

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.*

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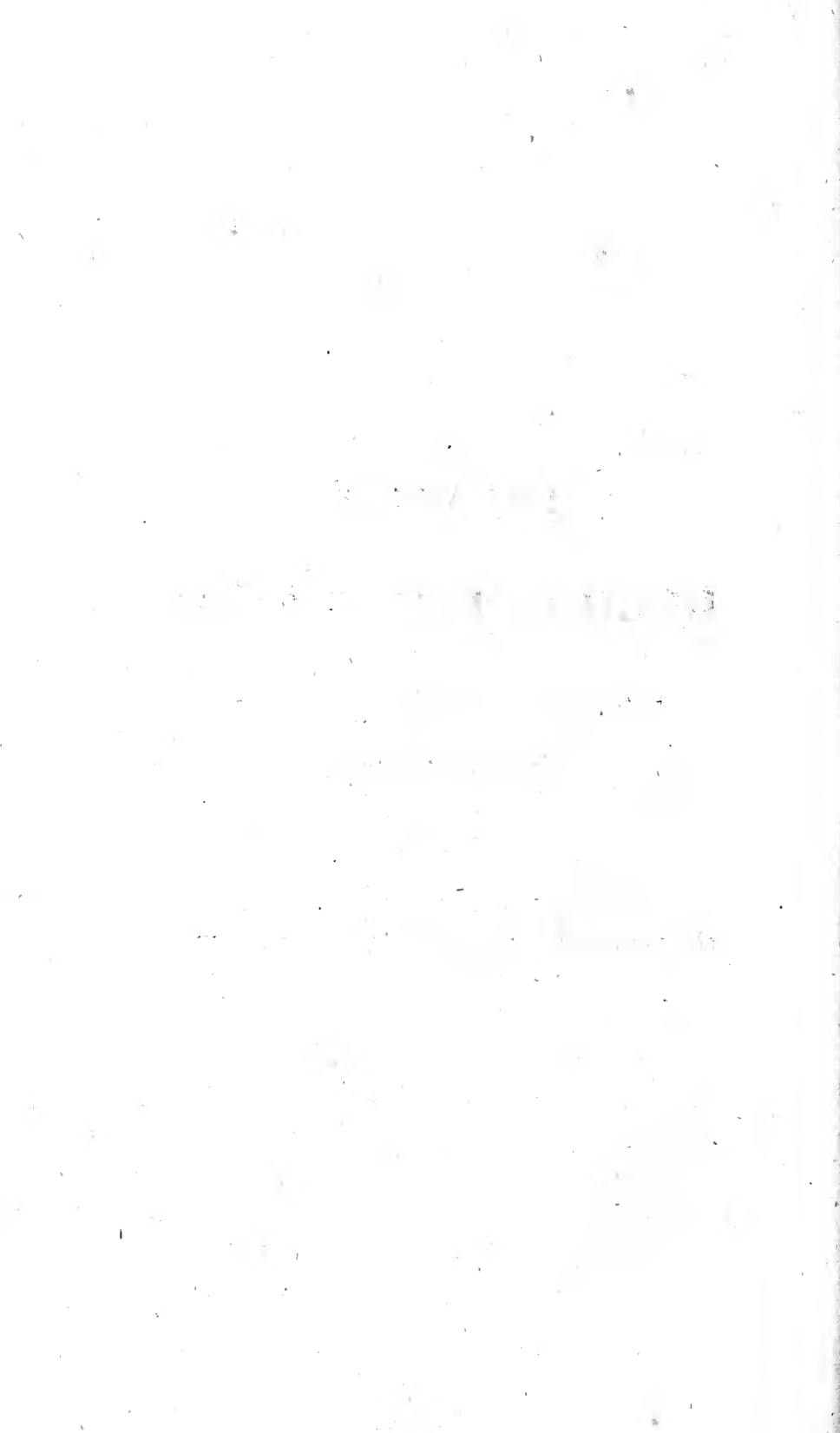
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PART II.

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CONCERNING  
SECONDLY—THE PRACTICE OR EXERCISE OF DELIGHT  
IN GOD.



A  
TREATISE  
OF  
DELIGHTING IN GOD:

From Psalm xxxvii, 4.

*Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee  
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PART II.

THE DUTY ENFORCED; CONSIDERED

FIRST, AS ADHERENT TO THE OTHER DUTIES OF RELIGION.—SECONDLY, AS  
A DISTINCT DUTY OF ITSELF.

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CHAP I.

I. Introduction. II. The practice or exercise of delight in God considered. **FIRST.** As adherent to the other duties of religion. Here it is shewn. *First.* That we are not to rest in a practice of religion which is not naturally and in itself delightful. 1. What that religion is. (1.) Two cautions suggested. [1.] That even such a religion as is true and living and consequently in itself delightful may sometimes not appear, or be thought so. [2.] That a dead religion may be thought so, through the ill temper of the subject. (2.) A twofold general rule premised. [1.] That delight is unnatural which is taken in any thing not answering the end to which it serves. [2.] Such as is accompanied with a real hurt greater than the delight can countervail. Hence it appears, (3.) That, that religion is undelightful which is not *chiefly* delightful. 2. How unfit that religion is to be chosen and rested in. (1.) It is incapable of growth. (2.) Cannot be a lasting thing. (3.) It wants the fruits which should be sought by religion. (4.) It is foolish and unworthy of a reasonable creature. (5.) It will produce bitter reflections at death. (6.) It is offensive to God.

I. **WE** have in the Former Part extended the meaning of the words, "Delight thyself in the Lord," beyond what they seem at first sight literally to signify: so as not to understand them merely as requiring, that very single act of delight to be

immediately and directly terminated on God himself; but to take them as comprehending also the sum of all holy and religious converse with God, that is, as it is delightful, or as it is seasoned (intermingled, and as it were besprinkled) with delight; and upon the same account, of all our other converse, so far as it is influenced by religion. And I doubt not, to such as shall attentively have considered what hath been said, it will be thought very reasonable to take them in that latitude; whereof the very letter of the text (as may be alleged for further justification hereof) is most fitly capable. For (as was noted upon another text where we have the same phrase) the particle which we read *in* the Lord, hath not that signification alone, but signifies also *with*, or *by*, or *besides*, or *before*, or *in presence of*, as if it had been said, "Come and sit down with God, retire thyself to him, and solace thyself in the delights which are to be found in his presence and converse, in walking with him, and transacting thy course as before him, and in his sight." As a man may be said to delight himself with a friend that puts himself under his roof; and besides personal converse with himself, freely enjoys the pleasure of all the entertainments, accommodations, and provisions which he is freely willing to communicate with him, and hath the satisfaction which a sober person would take in observing the rules and order of a well-governed house.

II. According to this divers import of the precept enjoining this duty, it will be requisite to speak diversly of the practice of the duty itself: that is, that we treat of the practice and exercise of delight; as a thing adherent to the other duties of religion, and as it is a distinct duty of itself.

FIRST, As to the former, our business will be, to treat of the exercise of religion as delightful. Now religion is delightful naturally and in itself; and makes a man's other actions, even that are not in themselves acts of religion, delightful also, so far as they are governed and influenced by it; if that religion be true, that is, if it be living, such as proceeds from a principle of divine life. Being therefore now to treat of the practice of this duty (whereof the account hath been already given,) our discourse must aim at, and endeavour these two things, the former as leading and subservient to the latter, namely—That we may not take up, and rest, or let our practice terminate in a religion which is not naturally and in itself delightful, and—That we seek after and improve in that which is.

FIRST, That religion which is not delightful we have great reason not to acquiesce in, or be contented with, for it is plainly such as will not defray itself, or bear its own charges, as having only cumber and burden in it, no use or end; I mean the



dead formality of religion only. We find it natural and pleasant to carry about with us our own living body; but who would endure (how wearisome and loathsome a task were it?) to lug to and fro a dead carcase? It will be upon this account needful to insist in shewing more distinctly, what sort of religion it is, that is in itself wholly undelightful, and propound some things to consideration concerning it, that may tend to beget a dislike of it, and so incline us to look further.

1. That we may know what we are not take up with; because our present subject confines us to this one measure of religion, that it be delightful, it will be proper to limit our discourse to this character only of the religion we are to pass from as vain and worthless, namely, that which is without delight; which it also will be sufficient to insist on to our present purpose. For since (as hath been largely shewn) the delightfulness of the religion which is true and living is intrinsical, and most natural to it, it will therefore be certainly consequent, that which is not delightful is dead, and can serve for nothing.

(1.) But here it will be necessary, for caution, to insert two things.

[1.] That even such religion as is true and living, and consequently in itself delightful, yet may by accident sometimes, not appear or be thought so; because either variety of occasions may divert from minding, or some imbittering distemper of spirit may hinder the present relishing of that pleasure which is truly in it. As a man may eat and feed on that, which is very savoury and good; and yet, though his taste be not vitiated, but because he reflects not, may not every moment have that present apprehension that it is so; much more if the organs of taste be under a present distemper. But, if they be not so, any one's asking him how he likes that dish, (because that occasions a more express animadversion,) will also draw from him an acknowledgment that it is pleasant and savoury.

[2.] That a dead religion may be thought delightful; and through the ill temper of the subject, a pleasure may be apprehended in it, which doth not naturally arise from it; that is, the mere external part of religion may be flexible, and be accidentally perverted into a subserviency to some purposes which religion of itself intends not, in respect whereof a delight may injuriously (and as by a rape) be taken in it, as is said by the prophet of a hypocritical people: Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness; they take delight in approaching to God. (Isa. 58. 2.) Therefore, that which is here intended, is not, that the religion should

be rejected, in some present exercises whereof we have not the actual relish of a present pleasure (as that should not be embraced, wherein upon any whatsoever terms we find it;) but that which can rightfully, and upon just terms afford us none; and which upon our utmost inquiry and search, cannot in reason (as it is not unfit that spiritual reason should be employed in making a judgment what may) be thought spiritually delectable. We shall therefore in some particular heads, give a short account of such religion, as rationally cannot but be judged undelightful, or which hath not that in it which can yield pleasure to a sound and well-complexioned spirit; but that if any be taken therein, that very pleasure is so unnatural and out of kind, as to be the argument rather of a disease in the subject, than of any real goodness in the thing itself.

(2.) Whereunto we only premise this two-fold general rule, whereby an undue and unnatural delight may be estimated and judged of.

[1.] That such delight may be justly deemed unnatural which is taken in any thing besides and with the neglect of the proper use and end which it most fitly serves for.

[2.] Such as is accompanied with a real hurt, greater than the delight can countervail, or as is so far from taking in profit and benefit in conjunction with it, as that the damage and prejudice which it cannot recompence, is inseparable from it; which rules will be the more fitly applicable to the present case; for that (as hath been formerly observed) the delight which accompanies the acts and exercises of religion, or that flow from it, though it be natural thereto, yet is not the only or chief end of those acts; but they have another more important end, unto the prosecution whereof by such acts delight is only adherent: whence the delight cannot but be most preposterous and perverse, which is taken in such things as do either not serve the more principal design of religion; or much more that are repugnant and destructive of it. By these rules we may plainly see what delight in the general is to be accounted undue. As by the former rule we would justly reckon that an undue delight which a man should take in his food, if he only please himself with the looking on the handsome garnishing of the dishes, which he loaths in the mean time and refuses to taste; or which a covetous miser takes in having wealth hoarded up, which he is pleased often to view and cannot endure to use. And by the latter, that were most irrational delight, which in a fever one should take in gratifying his distempered appetite, whereby he doth not so much relieve nature as feed his disease.

(3.) And so we may say, that religion is undelightful, that is not duly delightful.

[1.] Which consists wholly in revolving in one's own mind the notions that belong to religion, without either the experience, or the design and expectation of having the heart and conversation formed according to them. So the case is with such as content themselves to yield the principles of religion true, and behold with a notional assent and approbation the connexion and agreement of one thing with another; but do never consider the tendency and aim of the whole: or that the truth of the gospel is the doctrine that is according to godliness; (1 Tim. 6. 3.) or such as is pursuant to the design of making men godly; of transforming them into the image of God, and framing them to an entire subjection to his holy and acceptable, will; that bethink not themselves the truth is never learned as it is in Jesus, except it be to the renewing the spirit of the mind, the putting off the old man, and the putting on of the new. (Eph. 4. 22.) When this is never considered, but men do only know, that they may know; and are never concerned further about the great things of God, than only to take notice that such things there are offered to their view which carry with them the appearance of truth, but mind them no more than the affairs of Eutopia, or the world in the moon; what delight is taken in this knowledge is surely most perverse. There is a pleasure indeed in knowing things, and in apprehending the coherence of one truth with another; but he that shall allow himself to speculate only about things wherein his life is concerned, and shall entertain himself with delight in agitating in his mind certain curious general notions concerning a disease or a crime that threatens him with present death, or what might be a remedy or defence in such a case, without any thought of applying such things to his own case, or that the case is his own, one may say of such pleasure it is mad; or of this delight, what doth it? or he that only surfeits his eye with beholding the food he is to live by, and who in the mean time languishes in the want of appetite, and a sickly loathing of his proper nutriment; surely such a one hath a pleasure that no sober man would think worth the having.

And the more any one doth only notionally know in the matters of religion, so as that the temper of his spirit remains altogether unsuitable and opposite to the design and tendency of the things known; the more he hath lying ready to come in judgment against him; and if therefore he count the things excellent which he knows, and only please himself with his own knowledge of them, it is but alike case as if a man should be much delighted to behold his own condemnation

written in a fair and beautiful hand: or, as if one should be pleased with the glittering of that sword which is directed against his own heart, and must be the present instrument of death to him: and so little pleasant is the case of such a person in itself, who thus satisfies his own curiosity, with the concerns of eternal life and death, that any serious person would tremble on his behalf, at that wherein he takes pleasure, and apprehend just horror in that state of the case whence he draws matter of delight.

[2.] It is yet a more insipid and gustless religion which too many place in some peculiar opinions, that are either false, and contrary to religion, or doubtful and cumbersome to it, or little and inconsiderable, and therefore certainly alien to it, and impertinent. For if that religion only be truly delightful which hath a vital influence on the heart and practice, as that must needs be indelectable, which is only so notionally conversant about the greatest truths, as that it hath no such influence; much more is that so, which is so wholly conversant about matters either opposite or irrelative hereto, as that it can have none. It must here be acknowledged that some doctrines not only not revealed in the word of God, but which are contrary thereto, may (being thought true) occasion the excitation of some inward affection, and have an indirect influence to the regulating of practice also, so as to repress some grosser enormities: as the false notions of pagans concerning the Deity, which have led them to idolatry, have struck their minds with a certain kind of reverence of invisible powers, and perhaps rendered some more sober and less vicious than had they been destitute of all religious sentiments. And yet the good which hath hence ensued, is not to be referred to the particular principles of idolatry which were false; but to the more general principles of religion, which were true. Yea, and though such false principles viewed alone, and by themselves, may possibly infer somewhat of good; yet that is by accident only, and through the short-sightedness and ignorance of them with whom they obtain; who, if they did consider their in-coherence with other common notions and principles most certainly true, would receive by them (if thought the only principles of religion) so much the greater hurt, and become so much the more hopelessly and incurably wicked. As most manifestly the principles which (looked upon by themselves) while they are reckoned true, do lead to idolatry, and consequently, by that mistake only, to some religion; do yet, being really false, lead to atheism, and of themselves tend to subvert and destroy all religion. Therefore such doctrines as cohere not with the general frame of truth, whatever their particular aspect may

be, considered apart and by themselves, are yet in their natural tendency opposite and destructive to the true design of religion, and the pleasure which they can any way afford, is only stolen and vain ; such as a person takes in swallowing a potion that is pleasant, but which, if it perform what belongs to it, he must with many a sickly qualm refund and disgorge back again.

We also acknowledge some truths of less importance, may be said to concern practice, though not so immediately. Nor is it therefore the design of this discourse to derogate from any such, that are of apparently divine revelation or institution ; which, however they justly be reckoned less than some other things, yet for that very reason as they are revealed by God for such an end, are by no means to be esteemed little, or inconsiderable ; be their subserviency to the great design of religion never so remote. Upon the account of which subserviency, they are also to be esteemed delectable, that is, in proportion thereto ; but when they are so esteemed beyond that proportion, and are exalted, into an undue preference to their very end itself ; so as that, in comparison of them, the great things of religion are reckoned low, frigid, sapless things ; when men set their hearts upon them abstractly, and without consideration of their reference and usefulness to the greater things of religion ; the delight that is so taken in them, argues but the disease of the mind that takes it, and so great a degree of dotage, that a serious person would wonder how men can please themselves with such matters, without considering, and with the neglect of so great things they have relation to.

[3.] And hither is to be referred the much less rational pleasure which is taken in the mere dress wherewith such notions and opinions may be artificially clothed by themselves or others ; rhetorical flourishes, a set of fine words, handsome cadences and periods, fanciful representations, little tricks and pieces of wit, and (which cannot pretend so high) pitiful quibbles and gingles, inversions of sentences, the pedantic rhyming of words, yea and an affected tone, or even a great noise, things that are neither capable of gratifying the christian nor the man ; without which even the most important weighty matters do to so squeamish stomachs seem gustless and unsavoury, and are reckoned dull and flat things. And most plain it is, (though it is not strange, that so trifling minds should impose upon themselves by so thin a sophism,) that such are in a great mistake, whose delight being wholly taken up in these trifles, do hereupon think they taste the delights of religion ; for these are nothing of it, are found about it only accidentally : and by a most unhappy accident too, as ill (for the

most of those things) agreeing to it and no more becoming it than a fool's coat doth a prudent grave person; and the best of them agreeing to it but in common with any thing else, about which such arts may be used; so that they are no way any thing of it, or more peculiarly belonging to it, than to any theme or subject besides, unto which such ornaments (as they are thought) can be added. How miserably therefore do they cheat themselves, who, because they hear with pleasure a discourse upon some head of religion thus garnished, according to their idle trifling humour; and because they are taken with the contrivance of some sentences, or affected with the loudness of the voice, or have their imagination tickled with some fantastical illustrations, presently conclude themselves to be in a religious transport when the things that have pleased them have no affinity or alliance with religion, befall to it but by chance, and are in themselves things quite of another country!

[4.] Of the like strain is the religion that is made up all of talk. And such like are that sort of persons, who love to discourse of those great things of God wherewith it was never their design or aim to have their hearts stamped, or their lives commanded and governed: who invert that which was the ancient glory of the Christian Church, "We do not speak great things, but live them." And are pleased with only the noise of their own (most commonly insignificant senseless) words; unto whom how ungrateful a relish would that precept have, "Be swift to hear, slow so speak!" And how much to be regretted a thing is it, that the delights of practical living religion should be so lost, and vanish into a mere lip-labour! things of this nature are to be estimated by their end, and the temper of spirit which accompanies them; which unto a serious and prudent observer, are commonly very discernible and easy to be distinguished. It is an amiable, lovely thing to behold those that are intent upon the great business of religion themselves, provoking others also with serious gravity unto love and good works. And it will ever stand as a monumental character of them that feared the Lord, that they spake often one to another, (Mal. 3. 16.) upon this account. But the pretence of this is odious, when the thing designed is nothing but self-recommendation, and the spirit of the pretenders is visibly vain and empty; and when it is apparent they take delight, not in the things they speak of, but only in this thing itself, speaking much. No breath is then more fulsome; and the better the things are, the worse it is to have no more savour of them. Again

[5.] The religion is a kin to this, which stands all in hearing. It is as remote (at least) from the heart, when it is wholly placed in the ear, as when it is all in the tongue. As it is with

them that are hearers only, not doers of the word, deceiving their own souls. (Jam. 1. 22.) When the preacher is to them as a very lovely song, of one that can play well on an instrument, and they hear his words, but do them not. (Exek. 33. 32.) And it is natural to the same sort of persons to be pleased indifferently with either of these, as the Athenians were in hearing or telling some new thing. Only that this difference most commonly appears with the persons we intend, that when the things they delight to hear, must be ever new, or at least new dressed, the things they speak, shall be everlastingly the same. How perverse a delight is that? Whereas it is the glory of substantial religion, that the principal things of it can never grow old, or be dry. Their ears still itch after novelties; a plain argument that it is not religion itself that pleases them (which cannot change) but the variable accessory modes of representing it. However, there is certainly very often a distemper appearing among those that profess religion, in coveting to hear unto excess, and beyond what is either suitable or designed unto use and profit. When the pleasure of a delightful revolving of the ever fresh and fragrant truths of the gospel, and reducing them to answerable practice, is lost and stifled, by heaping on of more than can be digested. And many a hopeful birth of pious and holy dispositions, affections, and good works, is suppressed or enfeebled by an untimely superfetation.

