concur in the usual way of reasoning from it.

No doubt but the same truth may be assented to upon divers grounds; sometimes upon rational evidence; sometimes upon testimony: and some truths may be seen by immediate mental intuition (as being self evident) which also may be capable of demonstration. And though this truth of God's particular love to such a man, be none of those that have self-evidence: yet God's Spirit, as it may by assisting the discursive faculty, help us to discern the connexions of some things which otherwise we should not perceive; so it may by assisting the intuitive, make things evident to us that of themselves are not. Nor yet, also, that it actually doth so, can any I believe certainly tell; for admit that at some times some have very transporting apprehensions of the love of God towards themselves, suggested to their

hearts by the holy Spirit ; they having this habitual knowledge before that love to him (for instance) or faith in him, or the like, are descriptive characters of the persons whom he accepts and delightfully loves; how suddenly may the divine light irradiate, or shine upon those pre-conceived notions (which were begotten in them by the interveniency of the external revelation before) and excite those before implanted principles of faith, love, &c. so as to give them the lively sense of them now stirring and acting in their hearts? and thence also enable them unwaveringly to conclude (and with an unexpressible joy and pleasure) their own interest in his special love, in this way shedding it abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them? (Rom. 5. 5.) This may be so suddenly done that they may apprehend the testimony to be immediate when indeed it is not. Nor are they able to prove from Scripture the immediateness of it; for as to what it doth to them in particular, Scripture says nothing, they not being so much as mentioned there; what it doth or hath done to this or that person there mentioned signifies nothing to their case; if any thing were said that must have that import (which will be hard to evince) and that it is any where in Scripture signified to be its usual way, in common, towards them on whose hearts it impresses this persuasion, to do it immediately; is much less to be evinced. For what scripture saith so? and that famous text that speaks so directly to this matter: the Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, seemeth rather to imply the contrary: in as much as the Spirit of God is there expressly said to co-witness with our spirit (as the word there used signifies) by which it should seem to take the same course in testifying which our spirit or conscience doth, that is, of considering the general characters of his children laid down in his word, reflecting upon the same in ourselves, and thereupon concluding we are his children: which if it were supposed the only thing the Spirit of God ordinarily doth in this matter, we may

2. With much confidence make the following remarks.

(1) That it doth herein no small thing; for is it a small thing to be ascertained of God's fatherly love to us as his own children?

(2.) That it doth not a less thing than if it testified the same matter in a way altogether immediate. For wherein is it less? Is the matter less important? that cannot be said; for the thing we are assured of is the same howsoever we be certified thereof. Is it less evident? that can with as little pretence be said; for doth any one account a thing not evident in itself, and that needs to be proved to him some way or other, the less evident

for being proved to him in a discursive way? What pretence can any one have to say or think so? Is it that reasoning is more liable to error and mistake? but I hope the reasoning of God's Spirit is not so, when it enables us to apprehend the general truth we should reason from; to assume to it; to collect and conclude from it, guiding us by its own light: in each of these surely we have as much reason to rely upon the certainty and infallibility of the Spirit's reasonings as of its most assertory dictates; otherwise, we would (most unreasonably) think the authority of those conclusions laid down in the epistle to the Romans, and other parts of scripture, invalidated by the Holy Ghost's vouchsafing to reason them out to us, as we know it most nervously and strongly doth: or, is it less consolatory? that cannot be, for that depends on the two former, the importance and evidence of the thing declared: the former whereof is the same; the latter not less.

(3.) Yea and supposing that the Holy Ghost do manifestly concur with our spirits in the several steps of that discursive way, so that we can observe it to do so (and there is little doubt but it may do so as observably to us, by affording a more than ordinary light to assist and guide us in each part of that procedure, as if it did only suggest a sudden dictate to us and no more) we may upon that supposition add, that it doth hereby more advantageously propose the same thing to us, than if it only did it the other way. It doth it in no way more suitable to our natures, which is not nothing, and it doth it in a way less liable to after-suspicion and doubt; for it is not supposed to be always dictating the same thing. And when it ceases to do so, howsoever consolatory and satisfying the dictate was at that instant when it was given, the matter is liable to question afterwards, upon what grounds was such a thing said? and though it cannot be distrusted, that what the Holy Spirit testifieth is true; yet I may doubt whether it was indeed the Holy Spirit that testified it or no. Whereas if it proceeded with me upon grounds, *they* remain, and I have no reason to suspect that which was argued out to me, upon grounds which I still find in me, was either from an ill suggestor, or with an ill design; whereas there may be some plausible pretence of doubt in the matter, if there was only a transient dictate given in to me, without any reference or appeal to that rule by which God hath not only directed me to try myself, but also to try spirits whether they be of him or no. Nor is there any imaginable necessity of assigning quite another method to the Spirit's work as it is a Spirit of adoption, from that which it holds as it is a spirit of bondage; for, as to this latter, when it convinces a person and binds down the condemning sentence upon him; this surely is the

course it follows, to let a person see (for instance) they that live after the flesh shall die; but thou livest after the flesh, therefore thou shalt die; or, all that believe not, the wrath of God abides on them; but thou believest not (as it is we know the Spirit's work, to convince of not believing) therefore the wrath of God abides on thee. And what need is there of apprehending its method to be quite another in its comforting-work? Nor is it surely a matter of less difficulty to persuade some that they are unbelievers, and make them apprehend and feel the terror suitable to their states; than others, that they are believers, and make them apprehend the comfort which is proper to theirs. Yea, and is not its course the same in its whole sanctifying-work, to bring home the particular truth, whose impression it would leave on the soul, with application thereof to it in particular; which (as generally propounded in Scripture) men are so apt to wave and neglect; for what is every one's concern, is commonly thought no one's: and what need that its method here should be wholly diverse? But in whichsoever of these ways the Spirit of God doth manifest his love, it is not to be doubted, but that

3. There is such a thing in itself very necessary, and to be attained and sought after, as a communicable privilege and favour to holy souls, this is evident enough from multitudes of Scriptures. Those that have been occasionally mentioned in speaking (what was thought fit to be said) of the way of his doing it, need not to be repeated, unto which we may add, what we find is added to those above-recited words, eye hath not seen, &c. the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, namely, but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit. (1. Cor. 2. 9. 10.) And that Spirit not only gives those lovers of God above-mentioned, a clearer view of the things prepared for them, so as that the nature of them might be the more distinctly understood, (as is argued in the latter part of this, and in the following verse;) but also of their own propriety and interest in them; now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God. (ver. 12.) Whence therefore they are revealed by the Spirit, not as pleasing objects in themselves only, but as gifts, the evidences and issues of divine love; their own proper portion, by the bequest of that love to whom they are shewn. Nor is this the work of the Spirit only, as inditing the Scriptures, but it is such a work as helps to the spiritual discerning of these things; such as whereto the natural man is not competent, who yet is capable of reading the Scriptures as well as other men. And what will we make of those words of our saviour, when having told his

disciples, he would pray the Father, and he should give them another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, that he might abide with them for ever: even the Spirit of truth, &c. he adds, I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you; that is, (as is plain) by that Spirit. And then shortly after subjoins, he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. (Joh. 14. 16.-21.) Here is an express promise of this love manifestation, whereof we speak, by the Spirit, (the Comforter mentioned above;) not to those particular persons only, unto whom he was then directing his speech, or to those only of that time and age, but to them indefinitely that should love Christ, and keep his commandments. Which is again repeated in other words of the same import; after Judas's (not Iscariot) wondering expostulation touching that, peculiarly of this loving manifestation; Jesus answered and said unto him, if any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (ver. 23.) So that such a manifestation as is most aptly expressive of love, such converse and cohabitation as imports most of kindness and endearedness, they have encouragement to expect that do love Christ and keep his words; the same thing no doubt with that shedding abroad of the love of God in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them, mentioned before. And whereas we have so plain and repeated mention of the seal, the earnest, the first-fruits of the Spirit, what can these expressions be understood to import (and they do not signify nothing) other than confirmation of the love of God, or assuring and satisfying evidences and pledges thereof.