[6.] It is a most undelightful religion, which consists entirely in the external additaments and forms of worship, which this or that party have chosen to affix to it. Yea, though those forms be never so certainly of divine prescription; which, however God hath appointed them, were never appointed or intended by him to be our religion, but to be subservient helps and means to it. Being enlivened by it, they are comely and delightful; but severed and cut off from it, or the course of vital spirit that should flow into them being obstructed and repressed they have no more pleasure in them than a dead arm or finger. Such divine appointments themselves, severed from the things wherein substantial religion consists, have been an abomination to the Lord, your new moons and sabbaths, &c. (Isa. 1. 14.) my soul hates, and then sure there is little reason they should be a delight to us. If they be, it is as fond and trifling a delight, as when one hath the opportunity of conversing with some excellent person, to neglect all his wise sayings, and pleasant instructive discourses, and only to please one's self in viewing his handsome apparel; yea, though I should know at the same time, that I thereby greatly displease him whom (as is also supposable) I were greatly concerned to please. Thus it is with them that mind only the solemnity



of God's worship, not the design. And more gross the matter is, with such as by their observance of the external modes of religion, think to expiate the badness of their most vicious conversation; that will steal, and murder and commit adultery, oppress the stranger, the fatherless and the widow; and yet presume to stand before the Lord in his house, and cry, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these, (Jer. 7. 4.) This is the pharisaical religion, that is scrupulous in tithing mint, annise, and cummin, and neglects the weighty things of the law, justice, judgment, and truth. These men delight in what not only is dead in itself, but will be mortal unto them. And if the divine institution of the things wherewith they so vainly please themselves, will not bear them out, much less their own; be their discriminating denomination or profession what it will. And now all these things (whether severally or together) and whatever else of like kind do at the best make but a dead, and consequently an undelightful religion, such as hath no pleasure in it, because it hath no life; it remains therefore,

2. To shew, how unfit such a religion is to be chosen or rested in. And surely since (as appears from what was formerly said) the persuading of men to become religious or godly, is but an inviting them to a state and course wherein they may delight themselves with God; or to a life of pure and heavenly pleasure; that is only the vain shew of religion, which affords nothing of that pleasure. And how unreasonable and foolish is it when religion itself is the thing we pretend, to let ourselves be mocked (as we mock others, and vainly attempt to mock him also, who is not to be mocked) with the mere empty shew and appearance of it! that we may be here somewhat more particular, let it be considered.

(1.) That the religion which is in itself undelightful, is, for the same reason for which it is so, incapable of growth; that is, because it is a dead thing. For that reason it is without delight; and for the same reason admits not of improvement. It wants the self-improving principle. He that drinks of that water (saith our saviour) which I shall give him, it shall be in him as a well of water springing up in him unto life eternal. (Joh. 4. 14.) That only principle of all true religion and godliness, the divine nature, the seed of God, is of that heavenly tendency, it aims and aspires upward; and will never cease shooting up till it reach heaven; and the pleasure and delightfulness of it stand much in its continual springing up towards a perfect state, from a grain of mustard-seed to the tallness of a cedar. It is pleasant to behold its constant undecaying greenness and verdure; such as renders its subject like a tree planted by the



rivers of water that brings forth fruit in season, whose leaf also doth not wither, and whatsoever he doth prospers, (Psal. 1. 3.) Or as plants set in the house of the Lord, that flourish in the courts of their God: that shall still bring forth fruit even in old age, and be fat and flourishing. (Psal. 92, 13; 14.) The dead, dry forms, or other appendages of religion, that have no communion with a living root, or the religion that is only made up of these, gives no such hope of improvement. A great and most considerable prejudice against any thing that pretends to the name of religion; which being at first an imperfect thing (as that especially which itself is but pretence and shadow cannot but be) if it shall never be expected to be better, can have little claim or title to any excellency. The value even of true religion, though it be of an excellent nature and kind, stands much in the hopefulness and improveableness of it; and is not so much to be considered in respect of what it is, as what it shall come to. This lank, spiritless religion as soon as you assume and take it up, you know the best of it. It is not of a growing, thriving kind; never expect better of it. It is true; the notional knowledge, opinionativeness, and external observances, which we have spoken of, may be so increased, as a heap of sand may be; but the religion of such grows not as a thing that hath life in it, by vital self-improvement.

(2.) Nor for the same reason can it be a lasting thing. For it wants what should maintain it. It will, as a vesture, wear and grow old; or, being as a cloak put on to serve a present turn, is when that turn is served, as easily thrown off, that is, being found to be more cumbersome than useful. What hath living union with a man's own self, it is neither his ease nor convenience; he neither affects, nor can endure to lay it aside. It is given as a character of a hypocrite (one who therefore must be understood to carry with him some shew and face of religion; and to want the living root and principle of it) that he is inconstant in his religion; Will he at all times call upon God? (Job. 27. 10.) or will he be constantly religious? The interrogative form of speech implies more than a mere negative. That is, doth not only say that he will not at all times call upon God, but that it is absurd to say or think that he will. For it is an appeal to common reason in the case; as if it had been said, "Can any man think that such a one's religion will be lasting? It imports a disdain it should be thought so. What! he call upon God at all times; a likely thing! no; the matter is plain, his religion is measured by his secular interest, and he will only be so long religious as will serve that purpose. And the reason is plainly assigned in the foregoing words, "Will he

delight himself in the Almighty?" His religion hath no delight with it; it is a languid, faint, spiritless thing, a dead form. If it had life, it would have pleasure in it; and then the same vital principle that would make it pleasant, would make it lasting and permanent also.

(3.) While it doth last, it wants the fruit and profit, which should be designed and sought by religion; even for the same reason for which it is without delight, it is also fruitless and vain, that is because it hath no life in it. So that all that is done in this way of religion is only labour and toil to no purpose. And what do or can we propose to ourselves from religion, as the proper design of it, but to have our spirits fitted to the honouring and enjoying of God, unto service to him, and blessedness in him; and that we may hereupon, actually both serve and enjoy him? both these chiefly depend upon his favourable acceptance of us. He will neither reckon himself served by us, not allow himself to be enjoyed, if he be not pleased with us. And how shall we expect to please him with that, wherewith, the more our minds come to be rectified and made conformable to the rule of righteousness and life, the more impossible it is that we can be pleased ourselves? Can we please him by a religion that is in itself unsavoury, spiritless and dead; and that affords not to ourselves the least relish of true pleasure? And partly the success of our religion in the mentioned respects, depends upon the due temperament our spirits receive by it; but what good impression can that light, chaffy, empty religion that hath been described, ever be hoped to make there? Is it a likely means of refining and bettering our spirits? Even as it is void of spiritual delight it is also of spiritual benefit; for certainly our spirits are like to embrace and retain nothing in which they can take no pleasure. How vain then is that religion by which we can neither please God nor profit ourselves?

(4.) It ought to be considered how foolish a thing it is, and unworthy of a reasonable creature to do that in a continued course and series of actions wherein we can have no design, and do aim at nothing. Even they that place their religion in things so remote and alien to the spirit and power of it, do yet spend a considerable part of their life's-time in those things. And how becoming is it of a man to have spent so much of his time in doing nothing? and that from week to week, or from day to day, the seasons should return, of which he hath constantly this to say, "Now comes the time of doing that whereof I can give no account why I do it! that there should be so constant a defalcation of such portions of time for that which a man can neither call business nor recreation, which tends to no

advantage in any kind. For it tends not to promote his secular interest but in so indirect and by-a-way, and with so sinister and basely-oblique respects, as an honest man would abhor, and an ingenuous man be ashamed to profess; and his spiritual and eternal interest much less. This were therefore the same thing as to proclaim one's self a fool or a vain trifler. The things that have been instanced in, (considered so abstractly from the substance of religion as we have considered them,) being such, some of them, as carry not with them so much as that very shew of wisdom, (Col. 2. 23.) of which the apostle speaks; and others of them, so faint a shew, as it ill becomes a wise man to be pleased with, while they do his better part no good, and carry not that shew in any provision (as that word *τιμή* sometimes signifies) for the satisfying of the flesh.

And yet it is to be withal remembered that this (waste and lost) time of their life, is all that such persons allot to their everlasting concernments; and that the things which have been mentioned (some or other of them; for all do not always concur with the same persons) are not made subservient to; but are substituted in the room and stead of the religion by which those concernments should be provided for. And is this a wise provision for eternity? What man! A few empty unimproved notions! a by-opinion or two! the flourishes of a little pedantic art tickling thy toyish fancy! the motion of thy only busy and labouring tongue! or the thirst and satisfaction of thy vain ear! the bowing of thy hypocritical knee! Are these all that thou designest, or wilt mind to do for thy soul? Are these like well to supply the place of living religion? to serve thee instead of inward acquaintance with God? of being really and habitually good and holy? of doing good and walking in the path of life? What a soul hast thou that can live upon chaff and air, and be sustained by the wind? Hast thou no need of quickening influence from God? no hunger after the heavenly, hidden manna, and the fruits of the tree of life? What use makest thou of thy understanding, or of the reason of a man, when thou thinkest such empty vanities as thou trustest in can do the office, or attain the ends of true religion? How much more rational were it to pretend to nothing of religion at all, than to think such a one will serve the turn!

(5.) Consider, what reflections are likely to be made upon this matter hereafter, when thy short course in this world is run out. Will it be a grateful remembrance to thee that thou wast so long hovering about the borders of religion? and wast at the very door and wouldest not enter in? that thou didst so often think and speak, and hear of the things wherein religion stood,

but wouldest never allow thyself to taste the pleasant relishes thereof? to have been so nigh to the kingdom of God, and yet an alien to it, to the righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost wherein it consists! That thou didst only please thyself with the painted casket (made fine, as thou thoughtest, but only with thine own pencil) wherein so rich a jewel was; and retaining that, threwst away this as thing of nought! will not these be wounding thoughts?

(6.) Let it be seriously pondered how offensive it must be to the jealous God that any should thus trifle with him and his holy things, under a shew and pretence of religion and devotion to him. Not to please him by the sincerity and truth of our religion, loses the end and reward we would expect. But that is not all. To provoke him by the hypocritical pretence and abuse of it, cannot but infer a sharp revenge which it may be we expected not. And let us bethink ourselves how high the provocation is! Either we design to please, honour and enjoy him by that irrational and undelightful course of religion, or we do not. If we do not, this signifies nothing but highest contempt and defiance of him; and that we care not for his favour nor fear his displeasure. Yea, inasmuch as such religion is pretended as a homage to him, it is nothing really but most profane and insolent mockery; as if we would join in the same breath and in the same act, "Hail Jesus and crucify him;" and at once invest him with the purple robe, and spit in his face. But if we have such a design, and do really think to please him by such trifling with him; and that these vain fancies and formality shall make amends for all our neglects of him through the whole course of our lives besides; then how vile thoughts have we of him! what do we make of the God we serve? How justly may that be applied to us, ye worship ye know not what! (Joh. 4. 22.) Who gave us our idea of that ever blessed Being? It is not God, but a despicable idol of our own creating we are thinking to please. We may see how well he is pleased with the external shew and the appendages of religion (which being his own appointments would in conjunction and in subserviency thereto have signified somewhat, but disjoined from it, and accompanied with the neglect and abandoning of real piety and righteousness, signified nothing but an affront to him) in that remonstrance by the prophet; He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense as if he blessed an idol. (Isa. 66. 3.) He is pleased with their religion as he would be with murder, profaneness and idolatry. And is it strange this should be his estimate, when he is hereby

practically represented as such a one that will not be displeased with real wickedness, and that will be pleased with the thinnest and most superficial shew of devotion?

They therefore make a fair hand of their religion, who are so far from pleasing God by it and advantaging themselves, that they wound their own souls (as they are most like to do that handle so awkwardly such an edged tool) and render God their most avowed enemy. The religion then which hath no delight in it hath so much of folly, incommmodity and mischief, that measuring it by the rules which were premised, we may see sufficient reason why such a religion should not be chosen or rested in: and that we are concerned to look further.

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## CHAP. II.

We proceed to what was next proposed, that is, to inquire, *Secondly*. What religion is fit to be chosen where somewhat is offered. 1. By way of direction: and 2. By way of excitation.

*Secondly*. **WE** pass on to the other head proposed; the positive judgment we are to make, what religion is fit to be chosen, and wherein we may safely acquiesce? whereof we shall only give the account which the subject we have in hand allows to be here given, that is, that it be such as is in itself rationally and justly delectable. And though religion is not to be chosen only or chiefly, for the delightfulness of it; yet since, as we have seen, only that religion is true which is delightful; that only which is delightful is fit to be chosen. So that this is a certain character (though not the chief cause) of the eligibleness of religion. And when it is so expressly enjoined us as a duty, to delight ourselves in the Lord; if, as hath been shewn, this be within the meaning of the precept, that, in the general, we delight ourselves in a way and course of religion; it is plain such religion only can be meant or intended, as can afford us matter of delight, or as is itself truly and really delectable. And here we shall not need to repeat what hath been so largely discoursed in the Former Part, tending to shew the rich matter of delight which the several exerci-

ses of true living religion, and all the actions influenced and directed by it, do carry in them. It will only be requisite, to offer somewhat partly to direct, partly to excite unto that delightful pleasant life.

1. For direction, let such rules be observed as these which follow.

(1.) Endeavour to have a mind well instructed in the knowledge of such things as more directly concern the common practice of a religious man, as such. That is, to be thoroughly insighted into practical truths, or into that truth which is after godliness. It hath been the merciful vouchsafement of the divine goodness, so to order it, that those things are plain and but few, which are of more absolute necessity in religion. This may be seen by the summary accounts which we find sometimes given thereof, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. (Act. 20. 21.) Which two things (intimated to comprehend the whole counsel of God) do manifestly suppose the state of apostacy, and express the way of remedy; whereinto, when we are brought, how succinct and clear a recapitulation of our duty have we in that of our Saviour, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself!" To a well-complexioned spirit, how comprehensive and full, how savoury and acceptable will these things appear! Nor would such a one part with the substantial fulness of these few words for all the treasures of both the Indies. How truly is it called, that good, that acceptable and perfect will of God! (Rom. 12. 2.) And how fitly to be preferred before thousands of gold and silver! Things of highest value are not bulky; their excellency is the greater by being contracted; and that, being in themselves precious, they are so conveniently portable. How easily are these dictates carried about with us through our whole course! and how universally useful are they for the well-guiding of it, to such as have a greater mind to do their duty than move questions about it! Two things are both opposite to this rule and not a little prejudicial to the delight of religious conversation, (by which it will appear, how conducive to it the matter here directed is) namely, excessive curiosity in the speculation of truths belonging to religion; without designing to refer them to practice; (which hath been animadverted on before,) and an equally excessive scrupulosity about matters of practice. It were indeed an argument of a desperate mind, and destitute of any fear of God, to be careless what we do, and unconcerned whether the way we take, in this or that case, be right or wrong. But it is certain, there may be an excess in this matter, and too often is; that is, there may be a scrupulosity which is both

causeless and endless. There is surely some medium in travelling between a careless wandering we mind not whither, and a perpetual anxiety whether we be in our way or no, with often going back to inquire. This would quite destroy both the pleasure of the journey, and the progress of it. Some difficulties may occur, which should justly occasion one to make a stand and consider. But probably, very many cases that some do agitate with much disquiet to themselves and others, would soonest be expedited by sincerity, and reducing them to the law of love.

It would however make much for our pleasant, delightful walking on in the way of God, to have a mind (informed once and established thoroughly in the belief of the principal doctrines of christian religion) well furnished also with the most useful practical precepts, which might at every turn be ready at hand to be applied upon emergencies; which they whom predominant self-interest or corrupt inclination render not difficult to the apprehending of their duty, (our way is not usually otherwise so very intricate) may cheerfully and innocently guide themselves by. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely." Though some men's way may, by the circumstances of their conditions, be much more perplexed than others, who are therefore concerned to be the more wary. But the difficult toil and tug that some have with themselves, is, how by contrived explications they may make their rule bend and yield to their self-biassed humours and ends; which because they find it not easy to do with full satisfaction to their consciences, (that see more than they would have them, and are yet not of authority enough with them to govern and command their practice) it is not strange, they entangle and even lose themselves amongst thorns and briars, and meet with little delight in their way. Wherefore,

(2.) Be principally intent to have your soul become habitually good and holy, by its own settled temper and complexion inclined and made suitable to the way of righteousness and life. It was, no doubt, with a very sweet gust and relish of pleasure, that the Psalmist utters that gratulatory acknowledgment of the divine goodness in this, He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths of righteousness, for his name's sake. (Psal. 23. 3.) The paths of righteousness are very agreeable and pleasant to a restored, a sound and healthy soul; to one that is now got into a good habit, and a settled state of spiritual strength. You may therefore take the meaning and substance of this precept, in the apostle's (more authoritative) words, be ye transformed in the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, that acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12. 2.) "You

can never (as though he had said) have a proof of it, the very palate of your soul will be vicious and still disaffected till then; that is, till that transformation and renewing change hath past upon you. Then it will be pleasant to you to know the will of God; your delight will be in the law of the Lord, and in his law you will meditate both day and night. And it will be more pleasant to do it. You will esteem the words of his mouth as your appointed food, and it will be as your meat and drink to do his will. You can easily apprehend how toilsome and painful any thing of business and labour, is to a person that languishes under some enfeebling lazy disease. A like case it is, when you would put one upon doing of anything spiritually good, that is listless, indisposed; to every good work reprobate. How will the heart recoil and give back! with how vehement a reluctance will it resist the proposal, as if you were urging it upon flames or the sword's point! The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be. (Rom. 8. 7.) But when once the law of God is within your heart, you will delight to do his will. (Psal. 40. 8.) To one that is born of God, and hath therefore overcome the world, his commands are not grievous. 1. Joh. 5. 5. Know therefore you must be good (really and habitually so) in order to your doing good with any delight, in conformity to the blessed God himself (your pattern) who therefore exercises loving-kindness judgment and righteousness in the earth, as delighting in these things. (Jer. 9. 24.) You must be partaker of a divine nature, and have the heart-rectifying communication before discoursed of, and become God's own workmanship, a second time, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Eph. 2. 10. It is not to be hoped, it can be delightful to act against inclination; or that a forced imitation of that good whereof you want the implanted vital principle, can be any more pleasing to you than it is to God, whom you cannot mock or impose upon by your most elaborate or specious disguises. And therefore, since that holy heart-rectitude must be had, it must be sought earnestly and without rest. Often ought heaven to be visited with such sighs and longings sent up thither, O that my ways were directed to keep thy righteous judgments. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed. (Psal. 119. 80) And it should be sought with expectation of good-speed and without despair, remembering we are told, if we ask, we shall receive; if we seek we shall find; if we knock, it shall be opened unto us; yea, that our heavenly Father will much more readily give his Holy Spirit to them that ask, than you would bread to your child that calls for it, rather than a stone.

(3.) When once you find your spirit is become in any mea-



sure well-inclined, and begins to savour that which is truly good; know yet, that it needs your continual inspection and care, to cherish good principles and repress evil ones. Your work is not done as soon as you begin to live; as care about an infant ceases not as soon as it is born. Let it be therefore your constant business, to tend your inward man; otherwise all things will soon be out of course. God hath coupled delight with the labour of a christian, not with the sloth and neglect of himself; the heart must then be kept with all diligence, (Prov. 4. 23.) or above all keeping, in as much as out of it are the issues of life. All vital principles are lodged there; and only the genuine issues of such as are good and holy, will yield you pleasure. The exercises of religion will be pleasant when they are natural, and flow easily from their own fountain; but great care must be taken that the fountain be kept pure. There are other springs besides, which will be apt to intermingle therewith their bitter waters, or a root of bitterness, whose fruit is deadly, even that evil thing, and bitter forsaking the Lord. I wonder not, if they taste little of the delights of religion that take no heed to their spirits. Such a curse is upon the nature of man as is upon the ground which was cursed for his sake, (till the blessing of Abraham through Jesus Christ do take place, even the promise of the Spirit, Gal. 3. 14.) that it brings forth naturally thorns and thistles, and mingles sorrows with his bread. But that promised blessing, that will enable a man to eat with pleasure, comes not all at once; nor do the increases of it come on, or the pleasant fruits of righteousness spring up, but in them that give all diligence, to add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity; which would make that we be not barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2. Pet. 1. 5-9.) Otherwise, look in upon thy soul when thou wilt, and thou wilt have no other than the dismal prospect of miserable wastes and desolation. Consider it seriously, wretched man! who tillest thy field, but not thy soul; and lovest to see thy garden neat and flourishing, but lettest thy spirit lie as a neglected thing, and as if it were not thine.

We are directed for the moderating of our care in our earthly concernments to consider the lillies how they grow without their own toil, and are beautifully arrayed without their spinning; but we are taught by no such instances, to divert or remit our care of our inward man. To these concernments, let us then apply and bend ourselves. That is, carefully to observe the first stirrings of our thoughts and desires; to animadvert

upon our inclinations as soon as they can come in view, upon our designs in their very formation; and inquire concerning each, whence is it? from a good principle or a bad? whither tends it? to good or hurt? will not this design, if prosecuted, prove an unjustifiable self-indulgence? does it not tend to an unlawful gratifying of the flesh, and fulfilling some lusts thereof? If so, let it be lopt off out of hand, and the axe be laid even to the root; strike at it, favour it not. Think with thyself, "This, if spared, will breed me sorrow; so much as I give to it, I take away from the comfort of my life; and spend of the stock of my spiritual delight in God. Shall I let sin, the tormentor of my soul, live and be maintained at so costly a rate?" If any good inclination discover itself, cherish it, confirm and strengthen it. Look up, and pray down a further quickening influence. Say with thyself, now that heavenly Spirit of life and grace begins to breathe, impart more of this pleasant vital breath thou blessed and Holy Spirit! Account this a seed time, now the light and gladness are a sowing in thy soul (which are wont to be for the righteous and upright in heart) and do promise ere long, a joyful harvest. But if thou wilt not observe how things go with thy soul, despair that they will ever go well.

(4.) Be frequent and impartial in the actual exercise of gracious principles; or in practising and doing as they direct. Your actual delight arises from and accompanies your holy actions themselves, and is to be perceived and tasted in them; not in the mere inclination to them which is not strong enough to go forth into act. And as these principles are more frequently exercised, they grow more lively and vigorous, and will thence act more strongly and pleasantly; so that your delight in doing good, will grow with the principles it proceeds from. But then you must be impartial and even handed herein, as well as frequent; and run the whole compass of that duty which belongs to you as a christian. Exercise yourself (as we find the direction is) unto godliness; (1 Tim. 4. 7.) and in such acts and parts of godliness chiefly and in the first place, as **may** be the exercise of the mind and spirit, in opposition to the bodily exercise (whether severities imposed upon, or performances that require the ministry of that grosser part) to which this nobler kind of exercise is justly preferred. Turn the powers of your soul upon God. Act seasonably the several graces of the spirit that terminate directly upon him. Let none grow out of use. At sometimes repentance, at others faith, now your love, then your fear; none of these are placed in you, or sanctified in vain. Retire much with God; learn and habituate yourselves unto secret converse with him; contemplate his nature, attri-

butes and works for your excitation to holy adoration, reverence and praise. And be much exercised in the open solemnities of his worship; there endeavouring that though your inward man bear not the only, it may the principal part. How delightful a thing is it, to be paying actual avowed homage to the great Lord of heaven and earth before angels and men! And never think your religious and devotional exercises can acquit you, or supply the want and excuse the absence of sobriety and righteousness. Exercise a just authority over yourselves. Keep your imagination, passions, sensitive appetite under a due restraint, so as to be moderate in your desires and enjoyments, patient as to your wants and sufferings. Do to others as you would be done unto: study common good: endeavour, so far as your capacity can extend, all about you may be the better for you. Forbear and forgive the injurious, relieve the necessitous, delight in good men, pity the bad, be grateful towards friends, mild and unrevengeful towards enemies, just towards all. Abhor to do not only a dishonest, but even a mean and unworthy act, for any self-advantage. And all this out of an awful and dutiful respect to God; by which the ordinary actions of your life may become as so many acts of religion, or be directed and influenced thereby, tinctured as it were with the savour of godliness. Pass thus, in your continual practice, through the whole circle of Christian duties and graces, with an equal respect to all God's commandments, not so partially addicting yourselves to one sort of exercise, as to disuse and neglect the rest; which kind of partiality is that which starves religion, and stifles the delight of it.

There are those that affect the reputation of being sober, just, kind, charitable persons, and do appear such, who yet are great strangers to God, and to the more noble exercises of the divine life; know not what belongs to communion with God, live not in his love and converse, savour not heaven; have not so much as the taste of the great vital powers of the world to come. Others, that pretend to much acquaintance with God, and are much taken up in discoursing of his love, and of intimacies with him, that count justice and charity mean things, and much beneath them: can allow themselves to be covetous, oppressive, fraudulent, wrathful, malicious, peevish, fretful, discontented, proud, censorious, merciless; and so glory in a religion which no one is the better for, and themselves least of all; and which is quite of another stamp from the pure religion and undefiled. (Jam. 1. 27.) which the apostle describes and recommends. And certainly, their religion hath as little of pleasure in it to themselves, as it hath of beauty and ornament in the sight of others. So maimed a religion can be ac-

accompanied with little delight. Would it not detract much from the natural pleasure of a man's life, if he should lose an arm or a leg? or have them useless and unserviceable? or if he should be deprived of some of his senses, or natural faculties, so as to be incapable of some of the more principal functions of life? And if we should suppose the new creature alike maimed and defective, will there not be a proportionable diminution of its delight? But the Spirit of God is the Author of no such imperfect productions; and therefore the total absence of any holy disposition will not argue the true delight of such a one to be little, but none at all. However, let all the integral parts of the new man be supposed formed at first, and existing together; when this creature is thus entirely framed, it is our business to see to the due exercise, and thereby to the improvement and growth of the several parts, wherein if one be neglected, it infers a general enfeeblement of the whole. Let patience have its perfect work (saith that apostle) that ye may be perfect, and entire wanting nothing, (Jam. 1. 4.) implying, that not only the absence of that one grace, but its not being thoroughly exercised, would render us very defective christians. We may say of the several members of this divine creature, as is said of the complex body of christians, if one suffer, all the members suffer with it; if one be honoured, all rejoice with it. Therefore that you may experience the delightfulness of religion, see that in the exercise and practice of it you be entire, thorough christians.

(5.) Be ye confirmed in the apprehension, that religion is in itself a delightful thing, even universally and in the whole nature of it. Whereby a double practical mistake and error will be avoided, that greatly obstructs and hinders the actual relish and sensation of that delight.

[1.] That either religion is in the whole nature of it such a thing to which delight must be alien, and banished from it; as if nothing did belong to, or could consist with it, but sour severities, pensiveness and sad thoughts. Or else,

[2.] That if any delight did belong to it at all, it must be found only in peculiar extraordinary assurances and persuasions of God's love; and be the attainment consequently of none but more eminent christians.

That apprehension being thoroughly admitted, both these misapprehensions fall and vanish. And it will take place, if it be duly considered,—that there is a delight that will naturally arise from the congruity and fitness of actions in themselves, and the facility of them, that they flow easily from their proper principles. Whereupon there can be no true vital act of re-

ligion but will be delightful. And we may appeal herein to the judgments of such as shall allow themselves to consider, whether the matter do not evidently appear to be so upon a serious review and revolving with themselves of the several gracious operations that proceed from the holy rectitude mentioned in the Former Part; as the acts of even repentance, self-abasement, self-denial, self-devoting, (appearing to be in themselves most fit and becoming things,) and readily without force proceeding (as they cannot but do) from a rectified and well-disposed heart, how can they but be pleasant? And it is much in our way to the experiencing of such delight, to be at a point with ourselves, and well resolved wherein it is to be sought and found.

(6.) However all the acts and operations of true, and living religion be in themselves delightful, yet apply yourselves to the doing of them for a higher reason, and with a greater design than your own delight. Otherwise you destroy your own work therein, and despoil your acts of their substantial, moral goodness, and consequently of their delightfulness also. That is not a morally good act, which is not referred to God, and done out of (at least) an habitual devotedness to him, so as that he be the supreme end thereof. You would therefore, by withdrawing and separating this reference to God, ravish from them their very life and soul; yea and perfectly nullify those of them that should be in themselves acts of religion. So as that in respect of all your actions, that separation were unjust; and as to those that should be direct acts of religion, impossible. Since therefore they are only delightful as they are vital acts, proceeding from a principle of divine life; and that an habitual devotedness to God, is that very (comprehensive and most radical) principle; you should, by designing your own delight in them supremely, counter-act yourself, and cross your own end; you should make them acts of idolatry, not religion; and set up your own self as the idol of jealousy, that receives the homage of them, instead of God: whereby the unlawful pleasure which you would engross to yourselves, will turn all to gall and wormwood, and be bitterness in the end. That therefore you may taste the sweetness and pleasure which belongs to a religious, godly life, your way must be, to act on directly forward in the simplicity of your heart, doing all that you do to and for God. And thus that pleasure, because it is natural to such acts, will of its own accord result and arise to you; and so much the more, by how much less you design for yourself in what you do. From that uprightness and sincerity of heart towards God it can never be separated. But to be a religious epicure, to pray, hear, meditate, do acts of justice and charity, only to

please and humour yourselves, and that you may derive a kind of solace and satisfaction from your own work, is to undo your design, and blast the delight which you covet. It follows while you seek it not; it flies from you while you so inordinately seek it.

(7.) Yet disallow not yourself to taste and enjoy the pleasure of well-doing. Yea, and (secondarily and in due subordination) to design and endeavour that you may do so. It is in itself, a covetable and lawful pleasure; so that it be not sought and entertained out of its own place. It is a promised pleasure, the good man (it is said) shall be satisfied from himself. (Pro. 14. 14.) And it is by particular direction to be testified to the righteous, they shall eat the fruit of their own doings. Isa. 3. 10. It is God's gracious allowance to them, which it is a part of gratitude and dutifulness to esteem and accept; yea, and with great admiration of the divine goodness that hath made and settled such a conjunction between their duty and their delight; that hath laid such laws upon them, as in the keeping whereof there is such reward; (Psal. 19. 11.) when as they might have been enjoined a meaner servitude, and by the condition and kind of their work, have been kept strangers to any thing of delight therein.

That thankful acknowledgment of the bounty and goodness of God to them in the very constitution of his laws and government, is become a part of their duty, which cannot be done without previous relishes of the sweetness and goodness of their other duty. They are required in every thing to give thanks, 1 Thes. 5. 18. And it is said, they shall go on in their way as the redeemed of the Lord, with everlasting joy upon their heads; (Isa. 51. 11.) that they shall sing in the ways of the Lord; (Psal. 138. 5.) which cannot be, if they take not notice that the ways of the Lord are pleasantness, and all his paths peace. Prov. 3. 17. Therefore you should designedly set yourself to taste the goodness and delightfulness of holy walking. And to that end, when you find the blessed cherishing warmth and vigour of God's gracious communication let in upon you, enlarging your hearts, making your way and work easy to you, and helping you to do with an untoilsome facility, what he requires and calls for, and to run the way of his commandments; so that you can do acts of piety, righteousness and mercy as natural acts, borne up by the power of a steady, living principle acting in you, (as it is said, they that wait upon the Lord shall renew strength and mount up with wings as eagles, run without weariness, and walk without fainting, Isa. 40. 31.) you should now reflect and take notice how good and pleasant is this! Make your pauses and deliberate; have your seasons of

respiration and drawing breath; and then bethink yourself, commune thus with your own heart, "How do I now like the way and service of the Lord? and a life of pure devotedness to him? a course of regular walking in thorough subjection to his laws and government? and that the course of my actions be as a continual sacrificing; doing all to him, and for him?" What do you not now rejoice that you find yourselves to offer willingly? Can you forbear with gratitude and joy to acknowledge and own it to him, that it is of his own hand that you do this? You should now compare your present with your former state and temper, and consider how much better is it to me to live in his fear, love and communion, than to be, as once I was, alienated from the life of God, and as without him in the world! now I can trust and obey, once I could not. Now, when the opportunity invites, I am in some readiness to serve him, created to good works, a vessel fitted to my master's use; some time I was to every good work reprobate. Surely it is most becoming to take a free complacency in this blessed change. That is, not with a proud, pharisaical gloriation to say, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men;" or, trusting in yourself that you are righteous, to despise others; but with a mean estimation of yourself, and all you can do; and with that deep and constant sense, that when you have done all you can, you are an unprofitable servant, you do but your duty. Yet blessing God that since he hath made such things your duty, he also doth in some measure enable you to do it; that he hath reconciled and attempered your heart to your way and work, and made it pleasant to you. Not hypocritically arrogating all to yourself, under the formal and false shew of thanksgiving to him; or aiming only more colourably to introduce a vain boast and ostentation of yourself, in the form of gratulation to God; but as having a heart inwardly possessed with the humble sense who it is that hath made you differ, not only from other men, but from yourself also.

(8.) And because that disposedness of heart unto such a course of holy practice, may not be constantly actual, and equally sensible at all times, (that all delight, in the ways of God may not hereupon cease, and be broken off, which in those sadder intervals cannot but suffer a great diminution,) you must take heed, that as to the distempers and indispositions you now discern in your own spirit, you do neither indulge yourself nor despair; but take the proper course of redress.

To indulge yourself in them were mortal. Then down you go as a dead weight into the mire and dirt, into the depths of the earth, and your swift and pleasant flight ends in a heavy



lumpish fall. You should therefore bethink yourself, that if you yield to a slothful, sluggish temper of spirit, which you now feel coming on upon you, shortly you shall have nothing (sensibly) remaining to you of your religion, but the dead and empty forms. How waste and desolate a thing will that be ! a like thing as if you come into a deserted house where you were wont pleasantly to converse with most delectable friends, and you now find nothing but cold bare walls. How dismal will it be when only the same duties, the same external frame and acts of worship remain, but the spirit of life and power which was wont to breathe in them, is retired and gone ! And what, will you take up with that delusive unconvertible shadow, or be content to embrace the stiff and breathless carcase that remains ? You find perhaps your spirit sinking into carnality, an earthly temper of mind gradually seizing on you ; worldly thoughts, cares, desires, fears, invading your heart : by the same degrees that these come on, life retires ; you grow listless toward God ; your heart is not in your religion as heretofore : you keep up your fashion of praying, and doing other duties which were your former wont ; but you languish in them. Can you here be content to lie still and die ? and rather choose to suffer the pains of death than of labour, by which your soul might yet live ? Is this a time to roll yourself upon your slothful bed, and say, "Soul, take thine ease," even upon the pit's brink ? Do not agree the matter so. Think not of making a covenant with death. It is not so gentle a thing as your slothful temper makes you think. Account the state intolerable wherein you are so manifestly tending towards it. Think not well of yourself and your present case. What reason soever any have to be pleased and delighted with a course of lively converse with God, and of walking in the Spirit ; so much reason you have to be displeased with yourself as your case now is ; to dislike and abhor the present temper of your own soul. If the life of religion, and its vigorous exercises be delightful, by that very reason it appears its faint and sickly languishings are not so.

Therefore know, that self-indulgence is now most unsuitable and dangerous. Labour to awaken in yourselves some sense of your condition. Think, "Whither am I going ?" Represent to your own soul the terrors of death. Admit the impression thereof. Behold its frightful visage, and be startled at it. Re-count with yourself what you shall be if God who is your life quite depart ; if this shall never be, yet know that your fear lest it should, is the means of your preservation. And let the apprehension of the tendency of your distemper excite in you that just and seasonable fear. How sure soever you are of the



principle that God will never utterly forsake those that are his (as most certainly he never will) yet you cannot be so sure of your application of it to yourself, as your case stands, but that there will now be room for this fear: therefore let it be entertained.

But though you admit a just and very solicitous fear, be sure that you exclude not hope, though you apprehend your case dangerous, look not upon it as desperate. Your hope must not be in yourself, but in him that raises the dead, and calleth things that are not, as though they were; yea, makes them exist and be. But if you cast away all hope, you yield yourself to perish. This stops your breath; so that even all strugglings for life, and the very gaspings of your fainting heart must immediately cease and end in perfect death. The danger of your case as bad as it is; calls not for this; nor will the exigency of it comport with it; when once the soul says there is no hope, it immediately proceeds to say; I have loved strangers and after them will I go. (Jer. 2. 25) Your hope is as necessary to your safety as your fear; we are saved by hope, (Rom. 8. 24.) that is of the end itself, which therefore animates to all the encounters and difficulties of our way, as well from within as from without. Great distempers appear in you and often return; yea, such as are of a threatening aspect and tendency. You should yet consider you are under cure: the prescribed means and method whereof are before you. There is balm in Gilead, and a physician there: One in whose hands none that trusted him ever miscarried. It is well if you find yourself sick. The whole need him not; and will not therefore commit themselves to his care. He hath relieved many such as you, that apprehending their case, have been restored to him; let them despair that know no such way of help. Say within yourself, though I am fallen and low, I shall rise and stand, renewed by thee, O my God: Was there never such a time with you before, when in the like case you cried to the Lord and he answered you, and strengthened you with strength in your soul? (Psal. 138. 3.) Say, within yourself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance (where health shews itself in lively, sprightly, pleasant looks) and my God." (Psal. 42. 11.) And this very hope as it preserves life, so it doth the delight and pleasure of life from being quite extinct. The joy of hope is not to go for nothing, when it can only be said; not, it is well but it shall be. It is pleasant to consider that the state wherewith saints on earth are, is a state of recovery; that though it be not a state of perfect health, yet it is not (also) a state of death; but wherein they are tending to life in the perfection of it.

And their frequent (and very faulty) relapses shall be found but to magnify the more, the skill and patience of their great Physician. Therefore however you are not hence to be secure, or imposing upon him; yet let not your hearts sink into an abject despair and sullen discontent, that you find a distempered frame sometimes returning. Let there be tender relents after God. Your heart ought often to smite you, that you have been no more careful and watchful; but not admit a thought that you will therefore cast off all; that it is in vain ever to strive more, or seek to recover that good frame that you have often found is so soon gone.

Instead of that, apply yourself with so much the more earnestness to the proper course of remedy; and therein you must know your own labour and diligence; your contentions with yourself must have a great place: otherwise it would never have been said, be watchful and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die. (Rev. 3. 2.) And give all diligence to add to your faith, virtue, &c. (2. Pet. 1. 5.) Such things would never have been charged, as duty upon you if you had nothing to do. You must expect to be dealt with as a sort of creatures capable of understanding your own concerns; not to be hewed and hammered as senseless stones that are ignorant of the artist's intent, but as living ones to be polished and fitted to the spiritual building, by a hand that reasonably expects your own compliance and co-operation to its known design. Unto which design though you must know you are to be subservient and must do something; yet you must withal consider you can be but subservient and of yourselves alone can do just nothing. Therefore, if ever you would know what a life of spiritual delight means, you must constantly strive against all your spiritual distempers that obstruct it, in the power of the Holy Ghost. And do not think that is enjoining you a course wholly out of your power; for though it be true, that the power of the Holy Ghost, is not naturally yours, or at your disposal; yet by gracious vouchsafement and ordination it is. If it were not so, what means that exhortation, Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; (Eph. 6. 10.) and that if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit; (Gal. 5. 25.) with the foregoing prescription of walking in the Spirit, that we might not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. (ver. 16.) Doth the Holy Ghost himself prescribe to us impertinently, in order to our obtaining of his own imparted influences? Doth not he know the method and way wherein they are to be conveyed? or would he deceive us by misrepresenting it? In short walking in the Spirit must signify something; and what can it signify less than dependence on his power, and subjection thereto,

with the continuance of both these ? These therefore are necessary to the making of that power our own :

[1.] Dependence and trust : as that like phrase imports, I will go in the strength of the Lord God, &c. (Psal. 71. 16.) And that, I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, (Zech. 10. 12) at once shews us both the communication of the divine power, "I will strengthen them in the Lord" and the way wherein it is communicated, their walking up and down in his name, namely in actual and continued dependence thereon. The blessed God hath settled this connexion between our faith and his own exerted power. As the extraordinary works of the Spirit were not done, but upon the exercise of the extraordinary faith, which by the divine constitution was requisite thereunto ; so that the infidelity which stood in the privation of this faith, did sometimes (so inviolable had that constitution made that connexion) in a sort bind up the power of God, and he could do no mighty works there, and he marvelled because of their unbelief, (Mark 6. 5. 6.) Why could we not cast him out ? Because of your unbelief. (Mat. 17. 19. 20.) Nor also are the works of the Holy Ghost, that are common upon all sincere christians, done, but upon the intervening exercise of that more common faith. (Eph. 6. 16) Therefore is this shield to be taken above all the other parts of the divine armature, as sufficient to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked ; therefore are we said to be kept by the power of God through faith, (1. Pet. 1. 5.) And more expressly in terms to our present purpose ; we are to receive the promise of the Spirit (that is the Spirit promised) through faith. (Gal. 3. 14.) Hereby we draw the power of that Almighty Spirit into a consent and co-operation with our spirit. So the great God suffers himself, his own arm and power to be taken hold of by us. He is engaged when he is trusted ; that trust being now in this case, not a rash and unwarrantable presuming upon him, but such whereto he hath given the invitation and encouragement himself. So that when we reflect upon the promises wherein the gift of the Spirit is conveyed, or wherein the express grant thereof is folded up, we may say, Remember thy word to thy servant, wherein thou hast caused me to hope. (Prov. 1. 2. 3. Ezek. 36. 27. Psalm 119.)