And that there should be such an inward manifestation of divine love superadded to the public and external declaration of it (which is only made indefinitely to persons so and so characterised) the exigency of the case did require; that is, where-in it was necessary his love should be distinctly understood and apprehended, it was so far necessary this course should be taken to make it be so. A mere external revelation was not sufficient to that end; our own unassisted reasonings therefrom were not sufficient. As other truths have not their due and proper impression, merely by our rational reception be they never so plain without that holy, sanctifying influence before insisted on; so this truth also of God's love to this person in particular, hath not its force and weight, its efficacy and fruit, answerable to the design of its discovery, unless it be applied and urged home on the soul by a communicated influence of the Spirit to this purpose: many times not so far as to overcome and silence tormenting

doubts, fears and anguish of spirit in reference hereto, and where that is done, not sufficient to work off deadness, drowziness, indisposition to the doing of God cheerful service, not sufficient to excite and stir up, love, gratitude, admiration and praise. How many (who have learned not to make light of the love of God, as the most do) who reckon in his favour is life, to whom it is not an indifferent thing whether they be accepted or no; who cannot be overly in their inquiry, nor trifle with matters of everlasting consequence who are not enough atheists and sceptics to permit all to a mad hazard, nor easy to be satisfied, walk mournfully from day to day with sunk, dejected spirits, full of anxiety, even unto agonies under the clear external discovery of God's love, to persons of that character, whereof they they really are? such as observe them judge their case plain, and every one thinks well of them, but themselves; yea their mouths are sometimes stopped by such as discourse the matter with them, but their hearts are not quieted: or, if they sometime are, in a degree yet the same doubts and fears return with the former importunity, the same work is still to be done, and it is but rolling the returning stone: and all human endeavours to apply and bring home the comforts proper and suitable to their case prove fruitless and ineffectual, nothing can be fastened upon them; they refuse to be comforted, while God himself doth not create (that which is the fruit of his own lips) peace, peace; while, as yet, they are not filled with joy and peace in believing, and made to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 15. 13.) It is plain there needs a more learned tongue than any human one, to speak a word in season to such weary ones. (Isa. 50. 4.) How many, again, have spirits overcome with deadness and sloth under a settled (perhaps not altogether mistaken but mere notional) apprehension of the same love! they have only that assurance which arises it may be not from a false but the single testimony of their own spirits; at least unaccompanied with other than the ordinary help of the Spirit, not very distinguishable from the workings of their own; have reasoned themselves (perhaps regularly, by observing the rule and the habitual bent of their own spirits) into an opinion of their own good estate, so that they are not vexed with doubts and fears as some others are. But they do not discover to others, nor can discern in themselves any degree of life and vigour of heavenliness and spirituality, of love to God or zeal for him, proportionable to their high expectations from him, or the great import of this thing to be beloved of God: there is no discernible growth or spiritual improvement to be found with them; how remote is their temper from that of the primitive christians! It is appa-

rent what is yet wanting, they are not edified (as those were) walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 9. 31.) Wherefore the matter is plain, there is such a thing, as an effectual over-powering communication of the Holy Ghost for the manifesting of the love of God, of great necessity and importance to christians; that may be had and ought to be diligently sought after.

4. And if it be afforded: how infinitely delectable is that manifestation! the thing itself carries its own reason and evidence with it.

(1.) If we consider the matter represented to us thereby; the love of a God! How transporting would the thought of it be to an enlightened, apprehensive mind! No one whose nature is not over-run with barbarism would entertain the discovery of the harmless, innocent love (though it were not profitable to us) even of a creature like ourselves otherwise than with complacency; yea, though it were a much inferior (even a brute) creature. Men are pleased to behold love expressing itself towards them in a child, in a poor neighbour, in an impotent servant; yea, in their horse or their dog. The greatest prince observes with delight the affection of the meanest peasants among his subjects: much more would they please themselves if they have occasion to take notice of any remarkable expression of his favourable respect to them! But how unspeakably more, if he vouchsafe to express it by gracious intimacies, and by condescending familiarities? How doth that person hug and bless himself? How doth his spirit triumph, and his imagination luxuriate in delightful thoughts and expectations, who is in his own heart assured he hath the favour of his prince? yea, with what complacency are inward friends wont to receive the mutual expressions of each other's love! And can it be thought the love of the great and blessed God should signify less? How great things are comprehended in this, the Lord of heaven and earth hath a kindness towards me and bears me good will? How grateful is the relish of this apprehension, both in respect of what it, in itself, imports, and what it is the root and cause of?

True ingenuity values love for itself. If such a one will think of me, if I shall have a place in his remembrance, if he will count me among his friends; this we are apt to be pleased with. And tokens are sent and interchanged among friends, not only to express love, but to preserve and cherish it, and keep up a mutual remembrance among them. And as there is a great pleasure conceived, in receiving such expressions or pledges of love from a friend, not so much for the value of the thing sent, as of what it signifies, and is the token of his love, his kind re-

membrance; so is there no less pleasure in giving and sending, than in receiving: because that hereby, as we gratify our own love, by giving it a kind of vent this way; so we foresee how we shall thereby excite theirs; which therefore, we put a value upon, even abstracting from any advantage we expect therefrom. And this hath a manifest reason in our very natures; because we reckon there is an honour put upon us, and somewhat is attributed to us, when we are well thought of, and a kindness is placed upon us; especially by such as have themselves any reputation for wisdom and judgment. How dignifying is the love of God! How honourable a thing to be his favourite! The apostle seems to put a mighty stress on this, when he utters those so emphatical words, wherefore we labour (so defectively we read it, we covet, or are ambitious of it as our honour, as that word signifies) that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him; (2 Cor. 5, 9) as though he had said, neither life or death, neither being in the body or out of it, signify any thing to me, or they are indifferent things in comparison of this honour, that he may accept me, that I may be pleasing to him and gracious in his eyes, that I may stand well in his thoughts, and he bear a kind and favourable regard to me.

Yea and this is a thing in itself delightful not only as it is honourable, but as it is strange and wonderful. Things that are in themselves grateful, are so much the more so, for their being somewhat surprising, and above all our expectation. I say, supposing they have an antecedent gratefulness in them, for otherwise we know there are also very unwelcome wonders, and which are so much the more dreadful, because they are surprising and unexpected, it is greatly heightened by their being out of the road quite of all our thoughts,—great things that we looked not for. And who would have looked for such a thing as this, that the Lord of glory should place his love on such a worm as I! Which is set off with the more advantage, because the same light that represents to a soul God's love, doth also discover to it, at the same time, its own deformity and unloveliness. And then how taking and overcoming is the thought “I impure wretch! loathsome miscreant! that lost apostate creature, that made one with a race and crew of rebels, was confederate with rebellious men against him, yea in a combination with those revolted creatures the devils, and now taken, I know not why, into a state of acceptance and favour with him! and his love is declared to be towards me! And why towards me? in myself so vile! and such love! the love of a holy glorious God, towards one in whose very nature was such a horror and hell of wickedness! Why towards me rather than others, not naturally more vile than I?” How can this be thought on with-

out crying out, O wonderful ! O the depths, breadths, lengths and heights of this love, that so infinitely passeth knowledge ! and here the greater the wonder, the greater is also the delight.

And now also are the effects of this love great in the eyes of the soul, according to the apprehended greatness of their cause. If we indeed were to form conceptions of these things ourselves, by our own light and conduct, our way were to follow the ascending order, and go up from the effects till we reach the cause. But he can, if he please, in the cause present to us the effects and magnify them in our eyes, by giving us to see unto how great and magnificent a cause they owe themselves. Now shall we know whence all hath proceeded that he hath done for us. Wherefore again must the transported soul admiringly cry out, " I now see whence it was that he gave his Son, because he so loved the world ! why he came and bled and died, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood ! What a lustre doth that love cast upon those sufferings and performances ! I see why he sent his gospel to me, why so convincing awakening words were often spoken in my ear, (I see much in what once I saw but little) why he so earnestly strove with me by his Spirit, why he gave not over till he had overcome my heart, why he humbled, melted, broke me, why he drew so strongly, bound me so fast to himself, in safe and happy bonds ; why he shone into my mind with that mild and efficacious light, transformed my whole soul, stamped it with his holy image, and marked me out for his own. These are now great things when I behold their glorious mighty cause ! " And now also in this same cause are all the great effects to be seen which are yet to be brought about by it.

They are seen as very great. His continued presence and conduct, which he affords to his own through this world : that constant fellowship which they expect him to keep with them ; the guidance and support they look for ; in his love these appear great things. And now doth heaven sound no more as an empty name, it looks not like a languid faint shadow ; somewhat can be apprehended of it that imports substance, when it is understood to be a state of rest and blessedness in the communion of the God of love ; and intended as the last product and expression of his love !

They are seen as most sure and certain. Such love, now manifested and apprehended, leaves no place for doubtful thoughts and suspicious misgivings. There is no fear that this love intends to impose upon us, or mock us with the representation of an imaginary heaven ; or that it will fail to do what can be expected from it to bring us to the real one.