And then surely he will not frustrate the expectation which he hath himself been the Author of. He would never have induced those to trust in him, whom he intended to disappoint. That free Spirit which (as the wind blows where it listeth) now permits itself to be brought under bonds, even the bonds of God's own covenant, wherof we now take hold by our faith ;

so that he will not fail to give forth his influence, so far as shall be necessary for the maintaining a resolution in us of steadfast adherence to God and his service, and retaining a dominion over undue inclinations and affections. How express and peremptory are those words, this I say, (as though he had said) I know what I say, I have well weighed the matter, and speak not at random) "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh!" And so much as this affords great matter of rational delight, though more sensible transports (which are not so needful to us, and in reference whereto the Spirit therefore retains its liberty) be not so frequent. Therefore if we aim at the having our spirits placed and settled in the secret of the divine presence, entertained with the delights of it; if we would know and have the sensible proof of that religion which is all life and power, and consequently sweetness and pleasure; our direct way is believing on the Spirit. That very trust is his delight, he taketh pleasure in them that hope in his mercy. (Psal. 147. 11.) It is that whereby we give him divine honour, the homage and acknowledgments proper to a Deity; confessing ourselves impotent and insufficient to think any thing as of ourselves, we rely upon his sustaining hand and own our sufficiency to be of him. (2. Cor. 3. 5.) It is his delight to be depended on as a Father by his children. He is pleased that title should be given him the Father of spirits. (Heb. 12. 9.) To have the spirits which are his offspring gathering about him (especially those who being revolted from him and become sensible of their misery by their revolt, do now upon his invitation apply themselves, and say, "Lo, now we come to thee, thou art the Lord our God,") craving his renewed communications, drawing vital influences from him, and the breath of life, adoring his boundless fulness that filleth all in all. And when we thus give him his delight, we shall not long want ours. But then we must also add,

[2.] Subjection to our dependence; a willing, obedient surrender and resignation of ourselves to the conduct and guidance of that blessed Spirit. A dutiful yielding to his dictates, so as that they have actually with us the governing, binding force and power of a law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ as it is called (Rom. 8. 3.) Great care must be taken of grieving and quenching the Spirit, of rebelling and vexing it, of resisting it, and of striving against it (which appears to have been the horrid crime of the old world; his Spirit it is intimated had striven, when it is said it should no longer strive; (Eph. 4. 30. 1. Thes. 5. 19. Isa. 63. 10. Acts. 7. 5. Gen. 6.) and that it had striven, implies a counter-striving that was now, by his penal retirement permitted to be victorious, but their own sudden ruin

of despiting the Spirit of grace. (Heb. 10. 29.) A wickedness aggravated by the very style and title there given it, the Spirit of grace ; and unto which only such a vengeance (as is intimated in what follows) which it peculiarly belonged to God himself to inflict could be proportionable. When we permit ourselves entirely to the government of the Holy Ghost, thereby to have our spirits and ways framed and directed according to his own rules, his quickening influence, and the pleasure and sweet relishes thereof will not be withheld. And if the experience of some christians seem not constantly to answer this, who complain they pray often for the Spirit, and desire earnestly his gracious communications, but find little of them, they are concerned seriously to reflect, and bethink themselves whether their distrust or disobedience, or both, have not made them desolate. Surely we are altogether faulty in this matter : his promise and faithfulness do not fail, his Spirit is not straitened. But we either do not entirely commit and entrust ourselves to his guidance, or we obediently comply not with it ; but either indulge our sluggishness and neglect, or our contrary inclinations ; and resist his dictates ; are intractable and wayward, not apt to be led by the Spirit, and hence provoke him to withdraw from us. Hereto we are in justice to impute it that we find so little of that power moving in us, all the motions whereof are accompanied with so much delight.

2. For excitation. Little one would think should be needfull to be said more than only that we would bethink ourselves, what all this while we have been directed to and are by this text. If that be once understood, hath it not in itself invitation enough ? Do we need further to be invited to a life of delight ? Do we need to be pressed with arguments to choose delightful and wholesome food, rather than gall and wormwood, or even very poison ? It is a sad argument of the deplorate state of man that he should need arguments in such a case ! But because (moreover) much is to be said hereafter, to persuade unto delighting in God considered in the stricter notion of it, and that will also be applicable to this purpose ; therefore little is intended to be said here. Only it is to be considered, do you intend to proceed in any course of religion, or no ? If not, you are to be remitted to such discourses as prove to you the reasonableness and necessity of it : which if you think nothing you meet with sufficiently proves : think with yourself how well you can prove, that there is no God, and that you are no man, but a perishing beast. For these things they are concerned not fondly to presume and wish ; but most clearly and surely to demonstrate, who will be of no religion. But if you think that horrid ; and resolve to own something or other of religion ;

will you here use your understanding, and consider? Is it indeed so horrid a thing to disavow all religion? And what is it better to pretend to it to no purpose? You find the religion is all but shew and shadow, mere empty vanity and mockery, which is not delightful. If you will not choose a better, because it is delightful, (as you are not advised to do for that as your chief reason) yet at least choose that which is so, because it is in other more considerable respects eligible, as being most honourable and pleasing to him that made you, and only safe and profitable to yourself. And what shall your religion serve for, that will not answer these purposes? And if you be not ashamed to spend so considerable a part of the time of your life, as the exercises of your religion will take up, in doing that (as was said before) whereof you can give no account; yet, me-thinks you should be afraid to make such things the subject of your vanity, as do relate to God, either really or in your opinion. Can you find nothing wherein vainly to trifle, but the sacred things of the great God of heaven, and the eternal concernments of your own soul? And shall the time spent about these matters be peculiarly marked out as your idle time, wherein you shall be doing that only which shall wholly go for loss and signify nothing? The religion which is not delightful can turn to no better account.

If therefore you will have a religion, and you have any reason for that resolution, by the same reason you would have any, you must have the pleasant delightful religion we speak of. You have no other choice. There is no other will serve your turn. And therefore what hath been said to divert you from the other, ought to persuade you to the choice of this. And besides, since there is so much of secret delight in true substantial religion, that ought not to signify nothing with you. If we did consider the delightfulness of it alone, upon that single account, it surely challenges the preference, before that which is neither profitable nor delightful. And that it is in itself so delightful, if you had nothing to inform you but the report of such as profess to have tried and found it so, methinks that at least should provoke you to try also. How sluggish a temper doth it argue, not to be desirous to know the utmost that is in it! It were even a laudable curiosity to resolve upon making trial; to get into the inmost centre of it; to pierce and press onward till you reach the seat of life, till you have got the secret, and the very heart of religion and your heart do meet and join in one. Did you never try experiments for your pleasure? Try this one. See what you will find in withdrawing yourself from all things else, and becoming entirely devoted to God through the Redeemer, to live after his will and in his presence.

Try the difference between viewing truths to please your genius, or using divine ordinances to keep up the custom, to conform yourself to those you live among, and help to make a solemn shew; and doing these things with a serious design to get into an acquaintance with God, to have your soul transformed into his image, that you may have present and eternal fellowship with him. Try how much better it is, to have your lives governed by an awful and dutiful respect to God, than to follow your own wild and enormous inclinations; and whether it be not better, what good things soever you do, to do it for the Lord's sake, than from base and sordid motives.

And why should you be of so mean and abject a spirit, as to content yourself to be held at the door and in the outer courts of religion; when others enter in and taste the rich provisions of God's house? Why will you distinguish yourselves by so debasing a character? It is a just and commendable ambition, to be as forward here as the best. Why will you suffer this and that and the other man to enter into the kingdom of God before you; even that kingdom which consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost! Think not so meanly of your self; impose not on yourself that needless unwarrantable modesty, as to account you are of a lower rank than all that ever became intimately acquainted with the hidden delights of a godly life. At least you are as capable of being thought worthy as any, for his sake upon whose account all must be accepted. Therefore think with yourselves, Why should I not labour to attain as far in the matter of religion, as this or that neighbour of mine? What should hinder? Who restrains or forbids me?

But you cannot, if you consider, but have somewhat more to assure you of the delightfulness of it, than the mere report of others; for your own reason and conscience cannot but so pronounce, if you go to the particulars that have been instanced in. If you acknowledge a God, and consider yourself as a reasonable creature made by him, and depending on him; you cannot but see, it is congruous and fit your spirit should be so framed and affected towards him, towards your fellow creatures of your own order, and all things else that do and shall circumstantiate your present and future state, as hath been in some measure (though very defectively) represented; and that it must needs be very pleasant, if it were so. You can frame in your mind an idea of a life transacted according to such rectified inclinations. And when you have done so, do but solemnly appeal to your own judgment whether that were not a very delectable life and thereupon bethink yourself what your case is, if you cannot actually relish a pleasure in what your own judgment tells you is so highly pleasurable. Methinks you

should reflect thus, "What a monstrous creature am I; that confess that delightful wherein yet I can take no delight! How perverse a nature have I! Surely things are much out of order with me; I am not what I should be!" And one would think, it should be uneasy to you to be as you are; and that your spirit should be restless till you find your temper rectified, and that you are in this respect become what you should be. And will you dream and slumber all your days? How much time have you lost, that might have been pleasantly spent in a course of godliness! Do you not aim at a life of eternal delights with God? If you now begin not to live to God, when will you? That life which you reckon shall never end with you, must yet have a beginning. Will you defer till you die your beginning to live? Have you any hope, God will deal in a peculiar way with you from all men, and make the other world the place of your first heart-change? How dismal should it be to you, to look in and still find your heart dead towards God, and the things of God; so that you have no delight in them. Think what the beginnings of the divine life, and the present delights of it, must be the earnest of to you, and make sure the ground (betime) of so great a hope. But I forbear here to insist further; and pass on to the discourse of delighting in God, under the other more strict notion of it, namely, as the very act of delight hath its direct exercise upon himself, which is the subject of the following chapter.



## CHAP. III.

Having considered the practice of delighting in God as adherent to the other duties of religion; we are now to consider it. **SECONDLY.** As a distinct duty of itself. In this view of it something is said, by way of—expostulation—invitation and—excitation. *First.* By way of expostulation. 1. With those who are averse to this duty. (1.) Their state shewn to be a state of apostacy. (2.) That their sin is great and horrid. 2. With those who are defective in it and dispute it. (1.) The evil included in the neglect of this part of holy practice. (2.) What evil is derived into it from its very faulty causes. (3.) What evils follow upon this neglect as natural consequents.

**SECONDLY.** **W**E are now to consider this delight, not as a thing someway adherent to all other duties of religion; but as a distinct duty of itself, that requires a solemn and direct application of ourselves thereunto. For though it seems little to be doubted, but there is in this precept a part of religion put for the whole (as having a real influence, and conferring with its name a grateful savour and tincture upon the whole) it would yet be very unreasonable, not to take special notice of that part from whence the intire frame of religion hath its name. And having shewn the nature of this duty already in the Former Part, what is now to be said, must more directly concern the practice of it; and will (as the case requires) fall into two kinds of discourse, namely, expostulation concerning the omission and disuse of such practice, and invitation thereunto. And in both these kinds it is requisite we apply ourselves to two sorts of persons, namely, to such whose spirits are wholly averse and alien to it, and such, as though not altogether unpractised, are very defective in it, and neglect it too much.

*First.* Both sorts are to be expostulated with; and no doubt the great God hath a just quarrel with mankind (whom these two sorts do comprehend) upon the one or the other of these accounts; wherein it is fit we should plead with men for his sake and their own.

1. With those who are altogether disaffected to God alienated and enemies in their minds through wicked works, and (excepting such as deny his Being, with whom we shall not here concern ourselves) at the utmost distance from delighting in him. And as to such, our expostulation should aim at their

conviction, both of the matter of fact, that thus the case is with them, and of the great iniquity and evil of it.

(1.) It is needful we endeavour to fasten upon such a conviction, that this is the state of their case. For while his Being is not flatly denied, men think it generally creditable, to be professed lovers of God; and reckon it so odious a thing not to be so, that they who are even most deeply guilty, are not easily brought to confess enmity to him; but flatter themselves in their own eyes, till their iniquity be found to be hateful. The difficulty of making such apprehend themselves diseased, that their minds are under the power of this dreadful distemper, that it is not well with spirits in this respect, is the great obstruction to their cure. But I suppose you to whom I now apply myself, to acknowledge the Bible to be God's word, and that you profess reverence to the truth and authority of that word, and will yield to be tried by it.

[1.] Therefore you must be supposed such as believe the account true, which that book gives of the common state of man; that it is a state of apostacy from God; that the Lord looking down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if any did understand and seek God, finds they are all gone aside, (Psal. 14. 2. 3.) that is, (that the return may answer to the meaning of the inquiry) gone off from him. Every one of them is gone back, (Psal. 53. 3.) or revolted, as it is expressed in the parallel psalm, there is none that doth good, no not one; (Rom. 3. 12) which is quoted by the apostle to the intent, that every mouth may be stopped. and the whole world may become guilty before God. (ver. 19.) This is then a common case. And as the same apostle charges it upon the Gentiles, that they were haters of God; so doth our Saviour as expressly on the Jews, (who no doubt thought themselves as innocent of this crime as you) that "they had both seen and hated both him and his Father." And when it is said of men, that they were by nature the children of wrath, (Eph. 2. 3.) (they to whom he writes even as others) do you think that is spoken of any lovers of God, as their present state? Or that when all by nature are children of wrath, any are by nature lovers of him, so as to love him, and be under his wrath both at once? It is likely then, that against so plain evidence, while you confess yourselves men, you will not deny you were sometime haters of God. Well then, is the case altered with you? It is a conviction against you, that you are of human race, till it can be evidenced you are born from above, and are become new creatures? And what, do you find this? It is not expected, you should be able to tell the very moment when you ceased from your enmity against God, and became his friends; or give a punctual account of every turn

or motion of the thoughts in such a change : but it is to be supposed, the work was not done upon you in your sleep, so as that you could have no animadversion of what was doing. However, comparing what you sometime were with what you are, what difference do you observe ? What were you, sometime haters of God, and are you now come to love and delight in him without perceiving in yourselves any difference ? Bethink yourselves, is not the temper of your spirits just such Godward as it was always wont to be, without any remarkable turn or alteration ? That is a shrewd presumption against you, that your case is most deplorable. But,

[2.] What is your present temper, in itself considered ? You do love God and delight in him, how do you make it appear ? wherein doth that friendly and dutiful affection towards him evidence itself ? Sure love and hatred are not all one with you. Whereby would you discern your hatred towards one you did most flatly and peremptorily disaffect ? You would dislike the thoughts of him, hate his memory, cast him out of your thoughts. Do you not the same way shew your disaffection to God ? Do you not find, that so a wicked a man (his enemy) is branded and distinguished, God is not in all his thoughts ? (Psal. 10. 4.) Are not they who shall be turned into hell described thus, the people that forget God ; (Psal. 9. 17.) that is, who willingly and of choice forget him, or from the habitual inclination of their hearts ? And is not that your case ? What could hinder you to remember him, if you were so disposed ?

Yea, but you often forget your friends, or those at least to whom you are sure you bear no ill will ; and what friends would expect to be always in your thoughts ? It is answered ; but you disrelish not the remembrance of a friend. Do you not the thoughts of God ? You do not think on your absent friends while no present occasion occurs, to bring them to your remembrance : but is God absent ? Is he far from any one of us ? Or have you not daily before your eyes, things enough to bring him to mind ; while his glorious works surround you, and you live, move, and have your being in him, and your breath is in his hand ? Have you that dependence on any friend ? Are you under so much obligation to any ? You often do not think on friends with whom you have no opportunity to converse ; Have you no opportunity to converse with him ? Your friends can lay no such law upon you, to have them much in your thoughts. It argues a depraved inclination, not to do herein what you ought and are bound to do. You cannot by the exercise of your thoughts obtain the presence of a friend ; you might a most comfortable divine presence.

And what though you think not of many to whom you bear

no ill will, nor have any converse with many such; is it enough to bear no ill will to God? Will that suffice you to delighting in him? Are you no more concerned to mind God and converse with him, than with the man you never knew or had to do with? Your unconvertibleness with God, and unmindfulness of him, can proceed from nothing but ill will, who daily offers himself to your converse, who seeks and invites your acquaintance, would have you inwardly know him, and lead your lives with him, why is it that you do not so, but that you like not to retain him in your knowledge? And that this is the sense and language of your hearts towards him, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" It can proceed from nothing but ill will and a disagreeable temper, that you shun the converse of one that seeks yours; that you will take no notice of one that often offers himself to your view, one that meets you at every turn, and aims to draw your eye, and cannot gain a look. When this is your deportment towards God, that he passes by you, and you perceive him not; he compasses you about, behind and before and is acquainted with all your ways, and with him and his ways you will have no acquaintance, remain alienated from the life of God, and as without him in the world; is not this downright enmity? Or can this deportment agree with habitual and the frequent actual delight in God which is required.

Again, would you not be justly taken to disaffect one whose temper is ungrateful, whose disposition and way is displeasing to you? Is it not thus with you Godward? When you hear of the purity and holiness of his nature, his abhorrency of all wickedness, and how detestable to him everything is that is impure, and that he will not endure it; do not your hearts regret this quality (as we must conceive of it) in the nature of God? Which yet, because it is very nature, doth so much the more certainly infer, that a dislike of it cannot but include disaffection to himself, and that habitual and constant, since his whole way of dealing with men, and the course of his government over the world, do (and shall more discernibly) savour of it; do they not wish him hereupon not to be, in this respect, what he is; which is in effect, to wish him not to be at all? The same thing which the heart of the fool says, "No God;" that is, this would please such a one to the very heart. And doth this import no enmity? Can this stand with delight in him. Are you not disaffected to him, whom not being able to accuse of falsehood, whom having the greatest imaginable assurances of the impossibility he should deceive, you will yet by no means be induced to trust? Consider, what doth your trust in God signify, more than the sound of the name? Doth it quiet your heart, in re-

ference to any affairs you pretend to commit to him? Doth it purify it, and check your ill inclinations, in any thing wherein they should be countermanded upon the credit of his word? What doth his testimony concerning the future things you have not seen, weigh with you, to the altering of your course, and rendering it such as may comport and square with the belief of such things? Would not the word of an ordinary man, premonishing you of any advantage or danger which you have no other knowledge of, be of more value with you? Constant suspicion of any one, without cause or pretence most certainly argues radical enmity. You love him not whom you cannot trust.

Do you love him whom upon all occasions you most causlessly displease; whose offence you reckon nothing of? Is that ingenuous towards a friend, or dutiful towards a father or a lord? How do you, in this, carry towards the blessed God? Are you wont to displease yourselves to please him, or cross your own will to do his? Do you take delight in him whom you make no difficulty to vex; whose known declared pleasure, though you confess him greater, wiser, and more righteous than yourself, you have no more regard to, wherein it crosses your own inclination, than you would have to that of your child, your slave, or a fool? Have you any thing to except against that measure and character of loyal affection to your Redeemer and Lord, "If ye love me, keep my commandments; ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you; this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments?" Do you not disobey the known will of God in your ordinary practice without regret? Do you not know it to be his will, that you "strive to enter in at the strait gate;" that you "seek first the kingdom of heaven;" that you "keep your heart with all diligence;" that you "deny yourself, crucify the flesh," be temperate, just, merciful, patient? Do you aim at obeying him in these things? Can you say, Lord, for thy sake I refrain the things to which my heart inclines? Hath his prohibition any restraining force upon your hearts? Do you not allow yourself to be licentious, earthly, vain, proud, wrathful, revengeful, though you know it will offend him? and is this your love to him, or delight in him? Do you bear goodwill to him whose reproach and dishonour you are not concerned for, yea, whom you stick not to dishonour and reproach? whose interest among men hath no place in your thoughts, whose friends are none of yours, whose enemies are your friends, whose favour you care not for, nor regret his frowns, whose worship is a burden to you, (that you had rather do any thing than pray to him,) and his fellowship an undesired thing? Make an estimate by these things of the temper of your hearts

towards God; and consider whether it bespeak delight in him, or not rather habitual aversion and enmity.

It may be you will admit these things seem to carry somewhat of conviction with them; but they concern many that are taken for godly persons and lovers of God, as well as they do you. And it may be many such may take themselves for godly persons and lovers of God, and be mistaken as well as you. And what will that mend your cause? If these things will prove a person one that hath no delight in God, they equally prove it as to you and others, which will make nothing to your advantage. But if they who have sincere love to God, are in a degree peccant against the laws of such love (as that they are, they will hear in due time,) they are more ready to accuse themselves than other men; they abhor themselves, that they do not more entirely delight in God, and repent in dust and ashes. It better becomes you, to imitate their repentance, than glory in their sinful weakness; which while they patronize not themselves, you should not think it can afford a valuable patronage unto you. When did you check and contend with your own hearts upon these accounts, as they are wont to do? And if these things, in a degree found with them, prove their delight in God imperfect, their prevailing contraries will prove it (however) sincere. And if you will not now understand the difference, God grant you may not hereafter at a more costly rate, between the imperfection and the total want of his love; between having your heart and soul imperfectly alive towards God and perfectly dead.