How pleasant is it now to behold the great and sure products of this mighty love ! its admirable designs and projects, as they appear in the gospel-revelation (now illustrated and shone upon by divine light) to lie ready formed in the pregnant womb of this great productive cause. It cannot but be an unspeakable pleasure which such a discovery will carry with it ; when we thus behold the matter itself that is discovered and offered to our view, unto which it must be a very considerable additional pleasure that will arise:

(2.) From the nature and kind of this manifestation. As being

[1.] In the general made by himself. It is a too plain and sad truth that men have unhappily learned to diminish God to themselves, and make every thing of him seem little. But when he represents his love himself (as who but God can represent the love of God ? He only can tell the story of his own love) that evil is provided, against. He will manifest it so as it shall be understood ; and set it off to the best advantage. He will make it known how great a thing it is to be beloved of him. And when he gives that blessed salutation ; "Hail thou that art highly favoured ! O thou that art greatly beloved !" he will withal bespeak and procure a suitable entertainment of it. And hence particularly it will be,

[2.] Most incomparably bright and lightsome in respect of any representation we have had of the love of God any other way.

[3.] Most immediate, that is, (at least) so as not to be only made by some external testimony, given out many an age ago, out of which we are left to pick what we can, and to construe or misconstrue it as our own judgment serves us ; but so, as that if he use such an instrument, he animates it, puts a soul into it, leaves it not as a dead spiritless letter : and applies it himself, to the purpose he intends by it, and immediately himself reaches and touches the heart by it.

[4.] Most facile and easily sliding in upon us ; so that we are put to no more pains, than to behold the light which the sun casts about us and upon us. Whatever labour it was necessary for us to use before, in our searches and inquiries into the state of our case, there is no more now than in moving, being carried ; or in using our own weak hand when another that is sufficiently strong lifts and guides it for us.

[5.] Most efficacious and overcoming : that makes its own way, scatters clouds, drives away darkness, admits no disputes, makes doubts and misgiving thoughts vanish, pierces with a quick and sudden energy like lightning, and strikes through the mind into the heart ; there sheds abroad this love, diffuses the sweet refreshing savour of it ; actuates spiritual sense, makes

The soul taste how gracious the Lord is, and relish the sweetness of his love, puts all its powers into a suitable motion, and excites answerable affection, so as to make the soul capable of interchanging love with love. In all these respects, this manifestation of love cannot but be very delectable; and they who have not found it to be so, will yet apprehend that it must be so, if they have found and experienced the cravings of their own hearts directed this way, and can upon inquiry find this among the things they would fain have from God; O that I might be satisfied of his love! that I might know his good will towards me! for to such cravings must this delight at least be commensurate (as was formerly said.) But to them that are indifferent in this matter and unconcerned, to whom the love of God is a fancy or a trifle, no real, or an inconsiderable thing, all this will be as tasteless as the white of an egg.

5. Concerning which yet (before we pass from this head) it is needful to add some few things by way of caution.

(1.) That when we say this is of great necessity, we mean not that it is simply necessary; we think it not so necessary that a Christian cannot be without it; that is, as a Christian. But it is necessary to his well-and more-comfortable-being, and his more lively, fruitful walking and acting in his Christian course.

(2.) That therefore the way of God's dealing herein is with great latitude and variety; he having reserved to himself by the tenour of his covenant, a liberty to afford or suspend it, to give it in a greater or less degree as in absolute sovereignty, and infinite wisdom he pleases and sees fit to determine.

(3.) It may not therefore with so absolute and peremptory an expectation be sought after, as those things may that are necessary to the holding of souls in life; but with much resignation, submission, and deference of the matter to the divine good pleasure; such as shall neither import disesteem of it, nor impatience in the want of it.

(4.) That it ought to be less esteemed than the heart-rectifying-communication, that is impressive of God's image, and whereby we are made partakers of his holiness. This proceeds more entirely from pure love to God for himself, that from self-love; this tends more directly to the pleasing of us, than to the pleasing of God. This is necessary, as was said, but to our well or better being, that simply to our very being in Christ; this hath its greatest real value from its subserviency to the other. And what hath its value from its reference to another must be of less value than that.

(5.) That it is a great mistake to think God is not otherwise to be enjoyed than in this way of more express testification of his love : as if you could have no enjoyment of a friend, otherwise than by his often repeating to you ; I love you, I love you, indeed I love you.

(6.) That it is a much greater mistake, to place the sum of religion here; and that any should make it the whole of their business, to seek this, or to talk of it; or should think God doth nothing for them worth their acknowledgement, and solemn thanksgiving while he doth not this.

(7.) Most of all, that any should reckon it the first thing they have to do when they begin to mind religion, to believe God's particular love to them, and that he hath elected them, pardoned them, and will certainly save them. So too many, most dangerously impose upon themselves; and accordingly before any true humiliation, renovation of heart, or transaction and stipulation with the Redeemer, do set themselves thus to believe, and it may be thus seek help from God more strongly to believe it, when as the devil is too ready to help them to this faith. And when he hath done it, they cry to themselves peace, peace, and think all is well ; take their liberty, and humour themselves, live as they list, and say that for so long a time they have had assurance of their salvation. The father of lies must needs be the author, (or the fautor, or both) of this faith : for it is a lie which they believe ; that is, that they are pardoned and accepted of God is a downright lie, repugnant to his word and the tenour of his covenant. And for any thing else that may import their state to be at present safe, is to them no credible truth.

(8.) That for the most part, if christians, upon whom the renewing work of the Holy Ghost in that former communication hath in some degree taken place, do yet want that degree of this also, which is necessary to free them from very afflicting doubts and fears, and enable them to a cheerful and lively walking with God; it is to be reckoned their own fault; either that they put too much upon it (too little minding his public declarations in his word,) or do unduly seek it, or unseasonably expect it ; or that they put too little upon it, and expect or seek it not ; or that by their indulged carnality, earthliness, vanity of spirit, they render themselves incapable of it ; or by their careless and too licentious walking, or their either resisting or neglecting holy motions, they grieve that Spirit that would comfort them. For though the restraint, of such more pleasant communications may proceed, sometimes, from an unaccountable sovereignty, that owes no reason to us of its arbitrary way of

giving or with-holding favours ; yet withal, we are to know and consider, that there is such a thing as paternal and domestic justice proper to God's own family, and which as the Head and Father of it, he exerciseth therein ; whereby (though he do not exercise it alike at all times) it seems meet to his infinite wisdom to awaken and rouse the sloth, or rebuke the folly, or check the vanity, or chastise the wantonness of his offending children ; and that, even in this way, by retiring himself, becoming more reserved, withdrawing the more discernable tokens of his presence, and leaving them to the torture sometimes of their own conjectures, what worse thing may ensue. And herein he may design, not only reformation to the delinquents, but instruction to others, and even vindication of himself. For however these his dealings with men's spirits are in themselves (as they must needs be) secret, and such as come not under the immediate notice of other men ; yet somewhat consequential thereto, doth more openly appear, and becomes obvious to the common observation of serious christians with whom such persons converse ; that is, not only such as languish under the more remarkable terrors of their spirits, and are visibly, as it were, consuming in their own flame, (of which sort there occur very monitory and instructive examples, at some times;) but even such also as are deprived of his quickening influence, and have only somewhat remaining in them that is ready to die, that are pining away in their iniquities, and sunk deep into deadness and carnality (for his comforting communication is also quickening, and he doth not use to withhold it as it is quickening, and continue it as it is comforting, but if such have comfort, such as it is, they are their own comforters) do carry very discernable tokens of divine pleasure upon them ; and the evils and distempers under which their spirits lie wasting, are both their sin and punishment. Their own wickedness corrects them, and their backsliding reproves them. And that reproof being observable, doth at the same time warn others, yea and do that right to God, as to let it be seen he makes a difference, and refuses the intimacies with more negligent, loose, idle, wanton professors of his name, which he vouchsafes to have with some others, that make it more their business and study to carry acceptably towards him, and are more manifestly serious, humble, diligent, obedient observers of his will. If therefore we find not what we have found in this kind, however the matter may possibly be resolvable into the divine pleasure, (as it is more likely to be in the case of such desertions as are accompanied with terror, when no notorious apostacy or scandalous wickedness hath gone before,)

it is both safe and modest, yea and obvious to suspect such delinquencies as were before-mentioned, are designed to be animadverted upon; and that the love hath been injured, which is now not manifested as heretofore.