You may further say, God is out of your sight, and therefore how can it be expected you should find a sensible delight in him? But is he out of the sight of your minds? If he be, what would you infer, that then you cannot delight in him at all, and therefore that you do not; the thing that you are charged with all this while. But he is out of sight by the high excellency of his Being; for which reason he should be delighted in the more, that is, with a deeper delight, though not like that you take in the things of sense: and he hath been so beyond all things, notwithstanding his abode in that light which is inaccessible. This therefore is confession without excuse; and would never be offered as an excuse by any, but those that are lost in flesh and sense, have forgot they have reasonable souls, and had rather be numbered with brutes than men; as if there were not many things you have not seen with the eyes of flesh, more excellent than those you have! or as if you had no other faculty than eyes of flesh to see with! Which since you have, and the depravation thereof is vicious and sinful; as your not-delighting in God (the matter of fact) seems to be yielded, and

so you quit your first post, it will thence appear, that it cannot but be sinful too. And since at that you seem to make a stand (as at your next post,) either thinking to deny or extenuate the evil of it, our expostulation must follow you thither, and be aimed,

(2.) To evince to you the greatness and horridness of that sin. Suffer yourselves therefore to be reasoned with to this purpose, and consider,—That you have somewhat of delectation in your natures, that is, you have the power naturally inherent in you, of taking delight in one thing or other. You have such a thing as love about you. Are not some things grateful and agreeable to you, in which you can and do take complacency? Therefore herein an act is not enjoined you which is incompetent to your natures, or simply impossible to you. Next then, do you not know, your delight or love ought to be placed on some good or other that is known to you; and among things that you know to be good, proportionably to the goodness which you find in them, and supremely on the best? Further, do you not acknowledge the blessed God to be the best and most excellent good? as being the first and fountain-good; the fullest and most comprehensive, the purest and altogether unmixed; the most immutable and permanent good? How plain and certain is this? How manifestly impossible is it, if there were not such a good, that otherwise any thing else should ever have been good, or been at all? Is not this as sure and evident as any thing your senses could inform you of? Whence is the glorious excellency of this great creation, the beauty, loveliness, pleasantness of any creature? Must not all that, and infinitely more, be originally in the great Creator of all. This, if you consider, you cannot but see and own.

While then your own hearts tell you, you delight not in God, do not your consciences begin to accuse and judge you, that you deal not righteously in this matter? And ought it not to fill your souls with horror, when you consider, you take no delight in the best and sovereign good? Yea, when you look into your disaffected hearts and find, that you not only do not delight in God, but you cannot; and not for the want of the natural power, but a right inclination? Should you not with astonishment bethink yourselves, every one for himself, “What is this that has befallen me; I am convinced, this is the best good, every way most worthy of my highest delight and love, and yet my heart savours it not!” You can have no pretence to say, that because your heart is disinclined, therefore you are excused, for you only do not what through an invincible disinclination you apprehend you cannot do. But you should bethink yourself, “What a wretch am I, that am so ill-inclined?”



For is not any one more wicked according as he is more strongly inclined to wickedness and averse to what is good? But how vincible or invincible, your disinclination is, you do not yet know, not having yet made due trial. That you cannot of yourselves overcome, it is out of question: but have you tried what help might be got from heaven, in the use of God's own prescribed means? If that course bring you in no help, then may you understand how much you have provoked the Lord. For though he hath promised, that for such as turn at his reproof, he will pour out his Spirit to them; yet they who when he calls refuse, and when he stretches out his hand regard not, but set at nought all his counsel, &c. may call and not be answered, may seek him early and not find him. (Prov. i. 23. 29.) And that wickedness may somewhat be estimated by this effect, that thus it makes the Spirit of grace retire, that free, benign, merciful Spirit, the Author of all love, sweetness and goodness, become to a forlorn soul a resolved stranger. If you are so given up, you have first given up yourselves; you have wilfully cast him out of your thoughts, and hardened your own hearts against him, who was the Spring of your life and being, and in whom is all your hope. And whether this malignity of your hearts shall ever finally be overcome or no (as you have no cause to despair but it may be overcome, if apprehending your life to lie upon it, you wait and strive, and pray and cry, as your case requires;) yet do you not see it to be a fearful pitch of malignity? and so much the worse and more vicious by how much it is more hardly overcome?

That we may here be a little more particular: consider,

[1.] How tumultuous and disorderly a thing this your disaffection is? You are here to consider its direct tendency, its natural aptitude or what it doth of itself, and in its own nature lead and tend to. If you may withdraw your delight and love from God, then so may all other men as well. Therefore now view the thing itself in the common nature of it: and so, is not aversion to delight in God a manifest contrariety to the order of things? a turning all upside down? a shattering and breaking asunder the bond between rational appetite and the First Good? A disjointing and unhinging of the best and noblest part of God's creation from its station and rest, its proper basis and centre? How fearful a rupture doth it make! How violent and destructive a dislocation! If you could break in pieces the orderly contexture of the whole universe within itself, reduce the frame of nature to utmost confusion, rout all the ranks and orders of creatures, tear asunder the heavens, and dissolve the compacted body of the earth, mingle heaven and earth together, and resolve the



world into a mere heap ; you had not done so great a spoil, as in breaking the primary and supreme tie and bond between the creature and his Maker ; yea, between the Creator of all things and his more noble and excellent creature. All the relations, aptitudes and inclinations of the creatures to one another, are but inferior and subordinate to those between the creatures and their common Author and Lord : and here the corruption of the best cannot but be worst of all. . Again,

[2.] What an unnatural wickedness is it ! To hate thy own original ! To disaffect the most bountiful Author of thy life and being ! What wouldst thou say to it if thy own son did hate the very sight of thee, and abhor thy presence and converse ? especially if thou never gavest him the least cause ? If thou hast been always kind and indulgent, full of paternal affection towards him, wouldst thou not think him a vile miscreant ? and reckon the earth too good to bear him ? But how little, and in how low a capacity, didst thou contribute to his being in comparison of what the great God did to thine ? How little of natural excellency hast thou above him (it may be in many things besides this unhappy temper he much excels thee) when thou knowest, in thy Maker is infinite excellency beyond what thou canst pretend unto ? And what cause canst thou pretend of disaffection towards him ? Many good works hath he done for thee : for which of these dost thou hate him ? Whereby hath he ever disobliged thee ? With how sweet and gentle allurements hath he sought to win thy heart ? And is it not most vilely unnatural that thy spirit should be so sullenly averse to him, who is pleased to be stiled the Father of spirits ? And in which respect it may fitly be said to thee, dost thou thus requite the Lord, O foolish creature, and unwise ? (Deut. 32. 6.) Is not he thy Father—? If thou didst hate thy own self (in a sense besides that wherein it is thy duty, and in which kind thou hast, as thy case is, a just and dreadful cause of self-abhorrence ;) if thou didst hate thy very life and being and wert laying daily plots of self-destruction, thou wert not so wickedly unnatural. He is more intimate to thee than thou art to thyself, That natural love which thou owest to thyself, and the nature from whence it springs, is of him, and ought to be subordinate to him ; and by a superior law of nature, thy very life if he actually require it, ought to be sacrificed and laid down for his sake. Thy hatred towards him, therefore is more prodigiously unnatural, than if it were most directly and implacably bent against thyself. And yet also in hating him thou dost most mischievously hate thyself too ; and all that thou dost, by the instinct of that vile temper of heart towards him thou dost it against thy own life and soul. Thou cuttest thy-

self off from him who is thy life ; and art laying a train for the blowing up of thy eternal hope. All that hate him love death, (Prov. 8. 36.) Further,

[3.] It is the most comprehensive wickedness, and which entirely contains all other in it For as the law of love is the universal and summary law, comprehending all duty, and even as it enjoins love to God (for love to men ought to be resolved into that, and must be for his sake ;) so must disaffection to God be comprehensive of all sin, whereinto every thing of it resolves itself. Dost thou not see then how thou cancellst and nullifiest the obligation of all laws, while thou hast no delight in God? offerest violence to the very knot and juncture, wherein they all meet and are infolded together? Not to delight in God therefore, What can it be but the very top of rebellion? What will thy sobriety, thy justice, thy charity signify, if thou hadst these to glory in, while thou art habitually disaffected to thy God? Let men value thee for these, to whom thereby thou shewest some respect; but shall he, who in the mean time knows thou bearest none to him?

[4.] It is a most reproachful contemptuous wickedness! To him, I mean, whom it most directly offends against!—Carries it not in it most horrid contumely and indignity to the most high God? It is a practical denial of all those excellencies in him, that render and recommend him the most worthy object of our delight; it is more than saying, He is not good, holy, wise, just and true. Things may on the sudden be said that are not deliberately thought, and may be retracted the next breath; but a man's stated, constant course and way signify the apprehension it proceeds from to be fixed, and that it is the settled habitual sense of his soul. Yea, and since, as hath been said, Thou delightest in other things whilst thou delightest not in him; it plainly imports it to be the constant sense of thy very heart, that those things are better than He. What is it then that hath thy delight and love? Whereon is thy heart set? Commune with thyself. Dost thou not tremble, when thou findest this to be thy very case, that thou mayest truly say, "I can delight in creatures, but not in God; can take pleasure in my friend, but none in him; I must confess it to be the temper of my heart, that I love my father, mother, son or daughter more than Christ. (Mat. 10. 37. Luk. 14. 26.) Is it not then to be concluded from his own express word, that thou art not worthy of him, and canst be none of his disciple? Nay, mayst thou not moreover truly say, that thou lovest this base impure earth more than God? that thou takest more delight in thy companions in wickedness; canst more solace thyself with a drunkard on the ale bench, with a lascivious wanton, with a

prophane scoffer at godliness, than with the blessed God? that thou canst allow thyself to riot with the luxurious, and eat and drink with the drunken, and not only do such things, but take pleasure in them that do them, yea and thyself take pleasure to commit iniquity; but in the glorious holy God thou canst take no pleasure! Then wouldst thou be content to carry the plain sense of thy heart written on thy forehead, and proclaim it to all the world, as thy resolved practical judgment, that thou accountest thy friends, thy relations, this vile and vanishing world, thy wicked associates, thine own impure lusts, better than God? And dost thou not yet see the horrid vile-ness of thy own heart in all this? Art thou yet a harmless innocent creature, an honest well-meaning man for all this?

Yea, wilt thou not see, that thine heart goes against thy conscience all this while? that thou disaffectest him in whom thou knowest thou shouldst delight? that the temper of thy spirit is a continual affront to thy profession, through the perfidious falsehood and vanity whereof, thou dost but cover hatred with lying lips? Is not that an odious thing which thou so seekest to hide; and which, though thou art not loath to be guilty of it, thou art so very unwilling should be known? And since thou art so very loath it should be known, how canst thou hold up thy head before that eye that is as a flame of fire, that searches thy heart and tries thy reins, that observes thy wayward spirit, and sees with how obstinate an aversion thou declinest his acquaintance and converse? Wilt thou stand before the glorious Majesty of heaven and earth, who knows thy disaffected heart, and say, it is but a small transgression thou hast been guilty of, in not loving him and making him thy delight? Dost thou think this will pass for a little offence in the solemn judgment of the great day that is drawing on? Or will thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong, when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, thou shalt stand convicted before his tribunal in the sight of angels and men, of having borne all thy days a false, disloyal heart, full of malignity and ill-will to thy Sovereign Lord, whom thou wast so many ways obliged to serve and cleave to with delight and love? When the difference shall be visibly put between those that delighted in God and them that never did, and thou shalt be marked out for one of them that didst in heart depart from him all thy days, and be thereupon abandoned to the society of that horrid accursed crew, in whom only thou didst delight; surely thou wilt not then say, thy transgression was small.

2. But we are also to expostulate with another sort; who,

though they are not altogether unacquainted with this heavenly exercise of delighting in God, yet too much disuse it, and apply not themselves to it (as who do?) with that constancy and intention of soul as the matter requires. And these we are to put upon the consideration of such evils, as either are included in this neglect, or are allied unto it (and do therefore accompany and aggravate the natural evil of it,) as either causing it, or being caused by it. And,

(1.) Those whom we now intend are to bethink themselves, what evil is included in their neglect of this part of holy practice. And you are to judge of the evil of it by its disagreement with such known and usual measures, as whereto our practice should be suitable, and which in reason and justice it is to be estimated and censured by; as for instance, the divine law, conscience, experience, obligation by kindness, stipulation, relation, profession, tendency of the new nature, dictates of God's Spirit, the course and drift of his design; with all which it will be found to have very ill accord.

[1.] How directly opposite is it to the law of God! Not only to his express written precept, but to that immutable, eternal law which arises from our very natures referred unto his! The obligingness or binding force whereof, doth not so much stand in this, That the thing to be done is such as whereto our natures were originally inclined, (which yet is of great weight, they having been thus inclined and determined by our Maker himself, so that our inclination was in this case expressive of his will;) but (which is indeed the very reason of that, for we must conceive the divine wisdom in the blessed God to conduct all the determinations of his will,) the natural unchangeable congruity of the thing itself. And therefore as to the things whose constant fitness would render them matter of duty to us at all times, it was provided, inclinations suitable to them should be planted in our natures from the beginning: but things that were to be matter of duty but for a time, having only a present fitness unto some present juncture or state of affairs, it was sufficient that the divine pleasure should be signified about them in some way more suitable to their occasional and temporary use, and that might not so certainly extend to all men and times.

That great law of love to God (which comprehends this of delighting in him) is you may be sure of that former sort, it being impossible there should be a reasonable creature in being, but it will immediately and always be his duty to love God supremely and above all things; yea, that you must know, is the most fundamental of all such laws. And therefore, when because original impressions were become so obscure and illegi-

ble in our natures, it became necessary there should be a new and more express edition of them in God's written word : this is placed in the very front of them, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me ;" Which signifies only the having of a God in name and no mere, if it doth not signify loving him before all other. Wherefore when our Saviour was to tell which was the first and great commandment, he gives it thus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. (Mat. 22. 37,) The thing enjoined by this law is most substantial; the life and soul of all other duty, and without which all that we can do besides is but mere shadow ; for whatsoever we are enjoined to do else, we must understand enjoined to be done out of love to God, as the principle whence it must proceed ; and not proceeding thence, the moral goodness of it vanishes as a beam cut off from the sun. For on this (with the other which is like unto it, and which also hangs upon this) "hang all the law and the prophets." And what durst thou who knowest God, or rather art known of him, neglect so great and substantial a duty ? This is not like the command of wearing fringe on the borders of the garment, or of not wearing a garment of linen and woollen ; wherein sure they whom it concerned should have been very undutiful to have disobeyed : but it is the very greatest among the great things of the law : a duty upon which all duty depends, even for life and breath ! Should not this have obtained in thy practice, that ought to run through and animate all the rest ? Or was it fit it should lie dead, and bound up in the habitual principle and not go forth (or very rarely) into act and exercise ? Or didst thou do thy duty herein, by being only inclined to do it ? Or would not the inclination, if it were right, infer (or otherwise is it like to last long without) suitable exercise ? Why was so express a law neglected, so often enjoined (or the practice mentioned with approbation, or the neglect of it animadverted upon with abhorrence, in the very terms, or in terms evidently enough of the same import) in the Sacred Volume ?\* How could you turn over the leaves of that book and not often meet with such words, "Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous : rejoice in the Lord, and again I say unto you rejoice, &c."† Should not so frequent inculcations of the same thing have been answered by the frequency and continuedness of your practice of it ? Or was it enough now and then, as it were casually and by chance to hit upon the doing of what is so momentous a part of your religion, and ought to be the business of your life ? Ought it not

\* Isa. 55. 1. 2. 3. Psal. 44. 19. Job. 27. 10. chap. 34. 9. Isa. 58. 14. † Psal. 33. 1. 97. 12. Phil. 3. 1. 4. 4.

to cut your heart to find yourself convicted herein of a disobedient omission? And when the great God exacts that stated homage from you, a frequent, practical, explicit recognition and owning of him as the supreme delight, the great solace, repose and rest of your souls, that you have been so little awed with the apprehension of his authority and right in this case? when he hath mercifully chosen, to make that the matter of his command and claim, wherein your own advantage, satisfaction and content doth so intirely consist? That your practice is herein disagreeable to a law, speaks it sinful: that it transgresses so great a law highly aggravates your sin: a law so important, upon which so much depends, so express and plain, legible in the very nature of things, and in reference whereto, the very excellency of the object would suffice to be a law to you, and dictate your duty, if no command had been otherwise given in the case. Surely the neglect of such a law cannot have been without great transgression.

[2.] Your own conscience you will acknowledge ought to be a rule to you, when it manifestly agrees with that former rule the supreme and royal law. Do you not find yourselves herein to have offended against that? It may be your sleeping conscience did not find yourself to offend: but do you not find yourself to have offended it, now beginning to awake? This is not a doubtful and disputable matter; (perhaps your minding such matters too much, hath hindered you in this) surely you will not make a scruple of it, a difficult case of conscience, whether you should take the Lord of heaven and earth for your God; whether you should choose him for your portion, seek rest in him, and place upon him your delight and love? And if in so plain a case your conscience hath not expressed itself offended, you have offended against it, in letting it sleep so securely, and not stirring it up to its proper office and work. And know that sinning against the light of one's own conscience, doth not stand only in going against the actual deliberated thoughts which we have had, but also in walking contrary to our habitual knowledge, and the thoughts and apprehensions which thence we might and should actually have had. Inadvertency and disregard of known duty, is the most usual way of sinning against conscience. And besides, have you not in this often gone against the repeated checks of your own consciences? Bethink yourselves, have you not in your prayers, intermingled frequent confessions of your cold love to God, and that you have taken so little delight in him? And were those only customary forms with you, and words of course? Surely (though it might not be urgently enough) your consciences did at such times accuse you. And let that be a dreadful thing in your eyes, to continue a

course which, if you consider, you cannot but condemn. And,

[3.] Ought not your experience to have been instructive to you; as it commonly is to men in other matters? Have you not in this neglect run counter to such instruction? By this means you are supposed to have known the sweetness, as by that last mentioned, the equity and fitness of delight in God. Have not those been your best hours, wherein you could freely solace yourselves in him? was not one of them better than a thousand otherwise spent! Did you never find it good for you, in this way, to draw nigh to God? (Psal. 73. 28) and hereupon pronounce them blessed whom he did choose and cause to approach unto him? (Psal. 65. 4) And where is that blessedness of which ye spake? Have ye forgotten, that ye ever thus tasted how gracious the Lord was? And it is like, you have by your taste found it also an evil thing and bitter to depart from him. Methinks you should reckon it a great increase of your sin to have gone against your own sense when especially your superior rule might give you assurance it did not deceive you. And doth it not expressly oblige you to follow its guidance, while it puts the character of perfect, or of being come to full age, upon them, who by reason of use (or accustomedness) have senses exercised to discern between good and evil? (Heb. 5. 14.)

[4.] And what will you say to the great obligations which the love and kindness of God have laid upon you? Will you not esteem yourselves to have been thereby bound to place your love and delight on him? could you decline doing so without putting a slight upon his love who is infinite in what he is, and who is love? was not his love enough to deserve yours? the love of a God, that of a silly worm! were you not obliged to love him back again, who was so much before hand with you in the matter of love? to love him who had loved you first? (1. Joh. 4. 19) The first love is therefore perfectly free; the latter is thereby certainly obliged and become bounden duty. How variously and with how mighty demonstration hath that love expressed and evidenced itself? It hath not glanced at you, but rested on you, and settled in delight. He hath so stood affected towards the people of his choice, and put a name on them on purpose to signify his delight in them. (Isa. 62. 4.) He rejoices over them with joy, and rests in his love to them. (Zeph. 3. 17.) The Lord taketh pleasure in his people. (Psal. 149. 4.) His delights have from of old been with the sons of men. (Prov. 8. 31.) Could he delight in such as you, and cannot you in him? Be amazed at this! How mean an object had he for his delight! How glorious and enamouring a one have you! excellency and love in conjunction! whereas in you were



met deformity and ill will ! he hath loved you so as to remit to you much. To give to you and for you a great deal more ; Himself and the Son of his delights. He then (thou shouldst recount) did invite thee to delight in him who hath always sought thy good, done strange things to effect it, takes pleasure in thy prosperity, and exercises loving kindness towards thee with delight ; who contrived thy happiness ; wrought out thy peace at the expence of blood, even his own ; taught thee the way of life, cared for thee all thy days, hath supplied thy wants, borne thy burdens, eased thy griefs, wiped thy tears. And if now he say to thee ; “ After all this couldst thou take no pleasure in me ? ” Will not that confound and shame thee ? He hath expressed his love by his so earnest (and at last successful) endeavours to gain thine. By this, that he hath seemed to put a value on it ; and that he desisted not till in some degree he had won it ; whereupon there hath been an acquaintance, a friendship, some intimacies between him and thee, according as Sovereign Majesty hath vouchsafed to descend, and advance sinful dust. And how disingenuous, unbecoming and unsuitable to all this is thy strangeness and distance afterwards ! It is more unworthy to cast out of your hearts than not to have admitted such a guest.