(9.) That yet such a degree of it, as is necessary to a comfortable serving of God in our stations being afforded; such superadded degrees, as whereby the soul is in frequent raptures and transports, are not to be thought withheld penally, in any peculiar or remarkable respect, or otherwise than it may be understood some way a penalty, not to be already perfectly blessed. For it is certain, that such rapturous sensations, and the want of them, are not the distinguishing characters of the more grown, strong, and excellent christians, and of them that are more infirm, and of a meaner and lower pitch and stature. Yea those extatical emotions, although they have much of a sensible delectation in them (as more hereafter may be said to that purpose;) and though they may, in part, proceed from the best and most excellent cause, do yet, if they be frequent (which would signify an aptitude thereto,) import somewhat of diminution in their subject, and imply what is some way a lessening of it, that is, they imply the persons that are more disposed this way, to be of a temper not so well fixed and composed, but more volatile and airy; which yet doth not intimate, that the chief cause and author of those motions is therefore mean and ignoble; nay, it argues nothing to the contrary, but that the Holy Spirit itself may be the supreme cause of them. For admitting it to be so, it doth not alter men's natural tempers and complexions; but so acts them, as that they retain (and express upon occasion) what was peculiar to their temper notwithstanding. The work and office of the Holy Ghost, in his special communications, is to alter and new-mould men in respect of their moral dispositions, not those which are strictly and purely natural; the subject is in this regard the same it was; and whatsoever is received, is received according to the disposition of that; and it gives a tincture to what supervenes and is implanted thereinto; whence the same degree of such communicated influence will not so discernibly move some tempers, as it doth others; as the same quantity of fire will not so soon put solid wood into a flame, as it will light straw. That some men therefore are less sensibly and passionately moved with the great things of God (and even with the discovery of his love) than some others, do not argue them to have less of the Spirit, but more of that temper which better comports with deeper judgment, and a calm and sober consideration of things. The unaptness of some men's affections unto strong and fervent

motion, doth indeed arise from a stupid inconsiderateness; of some others, from a more profound consideration, by which the deeper things sink, and the more they pierce even into the inmost center of the soul, the less they move the surface of it. And though I do not think the saying of that heathen applicable to this case, "It is a wise man's part to admire nothing;" for here is matter enough in this theme, the love of God, to justify the highest wonderment possible; and not to admire in such a case, is most stupidly irrational; yet I conceive the admiration (as well as other affections) of more considering persons, is more inward, calm, sedate, and dispassionate, and is not the less for being so, but is the more solid and rational; and the pleasure that attends it, is the more deep and lasting. And the fervour that ensues upon the apprehended love of God, prompting them to such service as is suitable to a state of devotedness to his interest, is more intense and durable; of the others, more flashy and inconstant. As, though flax set on fire, will flame more than iron; yet withall it will smoke more, and will not glow so much, nor keep heat so long.

(10.) But to shut up this discourse. They that have more transporting apprehensions of the love of God, should take heed of despising them who have them not in just the same kind, or do not express them in the same seraphic strains. They that have them not, should take heed of censuring those that with humble modesty, upon just occasion, discover and own what they do experience in this kind: much less should they conclude, that because they find them not, there is therefore no such to be found, which cynical humour is too habitual to such tempers. If they do fancy such to be a weaker sort of persons they may be sincere for all that. And it ought to be considered of whom it was said, that he would not quench the smoking flax. The grace and Spirit of Christ ought to be revered in the various appearances thereof: whether we be sober or beside ourselves—the love of Christ constraineth us. (2 Cor. 5, 13, 14.) So diversely may the apprehensions of that love work in the same person, much more in divers. Christians should be shy of making themselves standards to one another; which they that do, discover more pride and self-conceit, than acquaintance with God, and more admiration of themselves than of his love.

Thus far we have given some account of the object to be delighted in; wherein, if any think strange that we have spoken so much of the delectable divine communication as belonging to the object (which how it doth hath been sufficiently shewn;) let them call it, if they please, a preparing or disposing of the subject (which it also, making its own way into the soul, as

hath been said, effectually doth;) and if the necessity of it be acknowledged upon that account, it equally answers the main purpose aimed at in all this; and had it been only so considered, would but have inferred some alteration in the frame and method of this discourse, but not at all of the substance and design of it.

CHAP. IV.

We proceed to what was next proposed in this First Part. That is, **SECONDLY**, To consider the delight itself to be taken in this delectable object, viewed generally as essential to love and specially as placed upon God. *First*, What this delight is, that we are called unto. 1. Human delight distinguished into that which is natural and that which is holy. 2. Holy delight more particularly explained, as either open and explicit, or latent and unobserved. 3. These two more particularly considered apart. (1.) That which is latent. [1.] Its nature explained. [2.] An objection answered. (2.) That which is open and explicit. [1.] Its nature. [2.] Its modification. *Secondly*, How it is we are called to this delight- 1. As a privilege. 2. As a duty.

WE are next to say somewhat briefly of the delight itself to be taken therein. Nor shall we be herein so curious as to distinguish (which some do) delight and joy. The distinction wont to be assigned, cannot it is plain, hold here, so as to make the former of these signify a brutish affection only; and the latter proper to rational nature. Nor is there any such propriety belonging to the words, but they may be rendered (as indeed they are in Scripture) promiscuously, either in reference to the matter of intellectual or sensitive complacency, and either of a reasonable being, or an unreasonable. We take these therefore to signify substantially the same thing, and here delight to be intirely all one with joy: that is, there is not any the highest degree of joy which may not be fitly enough comprehended under the name of delight, when it is placed (as here it is required to be) upon the blessed God; whereof, that we may speak the more fully, it will be necessary to preface somewhat concerning its general nature; and more principally as it

is found in man, within which compass our principal business lies.

Delight, in the general, is most intimately essential to love ; which imports a well-pleasedness arising from the apprehended goodness or congruity of the thing loved ; and it seems to be merely by accident, that there is any thing else in love besides that complacency of delight : that is, what there is else belonging to the nature of love arises from the mixture and variety which is to be found in the present state of things ; which if it were at present universally and perfectly good, and as most rationally it might be wished ; love could have no exercise but in delight. Not being so ; desire that it may be so, in reference to ourselves and others whom we love, comes duly to have place ; together with other acts or exercises of love, which it belongs not so much to our present purpose to mention.

For instance, whatsoever we can love, is either things or persons ; whatsoever things we love, is for the sake of persons either ourselves or others ; whom also we love either supremely or subordinately. And whomsoever we love supremely, as it is certainly either God or ourselves, we love whatsoever else, person or thing, either for God's sake or our own. Be it now the one or other, or wheresoever we can place our love, we find things in reference to any object of it, not yet as we would have them, and as they shall be in that settled state which shall be permanent and last always ; whereunto this is but preparatory only, and introductive. The creation is indigent, every creature wants somewhat even whereof it is capable ; and our own wants in many respects, we cannot but feel. Nothing is perfect in its own kind, in respect of all possible accessories thereto ; even the state of glorified spirits above, is not yet every way perfect ; much is wanting to their full and complete felicity : the body and community whereto they belong, the general assembly, is not yet entire and full ; their common Ruler and Lord is not acknowledged and had in honour as he shall be. In the meanwhile, their consummate blessedness (which much depends on these things,) and the solemn jubilee to be held at the close and finishing of all God's work, is deferred. Yea, and if we go higher : the blessed God himself, the Author and Original of all things, although nothing be wanting to the real perfection of his Being and blessedness hath yet much of his right with-held from him by his lapsed and apostate creatures ; so that, which way soever we turn ourselves, there remains to us much matter of rational (yea and holy) desire ; and most just cause that our love (place we it as well and duly as we can) have its exercise that way ; we have before us many desiderata, according as things yet are.

Desire is therefore love suited to an imperfect state of things wherein it is yet imperfect. And because it is suited to such a state of things, it cannot therefore but be imperfect love, or love *tending* to perfection. Pure and simple delight is love suited to a state of things every way perfect, and whereto there is nothing lacking. Wherefore delight appears to be the perfection of love, or desire satisfied. But now, because this present state is mixed, and not simply evil, or such wherein we find no present good; therefore the love which is suited thereto, ought consequently to be mixed of these two especially (unto which two the present discourse is both extended and confined, because these two affections only are mentioned in the text) desire and delight. So far as things are otherwise than we practically apprehend, it is fit they should be with ourselves or others whom we love; our love is exercised in desire, wherein they are as we would have them, in delight; for then our desire is so far satisfied; and desire satisfied ceases, though love do not cease. Or, it ceases not by vanishing into nothing, but by being satisfied; that is, by being perfected in the delight which now takes place.