[5.] How contrary is this omission to what by solemn vow and astipulation you have bound yourselves to ? It hath graciously pleased the blessed God in his transactions with men to contrive his laws into the form of a covenant, wherein upon terms, he binds himself to them, expecting (what he obtains from such as become his own) their restitution. Wonderful grace ! that he should article with his creatures, and capitulate with the work of his own hands ! And whereas his first and great law (and which virtually being submitted to comprehends our obedience to all the rest) is as hath been noted, “ Thou shalt have no other Gods before me. ” This also he gives forth often, as the sum and abridgment of his covenant, “ That he will be our God, and we shall be his people. ” Now this you have consented to ; and therein bound yourselves, (as you have heard our Saviour expounds the first and great commandment) to love him with all your soul, &c. And how well doth your neglect to delight in him agree and consist with this ? What, love him with all your soul in whom you can rarely find yourselves to take any pleasure ? Surely your hearts will now misgive and admit a conviction you have not dealt truly (as well as not kindly) in this. What, not to keep faith with the righteous God ! To deceive a deceiver some would think not intolerable, but what pretence can there be for such dealing with the God of truth ? You have vowed to him, What think you of this



drawing back? Such trifling with him; the great and terrible God who keeps covenant and mercy for ever! How unbecoming is it! to dally with him as you would with an uncertain whiffling man! To be off and on, to say and unsay, that he shall be your God, and that he shall not, (for how is he your God if you delight not in him?) imports little of that solemn gravity and stayedness which becomes a transaction with the most high God. He takes no pleasure in fools; wherefore pay that which you have vowed. (Eccle. 5. 4.)

[6.] Nor doth it better agree with your relation to him, which arises from your covenant. Thence he becomes yours, and you his! "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine;" and the covenant binding on both parts, the relation is mutual: so that thereby also he becomes yours. It is a most near; represented therefore by the nearest among men, even the conjugal relation; therefore how full is that Song of Songs of expressions importing mutual delight suitable thereto! And what a bondage (as well as incongruity) were that relation without delight? Have you repented your choice? If not, why take you not pleasure? Why do you not rejoice and glory in it, even as he professes to do over you? If he should repent, in what case were you? Not to take pleasure in God! your own God! How strangely uncouth is it? You are not to consider him as a stranger, an unrelated one. If he were such to you, his own excellencies challenge to be beheld with delight. But you are to reckon and say of him, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, &c. I am his and he is mine." And how ill do such words become the mouth that utters them not from the abundance of the heart, even from a heart abounding and overflowing with love and joy!

[7.] And how doth the temper of your heart and your practice, while you take not actual, ordinary delight in God, clash and jar with your profession? For admit you do not then make an express verbal profession of actual delight in God at such times when you find it not, yet you still avow yourselves, and would be accounted and looked upon as related to him: and the just challenges of that relation are not any way answered, but by a course of ordinary actual delight. So much your profession manifestly imports. Whilst you profess the Lord to be your God, you profess him to be your supreme delight. And how is he so, when you seldom have a delightful thought of him, or look to him with any pleasure? And the temper of your spirit towards him is usually strange and shy? And bethink yourselves, what would you then be esteemed such as care not for him, as value him not? Would you willingly be taken for such in all those long intervals wherein your actual delight in him is

wholly discontinued? Would you not be ashamed the disposition of your heart towards him at such times should be known? Do you not desire to be better thought of? What is there then at the bottom, and under the covert of your yet continued profession at such times, but falsehood? A correspondent affection there is not. Is not your very profession then mere dissimulation and a lie? A concealment and disguise of a heart inwardly bad and naught? but which only comforts itself that it is not known; that is all day long full of earth and vanity, and wholly taken up with either the contentments, delights and hopes, or the cares, fears and discontents that do naturally arise from these vile, mean objects, and so are of a kind as mean and vile as they; only makes a shift to lie hid all the while, and lurk under the appearance such a one hath put on of a lover of God, and one that above all things delights in him. But is this honest dealing? or was this indeed all that was this while to be got of God, the credit of being thought his?

Yet it may be you will somewhat relieve yourselves, by saying you suppose for all this your profession was not altogether false. For you hope there was still a principle in you by which your heart was habitually directed towards God, and whereby his interest did still live and was maintained in you, notwithstanding your many and long diversions from him. And while your profession did signify that, it signified some real thing, and so was not a false and lying profession.

But to this I say, was this all that your profession was in itself apt, and by you designed to signify? Surely it was apt and intended to signify more than habitual inclination. It carried the appearance of such actings Godward as were suitable to your having him for your God; and you would it is likely have been loath it should have been otherwise understood. And surely whatsoever it said or imported more than the truth was false.

And again, can you be confident that so much as you suppose, was true? Are you sure of this, that because you sometimes found some motions of heart towards God, it is therefore habitually inclined to him, when it very rarely puts forth itself in any suitable acts, and for the most part works quite another way? Whereby are habits to be known but by the frequency of their acts? Do not you know there are many half-inclinations and workings of heart with some complacency Godward that prove abortive and come to nothing, as that of the stony ground, and that of Heb. 6. 4. do more than intimate. Surely your hope and safety more depend upon your repentance, your return and closer adherence to God thereupon, than the supposition your heart is in the main sound and right amidst those more notable declinings from him. But we will admit your supposition true

(which the consideration of the persons we are now dealing with and the design of this present piece of our discourse requires) and take it for granted, that amidst this your great neglect, you have notwithstanding, a principle, a new and holy nature in you, whose tendency is Godward; whereupon, we further say then,

[8.] And doth not your unaccustomedness to this blessed exercise resist the tendency of that new nature? And so your practice while your hearts run a quite contrary course (for they are not doing nothing while they are not in this delightful way working towards God) doth not only offend against your profession which it in great part belies; but against that vital principle also, which is in you; and so your very excuse aggravates your sin. Is there indeed such a principle in you? And whither tends it? Is it not from God? And doth it not then naturally aim at him and tend towards him? being upon both these accounts (as well as that it resembles him, and is his living image) called a participation of the divine nature? Yea, doth it not tend to delight in him? for it tends to him as the soul's last end and rest. What good principle can you have in you Godward if you have not love to him? And the property of that, is to work towards him by desire, that it may rest in him by delight. Have you faith in God? That works by this love. *Faith* is that great power in the holy soul by which it acts from God as a *principle*; *love* is that by which it acts towards him as an *end*; by that it draws from him, by this it moves to him, and rests in him. The same holy, gracious nature (dependently on its great Author and Cause) inclining it both to this motion and rest; and to the former, in order to the latter: so by the work of the new creature in the soul formed purposely for blessedness in God and devotedness to him; its aspirations, its motions, its very pulse, breathe, tend and beat this way. But you apply not your souls to delight in God. You bend your minds and hearts another way. What are you doing then? You are striving against your own life; you are mortifying all good inclinations towards God, stifling and stopping the breath that your panting heart would send forth to him; you are busily crucifying the new creature, instead of the body of sin. There is somewhat in you that would work towards God, and you suffer it not; and is that well? that divine thing, born of God, of heavenly descent, that hath so much in it of sacredness by its extraction and parentage, you fear not to do violence to!

If indeed such a thing (as you seem to hope) be in you; at sometime or other you may perceive which way it beats and tends. The soul in which it hath place is biassed by it Godward; and though often it is not discernible, it sometimes

shews its inclination. Other men, and meaner creatures, sleep sometimes, and then their most rooted dispositions appear not ; when they are awake they bewray them, and let them be seen in their actions, motions and pursuits. The renewed soul hath its sleeping intervals too, and what propensions it hath towards God is little discernible, (and yet even then it sometimes dreams of him, at least between sleeping and waking ; I sleep, but my heart waketh, it is the voice of my beloved, (Cant. 5. 2.) But if you seriously commune with yourselves in your more wakeful seasons, you may perceive what your hearts seek and crave ; some such sense as this may be read in them, the desire of our souls is unto thy name, O Lord, and to the remembrance of thee. (Isa. 26. 8.) One thing have I desired, that will I seek after, to behold the beauty (the delight, as the word signifies) of the Lord. (Psal. 27. 4.) And when you observe this discovered inclination, you may see what it is that in your too wonted course you repress and strive against. That divine birth calls for suitable nutriment, more tastes how gracious the Lord is. You will have it feed upon ashes, upon wind and vanity ; or (although it had the best parent, it hath so ill a nurse) when it asks bread, you give it a stone, and let it be stung by a scorpion : and the injury strikes higher than at it alone, even (as is obvious) at the very Author of this divine production ; which therefore we add as a further aggravation of this evil, namely,

[9.] That it is an offence against the Spirit of grace, whose dictates are herein slighted and opposed ; for surely with the tendencies of the new creature he concurs. It is maintained by him as well as produced, continually depends on him as to its being, properties, and all its operations. Nothing therefore can be cross to the inclination of a renewed soul as such, which is not more principally so to the Holy Ghost himself. And particularly the disposing of the soul unto delight is most expressly ascribed to him ; that very disposition being itself joy in the Holy Ghost ; (Rom. 14. 17.) and we find it numbered among the fruits of the Spirit. (Gal. 5. 22.) You may possibly be less apprehensive of your sin in this, because you find him not dictating to you with that discernible majesty, authority and glory that you may think agreeable to so great an Agent. But you must know, he applies himself to us in a way much imitating that of nature. And as in reference to the conservation of our natural beings, we are assured the first cause co-operates with inferior causes (for we live, move, and have our being in him) though the divine influence is not communicated to this purpose with any sensible glory, or so distinguishably, that we can discern what influence is from the superior cause and what from subordinate ; our reason and faith certainly assure us of

what our sense can reach in this matter. So it is here also, the divine Spirit accommodates himself very much to the same way of working with our own, and acts us suitably to our own natures. And though by very sensible tokens we cannot always tell which be the motions that proceed from him; yet faith teaches us from his word, to ascribe to him whatever spiritual good we find in ourselves; inasmuch as we are not of ourselves sufficient to think a good thought. And if by that word we judge of the various motions that stir in us, we may discern which are good and which not; and so may know what to ascribe to the Spirit, and what not. Whereas therefore, that word commands us to delight in God, if we find any motion in our hearts tending that way, we are presently to own the finger of God, and the touch of his Holy Spirit therein. And what have you found no such motions excited, no thoughts cast in that have had this aspect and tendency, which your indulged carnality and aversion have repressed and counter-wrought? Herein you have grieved and quenched the Spirit.

And if it have not over-borne you into what you should have understood to have been your duty, but have upon your untractableness, retired and with-drawn from you; do not therefore make the less reckoning of the matter, but the more rather; this carries more in it of awful consideration to you, and smarter rebuke that he desisted. You must consider him as a free Agent, and who works to will and to do of his good pleasure. His influence is retractable, and when it is retracted you ought in this case to reckon, it signifies a resentment of your undutiful and regardless carriage towards him. And ought you not to smite upon the thigh then, and say, "What have I done?" You have striven against the Spirit of the most high God; you have resisted him in the execution of his office, when you were committed to his conduct and government; you have fallen out and quarrelled with your merciful guide, and slighted at once both his authority and love. This could be no small offence. And you are also to consider, that when such a province was assigned him in reference to you, and such as you; and the great God set his Spirit to work about you; it was with a special end and design, being the determination of most wise counsel. And how highly doth this increase the offence? that,

[10.] You have herein directly obstructed the course and progress of that design; which could be no other than the magnifying of his grace in your conduct to blessedness. This is that whereon he hath been intent; and he hath made his design herein so visible, that they that run might read what it was. The very overture to you of placing your delights on him, speaks

its end; It is that whereby he should be most highly acknowledged and you blessed both at once. His known design you ought to have reckoned did prescribe to you, and give you a law. It is a part of civility towards even an ordinary man, not to cross his design which I know him earnestly to intend, when it tends no way to my prejudice, or any man's; yea, to do so would in common interpretation, besides rudeness, argue ill nature and a mischievous disposition. Much more would duty and just observance towards a superior challenge so much, as not to counter-work him, and awe a well-tempered spirit into subjection and compliance; but a stiff reluctancy to the great and known design of the blessed God, meant so directly to our own advantage, speaks so very bad a temper; hath in it such a complication of peevish wilfulness, of undutifulness and ingratitude to him, of negligence and disregard of ourselves, that it must want a name to express it.

And now do you see what evil the neglect of delighting in God (accompanied as it cannot but be with the having your hearts otherwise engaged and vainly busy) doth include and carry in it? Will you pause awhile and deliberate upon it? Do but make your just and sober estimate by the things that have been mentioned. Measure it by God's law, and it imports manifest disobedience in a matter of highest consequence;—by the judgment of your own conscience, and it imports much boldness against light in a very plain case;—by your experience, and it speaks an uninstrutable stupidity, or a very heedless forgetful spirit;—by the obligation laid upon you, by the kindness of this very counsel and offer (besides many other ways) and it hath in it great ingratitude and insensibleness of the greatest love;—by your covenant, and it imports treachery;—by your relation, much incongruity and undecency;—by your profession, falsehood and hypocrisy;—by the tendency of the new nature in you, unnatural violence;—by the dictates of God's spirit, great untractableness;—by his known declared design in this matter, a most undutiful disrespect to him, with a most wretched carelessness of yourselves, as to your nearest and most important concern. One would think it needless to say more. But why should we baulk anything that so obviously occurs, tending to set forth the exceeding great sinfulness of this sin? Therefore know, that besides its great faultiness in itself.

(2.) Much also cannot but be derived into it from its very faulty causes. It supposes and argues great evils that flow into it, and from which it hath its rise.

[1.] Great blindness and ignorance of God. For is it possible any should have known and not have loved him? or have beheld his glory and not have been delighted therewith? and

that with such delight and love as should have held a settled seat and residence in them. And can your ignorance of God be excusable or innocent? The apostle's words are too applicable; some have not the knowledge of God, I speak it to your shame. (1. Cor. 15. 34.) Do you pretend to him, and know him not? worship him so oft, and worship you know not what? had such opportunity of knowing him, and yet be ignorant? At least it would be thought, In Judah is God known, and that his name were great in Israel, (Psal. 76. 1. 2.) where he hath had his tabernacle and dwelling place. Here one would think his altar should not bear the same inscription as at Athens, "To the unknown God." How express hath his discovery of himself been to you! and how amiable! What was there in it not delectable? or in respect whereof he hath not appeared altogether lovely! as it were composed of delights! You have had opportunity to behold him clad with the garments of salvation and praise; and as he is in Christ, in that alluring posture, "reconciling the world to himself," wherein all his attributes have visibly complied to the reconciling design; his boundless fullness of life and love not obstructed by any of them, from flowing out in rich and liberal communications. If you had not excluded that glorious pleasant light wherein he is so to be beheld, you would have beheld what had won your hearts fully, and bound them to him in everlasting delight and love. And have you not reason to be ashamed you have not known him better, and to better purpose! Alienation from the life of God (Eph. 4. 18.) proceeds from blindness of heart, that is a chosen affected voluntary blindness. Or if your knowledge of him be not little,

[2.] Your little delight in him argues much unmindfulness of him; at least that you have not minded him duly, and according to what you have known. It might here be seasonable to suggest to you, how likely it is, that several ways your great faultiness in the matter of thinking of God may have contributed to the withholding of your delight from him. Consider therefore,

First. Have not your thoughts of him been slight and transient? Have they not been overly superficial thoughts? casual only, and such as have dropped into your minds as it were by chance, fluid and roving, fixed neither upon him nor into your hearts? Too much resembling what is said of the wicked man, God is not in all his thoughts; (Psal. 10. 4.) he hath not been amidst them. Your thoughts have not united upon him, he hath not been situated and centred in them. Was not this the case? You bestowed upon him it may be now and then a hasty passant glance, the careless cast of a wandering eye; and was



this likely to beget an abiding permanent delight! have you been wont to compose yourselves designedly and on purpose to think of him, so as your thoughts might be said to have been directed towards him by the desire and inclining bent of your heart; according to that, the desire of our soul is towards thy name, and to the remembrance of thee! (Isa. 26. 8.) Whence it is that it is represented as the usual posture of them whom he reckons among his jewels, and for whom the book of remembrance was written, that they thought on his name: a thing that they might be known by, and distinguished from other men. Wherefore it is observable that their remembrance of him, was thought worth the remembering, and to be transmitted into records never to be forgotten. The evil of your not delighting in God, hath a great accession from your negligent thinking of him.

Secondly. Have not your thoughts of him been low and mean, such as have imported light esteem! Compare them with those admiring thoughts, Who is like unto thee, O Lord among the gods! who is like thee, glorious in holiness! (Deut. 32. 15.) O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! (Psal. 8. 1.) How unlike have yours been to such thoughts? Bethink yourselves how deeply culpable you have made your neglect to delight in God, by your unworthy thoughts by which you have detracted so unspeakably from the divine excellency! hence you have more to account for than merely not delighting in God, a rendering him such to yourselves, as if he were not worthy to be delighted in. How ought this to shake your hearts!

Thirdly. Have they not been hard thoughts; full of censure, and misjudging of his nature, counsels, ways, and works? have there not been perverse reasonings, with dislike of his methods of government over men in this present state! as if he had too little kindness for such as you would have him favour, and too much for others; judging his love and hatred by false measures! This seems to be much the evil unto which the injunction of delight in God is here opposed in this psalm and whence it may be estimated, how directly that militates against this, and prevailing, excludes it. Perhaps you have delighted so little in God because ye have thought (the thing that is so wearisome to him,) every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; and have said in your hearts, where is the God of judgment? Or have you not been more peccant in your apprehensions of his rules and resolutions for the disposing of men as to their eternal states? Have you not disbelieved the revelation he hath given of his nature, and express declarations of his mind and purpose touching these



matters? Was it not enough for you to have known his gracious propensions towards returning sinners, that desire him again for their God, and willingly accept the grace, and submit themselves to the conduct and government of his Son? Should not this have allured and won your hearts to him, and made you, with humble, thankful admiration of his grace, resign and yield yourselves to be his for ever? Have you not measured your apprehensions of him by the suggestions and misgivings of your guilty, jealous hearts; or by your experienced animosity, and the implacableness of your own spirits towards such as have offended you; as if he could forgive no more than you are disposed to do? Have you not opposed your own imaginations of him to his express testifications of himself, that "He is love; slow to anger, and of great mercy, &c. And that as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts?" Have you not (against his plain word) thought him irreconcilable, and averse to the accepting of any atonement for you? prescribed and set bounds to him, and thought your sin greater than could be forgiven? And if hereupon you have not delighted in him, and have found all ingenuous affection towards him stifled within you, as your not delighting in him, was a foul evil; the more sinful injurious cause (denying the infinite goodness of his nature, and giving the lie to his word) hath made it beyond all expression worse. And further at least consider,

Fourthly. Have not your thoughts of God been few? Is not the meditation of him with you an unwonted thing? The Psalmist, resolving to mind him much, to praise and sing to him as long as he lived, and while he had any being; (Psalm. 104. 33.) doth as it were prophesy to himself, that his meditation of him should be sweet. Frequent right thoughts of God, will surely be pleasant delightful thoughts: but your little delight in God too plainly argues, you have minded him but seldom. And how full of guilt is your not delighting in God upon this account! How cheap is the expence of a thought! What, that so much should not be done in order to the delightful rest of your soul in God!

[3.] It supposes much carnality, a prone inclination and addictedness to this earth and the things of it; and thereupon argues in you a very mean, abject spirit. While you can take no pleasure (or do take so little) in God, is there nothing else wherein you take pleasure! And what is it? God hath in this matter no other rival than this world. It is its friendship that is enmity to him; (Jam. 4. 4.) something or other of it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life prevails far, while the love of the Father hath so little place in you. (1, John

2. 16.) Whither are you sunk? into how low and vile a temper of spirit, when you can take pleasure in so base things, rather than in the blessed God; and quit so high and pure delights for mire and dirt? What hath thus carnalized your minds that you savour only the things of the flesh, and divine things are tasteless and without relish? Nor are you to think more favourably of your case, if you take little actual complacency in the world also; probably it is because you have little of it to delight in; it may be you are more acquainted with the cares of it than the delights; or your desire after it is much larger than your possession. It is all one for that. But what are your hearts most apt to delight in? or, what is most agreeable to your temper? It is the same thing, what earthly affection predominates in you, while the temper of your spirit is earthly; and it is thereby held off from God. Your not having actual earthly delights to put in the balance against heavenly, is only by accident. But all your cares, desires and hopes of that vile kind, would turn into as vile delights, if you had your wills. In the mean time, you are the more excuseless, and your sin is the grosser, that even the cares and troubles of this world are of more value with you than delight in God. How far are you from that temper, Whom have I in heaven but thee, and whom do I desire on earth besides thee? (Psal. 73. 25.)