The one of these is therefore truly said to be love exercised upon a good which we behold at a distance, and are reaching at. The other, love solacing itself in a present good. They are as the wings and arms of love; *those* for pursuits, *these* for embraces. Or the former is love in *motion*; the latter is love in *rest*. And as in bodily motion and rest, *that* is in order to *this*, and is perfected in it. Things move, not that they may move but that they may rest (whence perpetual progressive motion is not to be found); so it is also in the motion and rest of the mind or spirit. It moves towards an object with a design and expectation to rest in it, and (according to the course and order which God hath stated and set) can never move forward endlessly towards a good in which it shall not at length rest; though yet desire and delight have a continual vicissitude, and do (as it were circularly) beget one another. And thus hath God himself been pleased to express his own delight, or the joy which he takes in his people, even by the name of rest, namely, that of love. He will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love. (Zeph. 3. 17. 18.) Wherefore delight hath not been unfitly defined—the repose or rest of the desiring faculty of the thing desired.

It is true, that love, as such, hath ever somewhat of delectation in it; for we entertain the first view of any thing we apprehend as good, with some pleasedness therein, (so far as it is loved,) it is grateful to us, and we are gratified some way by it; yea, there is somewhat of this before any emotion by desire to—

wards it; for we would not desire it, if it were not pleasing to us; which desire is then continued (as far as love is in exercise) till it be attained for ourselves or others, according as the object of our love, (that is the object for whom as we may call it) is. Nor is that a difficulty, how yet there may be somewhat of delectation, and even of rest in this love of desire. For the soul doth in that case, while it is thus desiring, rest from the indetermination of desire: that is, if it have placed love upon any one (itself or another) upon whom therefore it doth with a sort of pleasedness stay and rest; it doth first in the general desire it may be well with such a one; and then, if anything occur to its notice, that it apprehends would be an advantage to the person loved; though it cease not desiring it, yet it ceases from those its former hoverings of desire being pitched upon this one thing, as satisfied that this would be a good to him it loves. The appetite stays and insists upon this thing; as the psalmist, one thing have I desired. (Psal. 27. 4.) It hath here as it were a sort of hypothetical rest; as if he had said, how well pleased should I be if this were compassed and brought about! or it hath an anticipated and pre-apprehended rest, a rest in hope (by which the object is some way made present) as it is said, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." For there is no rational desire which is not accompanied with hope. Despair stifles desire. That which appears simply impossible, passes for nothing; and goodness goes not beyond the compass of being. But whatsoever appears to us a good (whether for ourselves or another) that is suitable and possible; that, if love stir in reference to it, becomes the object of complacential desire; that is, it pleases us first upon sight, or upon such an apprehension of it; the appetite pitches, centers and rests upon it; and then we pursue it with desire. But then our delectation therein grows, as our hope doth it will be attained; and still more (if we find it to answer its first appearance) as by degrees, it is attained actually; till being fully attained our desire (as to that thing) ends in all the delight and satisfaction which it can afford us. So that the delight and rest which follow desire in the actual fruition of a full and satisfying-good, is much more intense and pure, than that which either goes before, or doth accompany it; and is indeed the same thing with fruition or enjoyment itself; only that this term hath been, by some, more appropriated to signify the delectation which is taken in the last end, unto which yet it hath no more native designation than divers other words. We have then thus far some general notion of delight, and also of desire which is taken in here only on the by, and as tending somewhat to illustrate the other, whereof yet what we now say may be of some use hereafter.

We are next to speak of this delight in special, which is here

to be placed upon God. About which we are to consider, both—What it is we are called to—and how we are to reckon ourselves called to it. And

First. That we may shew, what we are called to. Having in this general account spoken only of human delight, or of delight as it is to be found among men; it will now be necessary.

To distinguish this into merely natural and holy. And when we thus distinguish, it is to be understood, that by natural we mean what is within the sphere of nature in its present corrupted state; otherwise, what was natural to man did (taken in a larger sense) include holiness in it; and so the addition of holiness doth but make up purely natural delight, as it was at first—But as the case now is, the distinction is necessary. And the latter of these only will be the subject of our following discourse; as being only suitable to the blessed object whereon it must terminate, and only capable of being applied thereto. When therefore our delight is to be placed and set on God, this must be understood as presupposed, that it be purified, drained from the pollution and impure tinctures which it hath derived from our vitiated natures, and further contracted by our converse with impure, mean, and vile things. For only that delight is to be placed on God which can be so placed; and delighting in God being duly designed, that is, by consequence designed which is necessary thereto; and thereto is necessary, not merely the direction of one such particular act towards God, but a holy principle, as prerequisite to the right doing even of that also. Unholy love declines God; and indeed it is unholy in as much as it doth so. Whence therefore it is as impossible it should be set on God, remaining unholy, as that it should be another thing from itself, and yet be still wholly what it was. Although it cannot be another thing in its general nature (as it is not necessary it should) it must be a much altered thing, by the accession of holiness thereto. And this coming upon the whole soul, even upon all its faculties and powers, doth therein spread itself unto its delight also. Delight in God is not the work of an unholy heart. And (as may be collected from what hath been said) holiness consisting in a right disposition of heart towards God, a divine nature, participated from him, conformed to him, which works and tends towards him, and in itself so delightful a thing; it may thence be seen what holy delight is, or wherein the holiness of it stands.

It must to this purpose be considered, that this holy delight is twofold, according to a twofold consideration of the delectable object into which, what was formerly said about it may be,

reduced. All delight in God supposes, has hath been said, some communication from him.

That communication is either of light, whereby his nature and attributes are in some measure known; or of operating influence, whereby his image is impressed and the soul is framed according to his will. And so it is partly mental or notional (I mean not merely notional, but that hath with it also an aptitude to beget a correspondent-impression on the soul, and not engage it in some speculations concerning him only) and partly real, that actually begets such an impression itself. It is partly such as may be understood, and partly such as may be felt; the manifestation of his love partly belongs to the one of these, and partly to the other.

2. Answerably hereto, the delight that is taken in him, is here more particularly considered either as open and explicit, and wherein a person reflects upon and takes notice of his own act and whereupon it is exercised—or, more latent, implicit and unobserved, when his delight lies folded up in other acts and dispositions which have another more principal design, though that also is involved in them. The *former* way, the soul delights in God more *directly*, applying itself thereto on purpose, and bending the mind and heart intentionally thereto; its present views of him having that very design and aim. The *latter* way, it delights in him rather *collaterally* when its present action (as well as the disposition leading to it) hath another more direct scope and aim. And the delight only adheres to the act, as being in itself delightful; as for instance, the acts of repentance, trust, self-denial, &c. which have another end than delight, though that insinuates into them. The former of these may be called *contemplative* delight: the soul solacing itself in a pleasant meditation of God, whereby its delight in him is excited and stirred up. The latter (understanding sense spiritually, as it belongs to the new creature, and is taken Phil. 1. 9. Heb. 5. 14.) may be called *sensitive delight*; whereby the soul, as it were, tastes how gracious the Lord is. Which though it doth by the other also, yet the distinction holds in respect of the way wherein the delight is begotten and begun, if not in respect of the thing itself, begotten, or wherein the matter ends. In the former way, the soul more expressly reflects upon its own present exercise, which it directly intends. In the latter, it may not reflect expressly either upon its actual delight which it hath, nor actually consider God as the object that yields it that pleasure; as I may be delighted by the pleasant taste of this or that food, without considering what the thing is I am feeding on; nor have distinct reflection on the pleasure I take therein, having another and more principal design in eating, the recruiting of my strength, and that delight being only accessory and

accruing on the bye. The former is less durable, and sooner apt to vanish upon the cessation of the present act, like the delight of the eye. The latter is more permanent, as that of the taste, and habitual ; such as is the pleasure of any thing whereof one hath a continued possession, as of a confirmed state and habit of health, or of the riches, dignities, pleasant accommodations which belong to any one's settled condition ; of which he hath that continual enjoyment that insensibly forms his spirit, raises and keeps it up to a pitch suitable to his condition, though he have not every day or hour distinct formed thoughts of them, nor is often in that contemplative transport with Nebuchadnezzar.—Is not this great Babylon which I have built? &c.

Both these are holy delight, or delight in God. In both whereof may be seen, added to the general nature of delight, a holy nature as the principle, inferring a powerful steady determination of the heart towards God, as the object and end which it ultimately tends to, and terminates upon. Though in the former way of delighting in God, the soul tends towards him more directly : in the latter (according as the acts may be to which the delight adheres,) more obliquely, and through several things that may be intermediate unto that final and ultimate object.

3. And both these may fitly be understood to be within the meaning of this text ; which therefore we shall now consider apart and severally ; though both of them very briefly.

(1.) And we begin with the latter of them. For though the former hath, in some respect, an excellency in it above the latter ; yet as the progress of nature in other creatures is by way of ascent, from what is more imperfect to what is perfecter and more excellent ; so is it with the communicated divine nature in the new creature, which puts itself forth, first in more imperfect operations, the buddings, as it were, of that tree of life which hath its more florid blossoms, and at length its ripe and fragrant fruit afterwards ; or (to come nearer the case,) inasmuch as the latter sort of delight (according to the order wherein we before mentioned them) hath more in it of the exercise of spiritual sense ; the other more of spiritual reason ; since human creatures, that have natures capable of both sorts of functions, do first exercise sense, and by a slower and more gradual process, come on to acts of ratiocination afterwards. So it is here, the soul in which the divine life hath taken place, doth first exercise itself in spiritual sensations : so that though, in the matter of delight, it is not destitute of the grateful relishes of things truly and spiritually delectable ; yet the more formed and designed acts of holy delectation, in the highest

object thereof, distinctly apprehended and pitched upon for that purpose, do follow in their season; and these are preparations, and the essays of the new creature, gradually and more indistinctly putting forth itself in order thereto; the embryos of the other.

[1.] If therefore it be inquired, wherein the delight of this more imperfect sort doth consist? I answer, in the soul's sensation and relish of sweetness in the holy, quickening communications of God unto it, by which he first forms it for himself, and in the operations which it is hereby enabled to put forth towards him, while it is in the infancy or childhood of its Christian state. Nor, while we say the delight of this kind doth more properly belong to the younger and more immature state of Christianity, do we thereby intend wholly to appropriate or confine it to that state. For as when a child is grown up to the capacity of exercising reason, it doth not then give over to use sense, but continues the exercise of it also in its adult state, even as long as the person lives; only, in its infancy and childhood its life is more entirely a life of sense, though there are early buddings of reason, that soon come to be intermingled therein; notwithstanding which, the principle that rules and is more in exercise, more fitly gives the denomination. So it is in this case also; that is, though there are sensations of delight and pleasure in religion (yea, and those more quick, confirmed and strong in more grown christians,) yet these sensations are more single and unaccompanied (though not altogether) with the exercise of spiritual reason and judgment, and do less come in that way with christians in their minority, than with others or themselves afterwards. Therefore that which we are to understand ourselves called to under the name of delighting in God (thus taken) is,—the keeping of our souls open to divine influences and communications:—thirsting after them, praying and waiting for them:—endeavouring to improve them and co-operate with them, and to stir up ourselves unto such exercises of religion as they lead to, and are most suitable to our present state:—together with an allowing, yea, and applying ourselves to stay and taste in our progress and course, the sweetness and delightfulness of those communications and operations whereof we have any present experience. For instance; when we find God at work with us, and graciously dealing with our spirits, to humble them, break and melt them under a sense of sin, incline and turn them towards himself, draw them to a closure with his Son the Redeemer, to a resignation and surrender of ourselves to him, upon the terms of his covenant and law of grace: yea, and when afterwards we find him framing our hearts to a course of holy walking and conversation; to the

denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts; to a sober, righteous and godly life in this present world; to the exercises of piety, sobriety, righteousness, charity, mercy, &c. And now this or the like heavenly dictate occurs to us, "Delight thyself in the Lord;" what doth it import? what must we understand it to say or signify to us? Though this that hath been mentioned, and which we are now saying is not all that it signifies (as will be shown hereafter;) yet thus much we must understand it doth signify and say to us: "Thy only true delights are to be found if a course of religion, they are not to be expected from this world, or thy former sinful course; but in exercising thyself unto godliness, in receiving and complying with the divine discoveries, recommended to thee in the gospel, and (through them) the influences of life and grace, which readily flow in upon any soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness; and by which thou mayest be framed in all things after the good and holy and acceptable will of God. Herein thou shalt find such pleasures and delights entertaining thy soul, as that thou wilt have no cause, to envy wicked men their sensual delights which they find in their sinful way; if thou wilt but observe what thou findest, and exercise thy sense, to discern between good and evil; and set thyself to consider whether there be not as well more satisfying, as purer relishes of pleasure, in mortifying the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, in denying thyself, in dying to this world, in living to God, in minding the things of another world, in giving up thyself to the several exercises of a holy life, watching, praying, meditating, &c. in trusting in the Lord with all thy heart, and in doing all the good thou canst in thy place and station, letting so thy light shine before men, that they seeing thy good works, may glorify thy Father which is in heaven; in contentment with what thou enjoyest, and patience under what thou sufferest in this world, in doing justice, loving righteousness, and walking humbly with thy God, than ever the vanishing pleasures of sin did or can afford." Thus into these two things may all be summed up, which delighting in God imports according to this notion of it.—The applying ourselves to those things by the help of God's own communicated influence (which in that case will not be withheld) wherein the matter of delight lies, and—The reflecting upon the things themselves that are so delightful, and setting ourselves to discern, and tasting actually the delectableness of them. And surely, if such words, "Delight thyself in the Lord," do say to us all this, they do not say nothing; nor say any thing impertinent, either to their own native import, or our state and condition in this world.

[2.] But here it may be objected; if we so interpret de-

lighting in God, we shall by this means bring the whole of religion, and all sorts of actions that are governed and directed by it within the compass of this one thing; and make delighting in God, swallow up all that belongs to a christian, and be the same thing with repentance, faith, self-denial, humility, meekness, patience, &c. which would sure seem too much to be comprehended under the name of one particular holy action or affection; especially that they should be called delighting in God, when in the exercise of divers of these, God may possibly not be in that instant actually so much as thought on. To this it may be sufficiently answered :

First, That these things cannot be hence said with any pretence to be made the same thing with delighting in God; but only that there is a delight adhering to all these; no more than it can be said, when, at some splendid treat or entertainment, there is a great variety of delicious meats and wine, which do therefore all agree in this,—that they are delectable; that all these dishes and liquors are therefore one and the same. Or, if the master of the feast call upon his guests to delight themselves with him their friend, (as here the particle in the text, which we read *delight thyself in the Lord*, may be read *delight thyself with him*,) and he explains himself, that he means by tasting this and that and another sort of his provisions, and eating and drinking cheerfully thereof, surely his words could not with more reason, than civility be capable of that snarling reply; that, therefore, it seems, he thought the things themselves or their tastes and relishes were all one. For though they all afford delight, yet each of a different kind.

Secondly, But are not all these truly delectable? Is there not a real delight to be had in them? Let any man, that hath tried, consult his experience; yea, let any one that hath not besotted his soul, and infatuated his understanding, but seriously consider the very ideas of these things, and revolve the notions of them in his mind, and then soberly judge, whether they be not delightful? And if so, when there is an actual sense of pleasure and sweetness in the communicated power, and in the practise of them, why is not this delighting in God? Admit that he is not actually thought on in some of these exercises; as when I freely forgive a wrong, or relieve a distressed person, or right a wronged one: if yet I do these things, from the radical principle of the love of God deeply settled in my soul, and with a sensible delight accompanying my act, and the disposition I find in mine heart thereunto: here is not, it is true, the very act of delighting in God, formally terminated upon him as the Object. But it is he that gives me this delight, and

is the material Object (as well as Author) of it. The communication is from him, whereby I am delighted, and enabled to do the things that are further delightful. As if I converse with an excellent person, my intimate friend, who is at this time incognito, and by a disguise conceals himself from me, or I through my forgetfulness or inadvertency have no present thoughts of this person; but I hear his pleasant discourse, and am much taken with it, and the person on the account of it: it is my friend that I delighted in all this while though I knew it not.

Thirdly, And what fault can I find in the matter that divine delight thus runs and spreads itself through the whole business of religion, and all the affairs whereon it hath any influence? Is this the worse or the better? Have I any cause to quarrel at this? Sure I have not. But if I have not such actual thoughts of God, as may give me the advantage of terminating my delight more directly on him, that may be, very much, my own fault.

Fourthly, And what is that an absurdity that under the name of delighting in God, the several acts and exercises of religion besides should be comprehended? How often in scripture are other (no-more-eminent) parts of religion put for the whole. The knowledge of God, calling upon God, the fear of God, &c. How commonly are these things acknowledged to be paraphrases of religion? And shall I not add the *love* of God? that most authentic and owned summary of all practical religion, and which ought to influence all our actions. And then how far are we from our mark? What is the difference between loving God, and delighting in him? But I moreover add, that delight itself in him, cannot but be so taken in that sharp passage, (though misapplied to the person of whom it was meant,) for Job hath said, what profit is it that a man should delight himself with God, (Job 34. 9.) that is, or be religious? It fitly enough signifies religion, as thus modified or qualified, namely, as having this quality belonging to it, that it is delightful, or is tinctured with delight in God. But this (so large) is not the only sense, as we have said, wherein we are to take delighting in God. And when any part of religion casts its name upon the whole, it would be very unreasonable to exclude the part from which the denomination is taken, or not to make that the principal thing there meant. We therefore proceed to speak,

(2.) Of the more explicit delight in God: and shall therein consider,—the nature and modification of it.