[4.] And how sad an argument is it, of downright aversion and disaffectedness to God, in a great degree at least yet remaining! Whence can your not delighting in him proceed, but from this, as its most immediate cause? What could hinder you, if your heart were inclined? Are you not astonished to behold this as the state of your case, that you delight not in him, because your heart is against it; that is, from flat enmity. And what doth more naturally import enmity to any thing than to turn off from it, as not being able to take pleasure in it. So God expresses his detestation of apostates, If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. (Heb. 10, 38.) And his contempt of Jechoniah is signified by the like manner of speaking. Do you not tremble to think that this should be the temper of your spirit towards God, and that your estimate of him, as if he were a despised broken idol, and as mean a thing, as a vessel wherein is no pleasure? (Jer. 22. 28.) Reckon then thus with yourself. As your case stands, and things do lie between God and you, your little delight in God can have no more favourable account given of it, nor be resolved into any gentler or milder cause than enmity. And if this seem to you not to be a cause, but to be coincident; and fall in with it, so much the worse. By how much less this enmity hath of antecedency to your neglect, or the more it seems the same

with it, so much the more it discovers the evil of the thing itself. For by what worse name can we call any thing than enmity to God? But we speak of your habitual temper, as that, which is the cause of your actual neglect. And since you have a discovery of God as the most delectable object, cannot pretend there is a better, have leave and free permission to place your delight on him, ye are earnestly invited and pressed to it. It is plain nothing else is in your way to hinder you. Therefore you delight not in him, because your heart only is averse.

(3.) We also might insist further to shew the evils that ensue and follow upon this neglect. Such I mean, as do not follow casually and by accident, but which have a very inward connexion with it, and are its most natural consequents; being someway caused by it, or which it doth very directly tend to beget. And yet these we need not be solicitously curious to distinguish, as things of a kind altogether diverse from those last mentioned under the foregoing head. For it is very apparent, the same things may both cause little delight in God, and be caused thereby; as a person may therefore not delight in God because he knows him not, and may therefore be the less apt to entertain the knowledge of him, because he hath no delight in him. And the case is the same as to the other things spoken of as causes of this omission, that is, that it and they may be mutual causes of one another. But it however equally serves the design of aggravating the evil of not taking frequent actual delight in God, that hereby sin grows, whether in the same or in different kinds. There is still an increase of sin, though but of the same sort that was in being before. You ought to consider then, as you take so little delight in God from that very bad cause, that you have not entertained the right knowledge of him, when you had so great opportunity to get much of it, which makes your matter very ill; do you not also find that by your withholding yourselves from delighting in him, you have still less disposition to seek his more inward acquaintance? And doth not that make your matter much worse? If you already know somewhat of him, you yet know but in part; your object is infinite, and this knowledge so excellent, that you cannot fully attain to it, there is still more to be known.

Now therefore if you did delight much in God, would you not be pressing hard after him? (Psal. 63. S.) would you not be following on to know him? (Hos. 6. 3.) And then would his goings forth be prepared before you as the morning, and he would be still visiting you with fresh and increasing light; whereupon your pleasure would be renewed and increased by every fresh view, and consequently your progress would be from sight to sight, and from pleasure to pleasure; whereas now this wheel stands still, or

you are going back into darkness and desolation. Have you not much the more to answer for upon this account? The like may be said as to the rest. The irrectitude and great faultiness of your thoughts of God, though that contribute not a little to your not delighting in him, yet also if you did delight in him more, would not your thoughts of him be more deeply serious, more highly raised? Would you not be very unapt to take up injurious hard thoughts of him? Would not his thoughts (once become precious to you, (Psal. 139. 17.) be also numerous or innumerable rather, as the sands of the sea shore? Would not your earthly temper, your strangeness and averseness to him, vanish and wear off, if you were more exercised in actual delightful converses with him? Therefore the permanency and increase of those mentioned evils, and that they have got such settled rooting in you, is all to be charged upon your not applying yourselves to more frequent actual delight in God. Besides what may further follow hereupon, the languishment and decays of your inward man; the difficulty you find to trust in God, when you are reduced to straits, (as who would commit his concerns to one he doth not love?) your impatience of adverse and cross emergencies, that may often befall to you; your aptness to vexation or despondency; the easy victory a temptation hath over you, (as surely he is sooner drawn away from God, or into sin against him, who delights not in him;) your less usefulness in your place and station; your want of courage, resolution, zeal for God, (which are best maintained by delight and the relishes of a sweet complacency taken in him) your sluggishness in a course of well doing: the sense of a toilsome, heavy labour in religion, that it begets you weariness without rest, whence you rather affect a rest from it, than in it and by it;) and lastly, your continual bondage by the fear of death, which one would not dread, apprehending it only a removal into his presence in whom I delight. All these things (which might have been distinctly insisted on, and more expressly accommodated to the present purpose, but that I would not be over-tedious, and that somewhere else some or other of them may fall again in our way) do bring in great and weighty additions to the evil and guiltiness of this sin, and much tend to lay load upon it, to fill up its measure, even unto pressing down and running over. For how just is it, to impute to it what it naturally causes, and lay its own impure and viperous births at its own door?

And though this discourse hath been drawn out to a greater length than was intended, it will not be lost labour, if by all that hath been said, any that fear God shall be brought to apprehend more of the odiousness of this sin; and the self in-

delugent thought be banished far from them, that this is either an indifferent matter, or at least (if it be somewhat a careless) it is one of their more harmless inadvertencies and omissions. Which good effect, if through the blessing of God it may accomplish, there will be the less need unto such to read on, but take their nearer way to the immediate present practice of this great duty, and because also it is to be hoped, that the evil of this neglect once apprehended, will prompt and quicken serious and considering persons to set upon the enjoined duty; it will be the less necessary to enlarge much in that other kind of discourse which we are now come to; namely of invitation to this holy exercise.

## CHAP. IV.

We pass on to the next thing proposed, which is to say something, *Secondly*, By way of invitation to this duty: addressed, 1 To those who are less disposed to it. 2. To those who are more disposed, or in a nearer capacity, yet are grown strange. 3. To those who are desirous of direction how to proceed in this holy exercise.

**H**AVING as proposed in the first place expostulated with those who are averse to this duty, and with those also who are defective in it, we come,

*Secondly*, To say something by way of invitation thereunto. Wherein yet we have reason to fear it may be too needful to place some part of our present labour. For though in matters of an infinitely inferior nature and concernment, any practice is readily undertaken that is once represented reasonable and gainful; in such a business as this, a hundred difficulties are imagined; we stand as persons that cannot find their hands; and all the question is, (even if there be some inclination to it, or conviction at least it should be done,) but how shall we go about it? We are apt to grope as in the dark, even at noon-day, and cannot find the door or way that leads into a practice wherein there is so much both of pleasantness and duty. Therefore as the case is, the invitation to this exercise ought, if it were possible, to be a kind of manuduction; and it is needful we be not only called and pressed, but even led into it. This

then we are to endeavour, the giving of some plain prescriptions that may put us into an easy and direct way of falling expediently upon this delightful work. And here, it must be considered, that all (as hath been said) are not in an equal disposition to it. Some are more averse, others less, but all too much; therefore are we to begin as low as their case may require, who are less disposed; and so proceeding on in our course, somewhat may fall in more suitable to them who are in some disposition to it, but do yet need (as who do not?) some help and furtherance in order thereto.

1. Our invitation is addressed to those who are less disposed to this duty. Unto whom we say therefore,

(1). It is necessary, that you do deliberately and resolutely design the thing itself. Propose to yourselves delighting in God as a business unto which you will designedly and with steadfast purpose apply your whole soul. Content not yourselves with light roving thoughts about it, which many have about divers matters which they never think fit to engage themselves in. Determine the matter fully in your own heart, and say, "Many projects I have tried in my time, sundry things I have turned my mind unto, to little purpose, I will now see what there is of delight to be found in God. The sloth and aversion of a backward heart must be overcome by resolution; and that resolution be well-weighed, deliberately taken up, deeply fixed, that it may last and overcome. And why should you not be resolved in this point? Is this a matter always to be wavered? Know you another way to be happy? Are you yet to learn, that a reasonable soul needs the fulness of God to make it happy, and that there is no other God but one? Can there be any dispute or doubt in the case, when there is but one thing to be done, besides yielding one's self to be miserable for ever? And what need of that, while yet there is one way to avoid it? Surely, that there is but one, is better than if there were a thousand. You need not now be long in choosing; nor do you need to deliberate, because of any doubt in the case, but that you may more fully comprehend in your own thoughts that there is none, and that your resolutions may hereupon grow the more peremptory, and secure from the danger of any change.

To talk of any difficulty in the matter, is a strange impertinency; for who would oppose difficulty to necessity? or allege the thing is hard which must be done? Or must it be done, and never be attempted? or attempted, and not be resolved upon? You have nothing to do to read further, who will not digest this first counsel, and here settle your resolution, "I will apply myself to a course of delight in God." If this appear

not reasonable to you, despair that any thing will that follows. It is foolish trifling, to look upon such writings that profess their design, and have it in their fronts, that they are meant for helps unto Christian practice, only with a humour of seeing what a man can say. And if ever you will be in earnest, you must return to this point; and will but waste time to no purpose, if you will not now set down your resolution; that is, that you will seek a happiness for your soul, (too long already neglected!) a happiness that may satisfy and last; and (where only it is to be found) in the blessed God; and in him by setting yourselves to delight in him; since nothing can make you happy wherein you delight not. And that you will make use of what you further read, according as you find it conducing, and apt to serve your purpose herein. Then next,

(2.) Consider your present state Godward. Must you, do you see you must come to this point, of having your delight in God? In what posture then are your affairs towards him? How do things stand between him and you? You do well know, you were unacceptable to him, and his enemy; and that his justice and holy nature obliged him to hold you as such, though he never gave you ground to think him implacable. Can you delight in an enemy? who (as matters in that case stand) must be apprehended ready to avenge himself on you, and as having whet his glittering sword, and made the arrow ready upon the string, directed against your very heart? Apprehend this to have been your case, and most deservedly, that you were an impure, hateful wretch, deformed and loathsome, one that could yield the holy God no matter of delight, full of enmity and contrariety to him, and in whom he could not but find much cause of most just hatred. Remember you were one of his revolted creatures, under his most deserved wrath and curse. Know at how vast a distance you were from delighting in him, or a state that could admit of it. Consider, is this still your case? And do not rashly think it altered; or that you have nothing to do, but out of hand to rush upon the business of delighting in God.

(3.) Yet do not think it unalterable. Do not conclude it as a determined and undoubted thing, that matters can never be taken up between God and you, or you become suitable and acceptable to him. Look not upon your vile wicked heart as unalterably wicked; nor upon him therefore as an irreconcilable enemy. Account he waits for your turning to him, as being inclined to friendship with you. Otherwise, would vengeance have suffered you so long to live? Have you not been long at his mercy? Hath he not spared you, when it was in his power to crush you at pleasure? Do not think therefore (what you

have no pretence for) that he hath a destructive design upon you, and will accept of no atonement.

(4.) Acquaint yourself with the way and terms upon which his gospel declares him reconcilable ; that is, that he will never be reconciled to you while you remain wicked, nor for your own sake, become you never so good : that a more costly sacrifice than you can either procure or be, must expiate your guilt, and make your peace. If this matter could have been effected in a less expensive way, the Son of God had not (as you know he was) been designed himself, and made that sacrifice ; nor a work have been undertaken by him that might as well have been done by common hands. And since he submitted and undertook as he did, reckon with yourself, how highly just it is, that the entire honour of so merciful condescension, and so great a performance, be wholly ascribed to him. But withal know, he shed his blood, not in kindness to your sin, but to you : and that his design was at once to procure the death of that, and your life ; that you need his Spirit as well as his blood ; *that* to recommend and reconcile you to his holiness, as well as *this* to his vindictive justice ; that as you expect ever to experience and taste the delights of that communion, whereinto he calls you, you must not only have the “ blood of Christ to cleanse you from all sin,” but must also “ walk in the light, as he is in the light ;” that an entire resignation, a betrusting and subjecting of yourself to the mercy and governing power of the Redeemer, is necessary to the setting of things right between God and you ; in whom only you may both accept God and be accepted of him ; that he must be the centre of union between God and you ; and that union the ground of all delightful intercourse.

(5.) Make request to him, that he would draw you into that union with his Son ; unto whom none can come, but who are drawn by himself. (Joh. 6.44) Do not dream and slumber in this business ; but know your *All* depends on it. Consider the exigency of your case. Do you find your heart sluggish and indisposed to any such transaction with God and Christ ? Doth it decline and draw back ? Know, it herein doth but act its own nature, and do as it is, or like itself. Therefore stir up yourself, to take hold of his strength ; (Isa. 27. 5.) in which way, if you have mind to be at peace, you shall make peace. Cry to him earnestly, “ Draw a poor wretch out of darkness and death, that must otherwise be at eternal distance from thee, and be miserable for ever. Join me to him who will bring me to thee, and make me one for ever with thee.” Hereupon,

(6.) Accepting Jesus Christ as thy Saviour and thy Lord ; accept in him, with all humble reverence, thankfulness and ad-



miration of divine mercy and goodness, the blessed God to be thy God; surrendering and yielding up thyself entirely and fully to be his for ever. Do this unfeignedly, and with great solemnity; and let it be to thee for an everlasting memorial! record it as a memorable day, wherein thou didst go out of thyself, and all finite, narrow, limited good, and pass into union with the eternal, immense, incomprehensible and all comprehending good, and enter upon it as thine own! And what! wilt thou delight in a God that is not thine? Canst thou be content to look wistly on him, as one unrelated and a stranger? Apprehend (and bless God that this is the state of the case) that in this way he offers himself most freely to thee. It were astonishing to think of purchasing so great a good! the matter were not to be offered at. But how transporting is it, that nothing but acceptance and resignation should be needful to make thee one with the great God, and make his fulness thine! Therefore make haste to do this, and be not hasty in doing it. Defer not, but do it with great seriousness, deliberation and fulness of consent; considering you are about to enter into an everlasting covenant not to be forgotten; and doing a thing never to be again undone. Now if herein your heart be sincere and there be a real and vital exercise of your very soul in this transaction with God in Christ, so as that you truly take him for your God, preferring him in your estimation and choice above all things, and giving up yourself absolutely and without reservation to him as his, to be governed and disposed of by him in all things at his pleasure; you are hereby brought into that state that doth admit of delighting in him. And what remains to be said, will concern you,

2. As persons in a nearer capacity, and who have a kind of fundamental aptitude and disposedness of heart unto this spiritual work; and will therefore be directed to you, considered according to that supposition. Only it is withal to be considered, in the case of many such, that they were arrived hither long ago, and been (as was before supposed) hereupon somewhat exercised and versed in this piece of holy practice, have had many pleasant turns with God, and tasted often the delights of his converse: but have discontinued their course, and are grown strange to him who was their delight; have suffered themselves by insensible degrees to be drawn and tempted away from him; or there hath been some grosser and more violent rupture, by which they have broken themselves off. It will be requisite to say somewhat more peculiar to these, for the reducing of them again even to this unitive point. After which, what shall ensue, may in common concern them, and all that are arrived so far, together. For such therefore whose

case this is, it will surely both become and concern you to take this course :

(1.) Make a stand, and bethink yourselves ; Can you justify your carriage towards him whom you have taken to be your God? Can you approve your own way? Was this all that you obliged yourselves unto in the day of your solemn treaty with him; only to take on you the name of a relation to him, and so (excepting that you would now and then compliment him in some piece of external heartless homage) take leave till you meet again with him in another world? And that in the mean time this present world, or your carnal self (to be gratified and served out of it) should really be your God, and he only bear the name? Was this indeed your meaning? or if it was, did you deal sincerely in that treaty? or can you think it was his meaning, and that he would expect no more from you? Can you allow yourselves so to interpret his covenant, and give this as the summary account of the tenour of it? How would you then expound it to nothing, and make a mere trifle of it, and make your religion a fitter service for an inanimate, senseless idol, than the living and true God! Do you not yet know what the name of God imports? Can he be a God to you that is not acknowledged by you as your very best, the universal, and absolutely all-comprehending good? But if you apprehend there was really more in the matter; and that you have been altogether faulty in this thing. Then,

(2.) Represent to yourselves as fully as you can the greatness of the fault. What have you made God an unnecessary thing to you, while the creature, your very idols, lying vanities, were thought necessary? And these were the things upon which you thought fit to set your hearts! which you have loved, which you have served, after which you have walked, which you have sought, and whom you have worshiped! (Jer. 8. 2.) The heap of expressions wherewith it seemed meet to the Spirit of God to set out the profuse lavishness of idolatrous affection. Think how monstrous this is! Revolve in your own minds the several aggravations of your sinful neglect before mentioned: and labour to feel the weight of them upon your own spirits. Think what time you have lost from pleasant delightful walking with God! what damage you have done yourselves! how far you might have attained! how much you are cast behind in your preparations for a blessed eternity! what wrong you have done him, whom you took for the God of your life, to whom you vowed your hearts and souls! how little kindly and truly you have dealt with him!

(3.) Return to him with weeping and supplication. Open yourselves freely to him. Let him hear you bemoaning your-

selves, pour out your souls to him, in large acknowledgments and confessions of your guiltiness, which, while you keep silence, will consume your bones and waste you to nothing. "Remember whence you are fallen, and repent and do your first works." Till then, he hath this against you, that you have left your first love. And consider, is it not a grievous thing to you? Doth it not pain your hearts, that your Lord and Redeemer should have somewhat against you, as it were laid up, noted, and put on record, kept in store, and as himself remarkably expresses it, sealed up among his treasures; (Deut. 32. 34) somewhat that sticks with him, and which he bears in mind, and hath lying in his heart against you? Is this a small thing with you? when that must be apprehended to be his sense (and suppose him saying to you) I remember the kindness of thy youth the love of thine espousals. Jer. 2. 2.) And now since those former days, "What iniquity hast thou found in me, that thou art gone far from me, and hast walked after vanity, and art become vain?" How confounding a thing were it, if he should say, as some-time to others in a case resembling yours (and why should you not take it as equally belonging to you?) O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me: (Mic. 6. 3.) And while the case admits such sharp and cutting rebuke, and that it is the matter of rebuke (not rebuke itself abstracted from the matter, that is if it were causless) that should smart or wound; how becoming is it, and suitable to the case, to cast down a wounded; bleeding heart before the Lord, and be abased in the dust at the foot stool of his mercy seat! And though your sin be great and heinous;

(4.) Yet apprehend you are before a mercy-seat; that "there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared." How would this apprehension promote the humiliation which the case requires! A sullen despondency that excludes hope of mercy hardens the heart; continues the sinful, comfortless distance. Therefore apply yourselves to him; seek his pardon in the blood of the Redeemer; know you need it, and that it is only upon such terms to be obtained. Yet also take heed lest any diminishing thoughts of the evil of your sin return, and make you neglect the thing, or wave the known stated way of remission. We are apt to look upon crimes whereby men are immediately offended, and which therefore are of worse reputation among men, as robbery, murder, &c. as very horrid. This is a matter that lies immediately between Spirit and spirit; the God of the spirits of all flesh and your spirit. You have had a solemn transaction with him, and have dealt falsely. And though the matter were secret between God and you, is it the less evil in it-

self for that? If you had dealt unworthily, and used base treachery towards a friend; in a matter only known to him and yourself, would you not when you have reflected, blush to see his face, till matters be composed betwixt you? And is there another way of having them composed, and of restoring delightful friendly converse, than by your seeking his pardon, and his granting it? Could you have the confidence to put yourself upon conversing with him as at former times, without such a preface? or were it not great immodesty and impudence to offer at it? But that when this hath been the case between the blessed God and you, and you now come with deep resentments, and serious unfeigned acknowledgments of your most offensive neglects of him, to seek forgiveness at his hand, he should be easy and facile to forgive; how should this melt you down before him! And this is what his own word obliges you to apprehend and believe of him. These words he hath required to be proclaimed to you; Return you backsliding ones, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. (Jer. 3. 12.) Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree (your offence hath been idolatry as well as theirs); turn, O backsliding children saith the Lord; for I am married unto you. (ver. 13.)