[1.] Its nature; which from what hath been said of delight

in the general, with the addition of holiness thereto, (which is the work of God's Spirit, determining the act or faculty to which it adheres towards God,) may be conceived thus,—That it is the acquiescence or rest of the soul in God, by a satisfiedness of will in him, as the best and most excellent good. That it be the rest of the soul, belongs to its general nature. And so doth the mentioned kind of rest, more distinguishingly, by the will's satisfiedness in him, because the soul may be also said to rest satisfied (in respect of another faculty) by the mere knowledge of truth; but this supposes so much of that also as is necessary. And because the acts of the understanding are subservient and in order to those of the will, in the soul's pursuit of a delightful good; which is so far attained as it actually delights therein; therefore this may more simply be called the rest of the whole soul, whereas that other is its rest but in some respect only: especially when we add, as in the best and most excellent good; for this signifies the good wherein it rests to be ultimate, and its last end, the very period of its pursuits, beyond which it neither needs nor desires to go further, namely, as to the kind and nature of the good which it is now intent upon; though it still desire more of the same, till there be no place left for further desire, but it wholly cease and end in full satisfaction. And that we may speak somewhat more particularly of this rest in God; it supposes,

First, Knowledge of him. That the soul be well furnished with such conceptions of his nature and attributes, as that it may be truly said to be himself it delights in, and not another thing; not an idol of its own fancy, and which its imagination hath created and set up to it instead of God. Therefore his own representation of himself must be our measure; which being forsaken, or not so diligently attended to, he is either by some, misrepresented, (according as their own corrupt hearts do suggest impure thoughts) and made altogether such a one as themselves, and such as cannot be the object of a pure and spiritual delight; or by others (as their guilt and fear do suggest to them black and direful thoughts of him) rendered such as that he cannot be the object of any delight at all.

Secondly, It supposes actual thoughts of him; "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." (Psal 63. 5, 6.)

Thirdly, A pleasedness with even the first view or apprehension of him; which is most essential to any love to him, and which gives rise to any motion of

Fourthly, Desire directed towards him, upon the apprehen-

sion that somewhat is absent, either of what is due to him, or lacking to ourselves from him.

Fifthly, It includes the satisfaction or repose itself which the soul hath, so far as it finds its desire answered in the one kind or the other. Where we must more distinctly know, that the delight taken in him, is according as the desire is which works towards him, and that as our love to him is : now we love him either for himself, or for our ourselves.

For *himself*, ultimately, so as that our love periods in him, and stays there, namely, on him, as good in himself.

For *ourselves* ; as when our love to him returns upon ourselves, apprehending a goodness in him which is suitable for our enjoyment. Loving him in the *former way*, we desire all may be ascribed and given to him, that possibly may or can. And because we know him to be every way perfect and full, and that nothing can be added to him of real perfection, and therefore nothing can be given him besides external honour and acknowledgments, we therefore desire these may be universally rendered him to the very uttermost. And as far as we find him worthily glorified, admired, and had in honour, so far we have delight in (or in reference to) him ; consisting in the gratification of that desire. Loving him in the *other way*, (which also we are not only allowed, but obliged to do, in contradistinction to all creature good,) we desire his nearer presence and converse, more full communications of his light, grace, and consolations. And are delighted according as we find such desire is answered unto us.

Sixthly, The form of expression used in the text, implies also a stirring up ourselves, and the use of endeavours with our own hearts, to foment, heighten, and raise our own delight. The conjugation (as it is thought fit to be called) into which the word is put, importing, by a peculiarity of expressiveness belonging to the sacred language, action upon one's self ; which must also be understood to have the same force, in reference to that former sense of delighting in God ; that is, that we put ourselves upon these acts and exercises whereunto such delight is adjoined. These things are now more cursorily mentioned, because there will be occasion more at large to insist on them in the discourse of the practice of this duty, reserved to the Second Part.

[2.] We now proceed to the modification of this delight in God ; or the right manner or measure of it. Concerning which it is apparent in the general, it can be no further right than as it is agreeable to its object. That our delight should ever be adequate, or of a measure equal to it, is plainly impossible : but it must be some-way suitable, or must bear proportion to it. I

shall here mention but two (and those very eminent) respects wherein it must do so; namely, in respect of the excellency and the permanency of the good to be delighted in.

First. The *excellency* of it. Inasmuch as it is the best and highest good; it plainly challenges our highest delight. That is, the highest delight *simply*, which our natures are capable of, is most apparently due to the blessed God, even by the law of nature itself, resulting from our natures, referred unto his. And as the case stands under the gospel; the highest delight *comparatively*, that is, higher than we take in any thing else; nothing must be so much delighted in as he. We do not otherwise delight in him as God, which is one way of glorifying him. And it is part of the apostle's charge upon the Pagan world, that knowing him to be God, they did not glorify him as God.

If we make the comparison between him and all the good things of this world, the matter is out of question. It is the sense of holy souls, whom have I in heaven but thee? and whom can I desire on earth besides thee (Psal. 73. 25.) When others say, who will shew us any good? They say, Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance. And thereby he puts gladness into their hearts, more than when corn and wine increase. (Psal. 4. 6.) And whosoever love not Christ more than father, mother, wife, child; yea, and their own lives, cannot be his disciples. (Mat. 10. 37. Luke 14. 26.) Their present worldly life itself, if put in the balance, he must outweigh.

And if we put the comparison between our spiritual, eternal life and him; though he and that can never be in opposition, (as there may be often an opposition between him and this present life, so that the one is often quitted for the other,) yet neither is there a co-ordination, but the less worthy must be subordinate to the more worthy. We are to desire the enjoyment of him for his own glory. And yet here is a strange and admirable complication of these with one another. For if we enjoy him, delight and rest in him as our best and most satisfying good, we thereby glorify him as God. We give him practically highest acknowledgments, we confess him the most excellent one. It is his glory to be the last term of all desires, and beyond which no reasonable desire can go further. And if we seek and desire his glory supremely, sincerely and really beyond and above all things; when he is so glorified to the uttermost, or we are assured he will be; our highest desire is so far satisfied, and that turns to, or is, our own contentment. So that by how much more simply and sincerely we pass from, and go out of ourselves, so much the more certainly we find our own satisfaction, rest and full blessedness in him. As it is impossi-

ble the soul that loves him above itself, can be fully happy while he hath not his full glory: so it is for the same reason equally impossible, but it must be so when he hath.

Secondly. Our delight must be suitable to the object, (the good to be delighted in,)

In respect of the *permanency* of it, this is the most durable and lasting good. In this blessed object therefore we are to rejoice evermore. (1. Thes. 5. 16.) As in the matter of trust, we are required to trust in the Lord for ever, because in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. (Isa. 26. 4.) Everlasting strength gives sufficient ground for everlasting trust. So it is in the matter of delight. A permanent, everlasting excellency is not answered, but by a continual and everlasting delight. Therefore, is it most justly said, rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say unto you rejoice; (Phil. 4. 4.) alway, and still on. If through a long tract of time you have been constantly alway rejoicing in the Lord, begin again, I, again, say to you rejoice; or rather never give over. The object will warrant and justify the act, let it be drawn forth to never so vast a length of time. You will still find a continual spring, unexhausted fulness, a fountain never to be drawn dry. There will never be cause of diversion with this pretence, that now this object will yield no more; it is drained to the uttermost, and is now become an empty and gустless thing. With other things it may be so; and therefore our delight doth not answer the natures of such things, but when we rejoice in them as if we rejoiced not, (Cor. 7. 30.) they are as if they were not. All the things of this world are so. For even the fashion of this world passeth away; as it is afterwards added. (ver. 31.) Therefore no delight can fitly be taken in them, but what is volatile and unfixed as they are: lest otherwise it over-reach, and run beyond its object. And how absurd and vain is it to have our hearts set upon that which is not, that takes wing, and leaves us in the dirt? This object of delight is the "I am, yesterday and to day the same, and for ever; without variableness and shadow of change." Therefore the nature of it cannot allow us a reason; wherefore if we be delighted therein yesterday, we should not to day; or if to day, why not to morrow, and so on to for ever. Whence then we may see no one can say he hath answered the import of this exhortation, "delight thyself in the Lord," by having delighted in him at sometime. It is continual, as well as highest delight we are here called to. We see then thus far what we are called to when we are here directed to delight ourselves in the Lord.

Secondly, We are next to shew how we are called to it.

And the matter itself will answer the inquiry. We are called to it, according to what, in itself, it is. Now it is both a privilege and a duty. We are therefore called to it and accordingly are to understand the words;

1. By way of gracious invitation to partake of a privilege which our blessed Lord would have us share and be happy in; no longer to spend ourselves in anxious pursuits and vain expectations of rest where it is not to be found; but that we retire ourselves to him in whom we shall be sure to find it. Pity and mercy invite us here to place our delight, and take up our rest. And concerning this, there is no question or imaginable doubt.

2. By way of authoritative command. For we must know, that delight in God is to be considered not only under the notion of a privilege unto which we may esteem ourselves entitled; but also of a duty whereto we are most indispensibly obliged. This is a thing (not so much not understood, as) not considered and seriously thought on, by very many; and the not-considering it proves no small disadvantage to the life of religion. It occurs to very many, more familiarly, under the notion of a high favour; and a great vouchsafement (as indeed it is,) that God will allow any of the sons of men to place their delights in himself: but they (at least seem to) think it is only the privilege of some special favourites; of whom, because they perhaps are conscious they have no cause to reckon themselves they are therefore very secure in the neglect of it. And thus is the pretence of modesty and humility very often made an umbrage and shelter to the vile carnality of many a heart; and a want of fitness is pretended and cherished at the same time, as an excuse. But whereas they do not delight in God, they never may; for he that is unfit to day, and never therewithal applies himself with seriousness, to the endeavour of becoming fit, is likely to be more unfit to morrow, and so be as much excused always as now; and by the same means at length excuse himself from being happy; but never from having been the author of his own misery. But what! is it indeed no duty to love God? Is that become no duty which is the very sum and comprehension of all duties? or can they be said to love him, that take no pleasure in him? that is, to love him without loving him. It is indeed, wonderful grace that there should be such a contexture of our happiness and duty; that, by the same thing wherein we are obedient, we also become immediately, in the same degree, blessed. And that the law of God in this case hath this very import, an obligation upon us to blessedness. But in the mean time we should not forget that God's authority and honour are concerned herein, as it is our duty; as well as our own

happiness, as it is our privilege, and that we cannot injure ourselves in this matter without also robbing God.

Delight in God is a great piece of homage to him, a practical acknowledgement of his sovereign excellency, and perfect all comprehending goodness. When we retire from all the world to him, we confess him better than all things besides: that we have none in heaven or earth that we esteem worthy to be compared with him. But when our hearts are averse to him, and will not be brought to delight in him, since there is somewhat in the meanwhile wherein we do delight, we do as much as say (yea, we more significantly express it than by saying) that whatever that is, it is better than he; yea, that such a thing is good, and he is not. For as not believing him is a denial of his truth, the making him a liar; not delighting in him is equally, a denial of his goodness, and consequently even of his Godhead itself. And since we find the words are here laid down plainly in a preceptive form: "delight thyself in the Lord;" can any think themselves after this, at liberty to do so or not? It is true that they who are in no disposition hereto have somewhat else to do in order to that (of which hereafter;) but, in the mean time, how forlorn is their case, who have nothing to excuse their sin by, but sin; and who, instead of extenuating their guilt do double it! yea, and we are further to consider, that it is not only commanded, by a mere simple precept, but that this precept hath its solemn sanction; and that not only by promise here expressly annexed (of which hereafter;) but also of implied threatening; that we shall not else have the desires of our hearts, but be necessarily unsatisfied, and miserable; which is also in many other places expressed plainly enough. Great penalty is due upon not delighting in God, even by the gospel-constitution itself; which is not so unreasonably formed as to require more in this matter, than is suitable to the object itself; and is framed so indulgently as to accept much less than is proportionable thereto; and yet within the capacity also, of a reasonable soul. So that, though the very nature of the thing doth plainly dictate a rule, by which this matter is to be estimated and judged; yet this other rule gives considerable abatement and allowance. That is, It being considered what the *object* claims and challenges, as by its own proper excellency due to it; and what the *subject* is, by its own nature, capable of; not only doth it hence appear, that delight in God is a duty, but that the soul ought to rise to that highest pitch of delight in him, that is, unto the highest the soul is naturally capable of. The very law of nature, resulting from the reference and comparison of our nature unto God's own, requires so

much; that we love, or delight in him with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our might, and with all our strength. He deserves from us our very uttermost. Yet this is by the gospel constitution required with indulgence and abatement, not as to the matter required but as to the manner of requiring it. The matter required is still the same, so as that the purest and highest delight in God doth not cease to be a duty, or any gradual defect thereof cease to be a sin. The gospel doth make no change of the natures of things; makes nothing cease to be due to God from us, which the law of nature made due; nor renders any defect innocent, which is in its own nature culpable and faulty. Therefore the same pitch of delight in God is still due and required that ever was; but that perfection is not (finally and without relief) required in the same manner, and on the same terms it was; that is, it is not by the gospel required under remediless penalty, as it was. For the law of nature (though it made not a remedy simply impossible, yet it) provided none, but the gospel provides one.

Yet not so but the same penalty also remains in itself due and deserved, which was before. For as the gospel takes not away the dueness of any part or degree of that obedience which we did owe to God naturally, so nor doth it take away the natural dueness of punishment, for disobedience in any kind or degree of it. Only it provides that (upon the very valuable consideration which it makes known) it becomes to us a remissible debt, and actually remitted to them who come up to the terms of it. Not that it should be in itself no debt, for then nothing were remitted; nor yet, when it so provides for the remission of defects in this part of our duty, doth it remit the substance of the duty itself, or pardon any defects of it to any but such who are found sincere in this, as well as the other parts of that obedience which we owe. Others, who after so gracious overtures, remain at their former distance, and retain their aversion, enmity, and disaffection to God, it more grievously (and most justly) threatens and punishes as implacable; and who will upon no terms return into a state of friendship and amity with their Maker, whom they hated without cause, and do now continue strangers and enemies to him without excuse; so that the very blood of the reconciling sacrifice cries against them.

And surely since; (as was formerly said) it is God in Christ that is the entire object of this delight or love, it is a fearful penalty that is determined upon them that do not so place it; when it is said, if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha. (1 Cor. 16. 22.) And when also it is said grace be upon all them that do, (Eph. 6. 24.) it is

plainly implied, that the penalty belongs to all them that do not love him in sincerity. Of which sincerity therefore of delight in God, (to keep within the compass of our present theme,) it is necessary we be well informed; as we may be from what hath been said before; that is—that we delight in him *supremely*, and above all things else, namely with our highest and deepest complacency of will. For it is not necessary (nor ordinarily possible) that our delight in him should be ever accompanied with such sensible agitation of the corporeal spirits, as we find in reference to merely sensible objects. Which is not essential to such delight, but an accident that follows union with the body; and more frequently, and to a greater degree in some tempers of body than others. But it is necessary there be that practical estimation of him, and propension towards him, as the best and most excellent good; as that we be in a preparation of mind and heart to forego whatever can come into any competition with him for his sake. That though we do not thus delight in him so much as we should, yet we do more than in any thing else.—That we *continue* herein: that this be the constant habitual temper of our spirits towards him: that we cleave to him with purpose of heart, as not only the most excellent, but the most permanent object of our delight: having settled the resolution with ourselves, “This God shall be our God for ever and ever; he shall be our God and guide even to the death.” (Psal. 43.) and that there be frequent actual workings of heart towards him, agreeable to such a temper, though they are not so frequent as they ought. Which account we give of this sincerity of delight in God, not to encourage any to take up with the lowest degree of that sincerity; but that none may be encouraged, upon their own mistake in this matter, to take up with any thing short of it; and that we may see whence to take our rise in aiming at the highest pitch thereof. And that we may (understanding the highest intenseness and most constant exercise of delight in God that our natures are capable of, to be our duty) understand also, that in reference to our gradual defects and intermissions herein that we ought to be deeply humbled, as being faulty; not unconcerned, as though we were innocent in this regard, that we need continual pardon upon these accounts;—that we owe it to the blood of the Redeemer, that such things can be pardoned:—that we are not to reckon, or ever to expect that blood should stand us instead, to obtain our pardon for never delighting in God sincerely at all; but only (supposing we do it sincerely) that we do it not perfectly. For most certainly, they whose hearts are never turned to him as their best and most sovereign good or portion, and Ruler or

Lord ; but do still remain alienated in their minds, and enemies through wicked works, will perish notwithstanding. And that we might the more distinctly, together with the apprehension of what we are called to in this matter, understand also how we are called to, that is, not by an invitation only, that leaves us at liberty, whether we will or will not, as we think fit : but by express command, and that also backed with the severe determination of most dreadful penalty in case of omission. And thus we have in some measure shewn the import of the direction in the text,—that we delight ourselves in the Lord.

THE END OF THE FIRST PART.