What heart would not break and bleed at this overture! You can be recovered to no capacity of delighting in God, as heretofore, till you sensibly feel the need of great forgiveness, and have a disposition of heart inwardly to relish the sweetness and pleasantness of it; till those words do agree with the sense of your hearts, and you can (as in a transport) cry out, O the blessedness of the man (as the expression imports) whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered! &c. (Psal. 32. 1. And now when you are come thus far, if the temper of your spirit be right even in this, there will be in conjunction with the desire, hope and value of forgiveness, at least an equal dread of such future strangenesses and breaches between God and you: and that will be very natural to you, which I next add as further advice;

(5.) Most earnestly seek and crave a better and more fixed temper of spirit; more fully determined and bent Godward; that your heart may be directed into the love of God; that the spirit of love, power, and a sound mind may bear rule in you (2. Thes. 3. 5.) Be intent upon the recovery of that healthy soundness, which wheresoever it hath place, will with a certain steady power, and a strong inclining bent of love, carry your heart toward God. And take heed lest you be satisfied in the expectation and hope of forgiveness, as to your former neglects

of God without this; there is a manifest prejudice daily accruing to the Christian name and profession, by the unequal estimation which that part of the doctrine of Christ hath, that concerns the work of his Spirit upon us, regeneration, the new creature, repentance, and a holy life; in comparison of that which concerns his performances and acquisitions for us, expiation of sin, satisfaction of divine justice, forgiveness and acceptance with God. How sweet, ravishing, transporting, doctrines, and how pure gospel are these latter accounted by many, who esteem the former cold, sapless, unpleasant notions! Thence comes Christian religion to look with so distorted a face and aspect, as if it suffered a convulsion, that hath altered and disguised it unto that degree, that it is hardly to be known; being made to seem as if it imported only a design to rescue some persons from divine wrath and justice, without ever giving them that disposition of heart which is necessary both to their serving of God and their blessedness in him. This is not to be imputed so much to the misrepresentation made of it by them, whose business it hath been to instruct others, (though of them too many may have been very faulty in almost suppressing or insisting less, or very little, upon doctrines of the former strain, while the stream of their discourses hath mostly run upon the other;) for it must be acknowledged, that by very many in our age, the absolute necessity of the great heart change hath been both most clearly represented, and as urgently pressed as perhaps in most that have gone before. But the matter is plainly to be most attributed to that depravedness of man's nature, whence there is a most unequal and partial reception of the truth of God; and that which seems (taken apart by itself) to import more of indulgence to sinners is readily caught at, that which more directly strikes at the very root of sin, is let pass as if it had never been spoken. And so men make up to themselves a gospel of this tenour and import, that let the temper of their spirits towards God be what it will, if they rely and rest upon the righteousness of Christ, God will be reconciled to them. And they think they need take no further care. But whatever is said in the gospel of Christ besides, of the necessity of being born of God, of partaking a divine nature, of putting off the old man, and putting on the new &c. is looked upon as if it had been thrown in by chance, and did signify nothing. And the other, without this, is thought to be pure gospel; as if these were impertinent additions and falsifications. But will not such men understand that the detracting of any thing from the instrument or testament of a man, as well as adding thereto, makes it another thing, and none of his act or deed? And so that their pure gospel, as they call it, is another gospel,

as they call it, is another gospel, nay (because there cannot be another) no gospel? Or will they not understand, how simply impossible it is, in the very nature of the thing, that the end should be attained, of bringing men to blessedness, (that is, to a delightful rest in God,) without their having a new nature, a heart inclined and bent toward God, wrought to a conformity and agreement with God's own holy nature and will, unto which the offer and hope of forgiveness by the blood of Christ is designed to win and form them? For can men be happy in him in whom they take no delight? or delight in him to whom the very temper of their spirits is habitually unsuitable and repugnant? How plain are things to them that are not resolved not to see!

Wherefore beware of contenting yourselves with the mere hope, that upon your having admitted a conviction, and felt some regret in your spirits for former strangeness to God, you shall be pardoned; so as thereupon never to design a redress, but run on the same course as before: and when you have hereby contracted a new score, and the load of your guilt begins to be sensibly heavy upon you, then betake yourselves to God for a new pardon. What presumptuous trifling is this with the Lord of heaven and earth! And what do you mean by it, or seem to expect? Is it not, that God should instead of remitting your sin to you remit your duty; cancel the obligation of that very supreme, universal, fundamental law of nature itself, and excuse you quite from ever loving, delighting in him, or setting your heart upon him at all? Think not forgiveness alone then will serve your turn; it will signify as much as a pardon will do to a malefactor just ready to die of a mortal disease. He, poor man! as much needs a skilful physician, as a merciful prince; and so do you. And your matter is nothing the worse (sure) that the person of each is sustained by the same Jesus, and that both parts can be performed by the same hand. And know, that a restored rectitude of spirit Godward, a renewed healthiness and soundness of heart, with your actual delighting in God thereupon in your future course, stands in nearer and more immediate connexion with your final, perfect, delightful rest and blessedness in him, than your being perpetually forgiven the not doing of it; if this were supposed possible without that. But it is not indeed supposable, for if God would not therefore hereafter banish you his presence (as now he does not) you would for ever banish yourselves, as now you do.

(6.) Let there be a solemn recognition and renewal of your engagement and the devoting of yourself to God. Again take hold of his covenant, and see that it take faster hold of you. Do it as if you had never done it, as if you were now to begin with him;

only that your own sin and his grace ought now to appear greater in your eyes; that more odious, that you have added treachery to disaffection; this more glorious and admirable, that yet he hath left open to you a door of hope, and that there is place for repentance, and that he is ready to treat with you again on a new score. With what humility, shame, fear and trembling, distrust of yourself, resolution of future more diligent circumspection and observation of your own spirit, trust and dependence on his, ought this transaction now to be managed with the holy God! And when you are thus returned into the way and course of your duty; then may what follows concern you in common with all others, that (being entered) desire direction how to proceed and improve in this holy exercise of delighting in God. For there are many such as have been somewhat practised in this course, and being convinced of the equity and excellency of it, desire to make progress therein, who yet find a difficulty in it; it goes not easily with them, they are easily diverted and can hardly hold on in it.

3. Therefore somewhat is intended to be said to those who are desirous of direction how to proceed in this holy exercise, that possibly may, through the Lord's blessing be some use, as to that (too common) case.

(1.) Let it be your great study and endeavour to get a temper of mind actually, ordinarily and more entirely spiritual. We suppose the implantation of some holy and spiritual principles in you already; but that is not enough. For as a mind wholly carnal, only savours the things of the flesh, will perpetually withdraw and recoil, if you offer it any thing tending Godward; so, in whatsoever degree it is carnal, it will do thus in a proportionable degree. If you say, let me now apply myself to some delightful intercourse with God, while an earthly tincture is fresh with you, and it was some carnal thing that made the last impression upon your spirit, many excuses will be found out, there will be manifold diversions: it will never be thought seasonable. Many other things will be judged necessary to be minded first. Wherefore fence against the addictedness of your hearts to those other things. And whereas, through the great advantages that sensible things have upon your senses and imagination, you are in continual danger to be over-borne and held off from God; this you must earnestly intend, to watch and fortify those inlets, and not to give away your souls to sense and the things of sense. Trust not your senses and the things of sense. Trust not your senses and their objects to parly, but under strict inspection. Never suffer that they should let in upon you what is suitable and grateful to them at their own pleasure.



You need to have somewhat else than sense, even a spirit of might and power, that may countermand and over-rule in every of those ports, and turn the battle in the gate. Those used to be the places of most strength; and surely here there needs most. Your case and present state cannot admit that you securely give up yourselves to unmixed unsollicitous delight even in the best object. If you intermit care and vigilancy, you will soon have such things come in upon you, as will make a worse mixture in your delight than they can do, and corrupt and spoil all. Your delight were better to be mixed with holy care, than with sinful vanity; *that* tends to preserve, *this* utterly to destroy it. Your state is that of conflict and warfare. You must be content with such spiritual delight, as will consist with this state. In a time of war and danger, when a city is beset with a surrounding enemy, and all the inhabitants are to be intent upon common safety, their case will not admit, that they should entirely indulge themselves to ease and pleasure. And surely it is better to bear the inconvenience of watching and guarding themselves, and enjoy the comforts which a rational probability of safety by such means will allow them, than merely with the mad hope of procuring themselves an opportunity and vacancy for freer delights, to throw open their gates, and permit themselves and all their delectable things to the rapine and spoil of a merciless enemy. Understand this to be your case. Therefore strictly guard all the avenues of your inward man. It is better resist *there* and combat your enemy, than within your walls; who is more easily kept than driven out. *There* cause every occasion and object (even that importunes and pretends business to you) to make a stand, and diligently examine the errand. Let also for this purpose a spirit of wisdom and judgment reside here, (the gate was wont to be the place of counsel and judgment as well as strength) that may prudently consider what is to be entertained and what not; and determine and do accordingly. But if you will have no rule over your own spirit, but let it be as a city broken down and without walls. (Prov. 25. 28.) If you will live careless and at ease, and think in this way to have delight in God, your delight will soon find other objects, and grow like that of the swine wallowing in the mire, become sensual, impure, and at length turn all to gall and wormwood.

It may be you have known some of much pretence to piety, that would allow themselves the liberty of being otherwise very pleasant in their usual conversation; by which you may imagine delight in God (which you cannot suppose such persons unacquainted with) may fairly consist with another sort of delight. Nor indeed is it to be doubted but it may; for the rules and measures which the holy God hath set us import no such rigo-



rous severity, nor do confine us to so very narrow bounds, but that there is scope and latitude enough left unto the satisfaction of sober desires and inclinations that are of a meaner kind. He that hath adjoined the inferior faculties we find in ourselves to our natures, and at first created a terrestrial paradise for innocent man, never intended to forbid the gratification of those faculties, nor hath given us any reason to doubt but that the lower delights that are suitable to them might be innocently entertained: nay, and the very rules themselves of temperance and sobriety, which he hath given us, for the guiding and governing of sensitive desires, do plainly imply, that they are permitted. For that which ought not to be, is not to be regulated, but destroyed. But then, whereas such rules do so limit the inclinations and functions of the low animal life, as that they may be consistent with our end, and subservient to it; how perverse and wicked an indulgence to them were it, to oppose them at once, both to the authority of him that set us those rules; and (therein) to our very end itself! That delectation in the things of this lower world, which is not by the divine law forbidden and declared evil, either in itself; or by the undue measure, season, or other circumstances thereof, is abundantly sufficient for our entertainment, and the gratification of this grosser part, while we are in this our earthly pilgrimage: and so much can never hurt us, nor hinder our higher delights. God hath fenced and hedged them in for us (as a garden enclosed) by his own rules and laws set about them; so that we cannot prejudice or impair them, but by breaking through his enclosure. Our great care and study therefore must be, to repress and mortify all earthly and sensual inclinations; unto that degree as till they be reduced to a conformity and agreement with his rules and measures; unto which they who have no regard, and do yet pretend highly to spirituality, and delight in God, it is apparently nothing else but mere hollow pretence; they only put on a good face, and make a fair shew; look big, and speak great swelling words of vanity, as they must be called, while their hearts taste nothing of what their tongues utter. Spiritual delight and joy is a severe thing, separated from vain and unbecoming levities, as well as from all earthly impurities; and only grows and flourishes in a soul that is dead to this world and alive to God through Jesus Christ.

See then to the usual temper of your spirit; and do not think it enough, that you hope the great renewing change did sometime pass upon it; and that therefore your case is good and safe, and you may now take your ease and liberty: but be intent upon this, to get into a confirmed growing spirituality, and that

you may find you are in your ordinary course after the Spirit; then will you savour the things of the Spirit; (Rom. 8. 5.) and then especially will the blessed God himself become your great delight, and your exceeding joy. (Psal. 43. 4) Retire yourself from this world, draw off your mind and heart. This is God's great rival. The friendship of this world is enmity to him, (Jam. 4. 4.) which is elsewhere said of the carnal mind; (Rom. 8. 7.) that is indeed the same thing, namely, a mind that is overfriendly affected towards this world, or not chastely; wherefore also in that forementioned scripture, they that are supposed and suspected to have made themselves, in that undue sense, friends of this world, are bespoken under the names of adulterers and adulteresses. You must cast off all other lovers, if you intend delighting in God. Get up then into the higher region where you may be out of the danger of having your spirit ingulphed, and as it were, sucked up of the spirit of this world; or of being subject to its debasing, stupifying influence. Bear yourself as the inhabitant of another country. Make this your mark and scope, that the temper of your spirit may be such, that the secret of the divine presence may become to you as your very element, wherein you can most freely breathe and live, and be most at ease; and out of which you may perceive you cannot enjoy yourself; and that whatever tends to withdraw you from him, any extravagant motion, the beginnings of the excursion, or the least departing step, may be sensibly painful and grievous to you. And do not look upon it as a hopeless thing you should ever come to this; some have come to it; 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, and to inquire in his temple. (Psal. 27. 4.)

Nor was this a transient fit only with the Psalmist, but we find him frequently speaking the same sense, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, (Psal. 23. 6.) and again we have the like strains; How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord God of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: blessed are they that dwell in thy house, &c. (Psal. 84. 1-4.) And what was this house more to him than another house, save that here he reckoned upon enjoying the divine presence? So that here was a heart no naturalized to this presence, as to affect an abode in it, and that he might lead his life with God, and dwell with him all his days: he could not be content with giving a visit now and then. And why should this temper of spirit in the clearer light of the gospel be

looked upon as an unattainable thing? A lazy despondency, and the mean conceit, that it is modest not to aim so high, starves religion, and stifles all truly noble and generous desires. Let this then be the thing designed with you, and constantly pursue and drive the design, that you may get into this disposition of spirit towards God. His Spirit will not be restrained, if it be duly sought, and dutifully complied with and obeyed; if you carefully reserve yourself for him, as one whom he hath set apart for himself. (Psal. 4. 4.) If you will be entirely his, and keep your distance, using a holy chaste reservedness as to other things; that is, such things as any way tend to indispose your spirit towards him, or render it less suitable to his converse, he will be no stranger to you. And that it may be more suitable and fit for him, you should habituate and accustom yourself to converse in the general with spiritual things. You will be as the things are you converse most with; they will leave their stamp and impress on you; wandering after vanity, you will become vain; minding earthly things, you will become earthly. Accordingly, being much taken up with spiritual things, you will bear their image, and become spiritual.

Think how unworthy it is, since you have faculties (and those now refined and improved by divine light and grace) that are capable of being employed about so much higher objects than those of sense, that you should yield to a confinement, in so great part, to so low and mean things; whence it is, that when you should mind things of a higher nature, it is a strange work with you, and those things seem odd and uncouth to you, and are all with you as mere shadow and darkness, that you should be most familiar with. Urge on your spirit; make it enter into the invisible world. May you not be assured, if you will use your understanding, that there are things you never saw, that are unspeakably more excellent and glorious than any thing you have seen, or than can be seen by eyes of flesh? Why should your mind and thoughts be limited within the narrow bounds of this sublunary world; so small and minute, and (by the apostacy and sin of man) so abject and deformed a part of God's creation? Do not bind down your spirit to the consideration and view of the affairs and concerns only of this region of sin and wretchedness; where few things fall under your notice, that can be a comfortable (or so greatly edifying and instructive a) prospect to a serious spirit. But consider, that as certainly as you behold with your eyes the wickedness and miseries of this forlorn world, that hath forsaken God, and is in great part forsaken of him; so certainly, there is a vastly greater world than this, of glorious and innocent creatures, that stand in direct and dutiful subordination to their common

Maker and Lord ; loving, and beloved of him ; delighting to do his will, and solacing themselves perpetually in his blessed presence, and in the mutual love, communion and felicity of one another. Unto which happy number (or innumerable company rather as they are called) the Redeemer is daily adjoining such as he recovers and translates out of the ruins and desolation of this miserable, accursed part of the universe.

Reckon yourself as someway appertaining to that blessed society. Mind the affairs thereof as those of your own country, and that properly belong to you. When we are taught to pray, "That the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven," can it be supposed, it ought to be a strange thing to our thoughts, how affairs go there ? Surely faith and holy reason, well used, would furnish us with regular and warrantable notions enough of the state of things above, that we should not need to carry it as persons that have no concern therein ; or, when we are required to be as strangers on earth, that we should make ourselves such to heaven rather. Let your mind be much employed in considering the state of things between God and his creatures. Design a large field for your thoughts to spread themselves in, (and you will also find it a fruitful one ;) let them run backward and forward and expatiate on every side. Think how all things sprang from God, and among them man, that excellent part of this his lower creation ; what he was towards God, and what he is now become. Think of the admirable person, the glorious excellencies, the mighty design, the wonderful achievements and performances of the Redeemer ; and the blessed issue he will bring things to at length. Think of, and study much the nature, parts and accomplishments of the new creature ; get your mind well-instructed and furnished with apprehensions of the whole entire frame of that holy rectitude wherein the image of God upon renewed souls doth consist ; the several lovely ornaments of the hidden man of the heart, how it is framed and habited, when it is as it should be towards God and towards men. Cast about, and you will not want matter of spiritual employment and exercise for your minds and hearts ; nor have occasion if any expostulate with you, why you mind this earth and the things of sense so much, to say, you know not what else to think of ; you may sure find many things else. And if you would use your thoughts to such converse, and thus daily entertain yourself, in this way you may expect a spiritual frame to grow habitual to you ; and then would the rest of your business do itself. You would not need to be pressed and persuaded to delight in God, any more than to do the acts of nature, to eat, and drink, and move, yea and draw your breath.

(2.) Endeavour your knowledge or the conception you have

of God, may be more distinct and clear. For observe whether when you would apply yourself to delight in him, this be not the next, (or at least one) great obstruction after that of an indisposed, carnal heart, that though you would, and you know it is fit you should do so, you know not how to go about it; for you are at a loss, what or how to conceive of him. But is it fit it should be always thus? What ever learning and never arrive to this knowledge? It is most true, "we can never search out the Almighty unto perfection;" and it will always be but a little portion we shall know of that glorious incomprehensible Being. But since there is a knowledge of God, we are required to have our souls furnished with, and whereon eternal life depends, with all gracious dispositions of heart towards him, that are the beginnings of that life; certainly the whole compass of our duty and blessedness is not all laid upon an impossibility. And therefore, if we do not so far know as to love and delight in him above all things else, this must be through our own great default; and more to be imputed to our carelessness and contentedness to be ignorant, than that he is unknowable, or hath so reserved and shut up himself from us that we cannot know him. There are many things belonging to the Being of God which we are not concerned to know, and which it would be a vain and bold curiosity to pry into: but what is necessary to direct our practice, and tends to shew how we should be and carry ourselves towards him, is not (such hath been his gracious vouchsafement) impossible or difficult to be known. We may apprehend him to be the most excellent Being; and may descend to many particular excellencies, wherein we may easily apprehend him infinitely to surpass all other beings.

For we most certainly know, all things were of him, and therefore, that whatsoever excellency we can observe in creatures, must be eminently and in highest perfection in him, without the want of any thing, but what doth itself import weakness and imperfection; and hath it not been his errand and business into the world, who lay in his bosom to declare him? (Joh. 1. 18.) And hath not he, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person? (Heb. 1. 1. 2.) He hath been on earth the visible representation of God to men; the divine glory shone in him, the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. Was not that divine? Suppose we then, we had seen Christ in the flesh, and been the constant observers of his whole conversation on earth, (and though we have not seen it, we have the sufficient records

of his life and actions in our hands;) let us I say suppose him from day to day before our eyes, in all his meek, humble, lovely deportments among men; and withal in the beams of majesty that appeared through that veil wherein he was pleased to inwrap himself. Observe him going to and fro, and every where doing good, scattering blessings wherever he went; with what compassion and tenderness he healed the sick, instructed the ignorant supplied and fed the hungry and necessitous; how he bare with the weak, forgave the injurious (even against his own life) and wept over secure and obstinate sinners; with what mighty power he cast out devils, raised the dead, commanded winds and seas, and they obeyed him; with what authority, zeal and conviction he contested against a hypocritical generation of hardened, impenitent, unbelieving wretches, casting flames of holy just displeasure in their faces, and threatening them with the damnation of hell. And now suppose the veil laid aside, and the lustre of all these excellencies shining forth, without the interposition of any obscuring cloud or shadow; and such a one is the blessed God. For this was the express image of his person; and as he himself tells us, they that have seen him have seen the Father. (Joh. 14. 9.) And do you not now see one to be delighted in?

But yet further. Can you not frame a notion of wisdom, goodness, justice, holiness, truth, power, with other known perfections, all concurring together in a Being purely spiritual (not obvious to our sense) and that was eternally and originally of himself, the Author and Original of all things, and who is therefore overall and in all, infinite and unchangeable in all the perfections before-mentioned? Surely such conceptions are not impossible to you? And this is he in whom you are to delight. Lift up then your minds above, your senses and all sensible things; use your understandings, whereby you are distinguished from brute creatures. Consider, this is he from whom you and all things sprang, and in whom your life is. Do you perceive life, wisdom, power, love in other things; these must all have some or other fountain. Other things have not these of themselves, for they are not of themselves, therefore they must derive and partake them from him; and thence it is evident, they must be in him in their highest excellency. Of this, your understandings, duly exercised, will render you as sure, as if you saw that infinite glory, in which all these meet, with your eyes; and will assure you, it is so much more excellent and glorious, for that it cannot be seen with your eyes. You see the external acts and expressions of these things from such creatures as you are. But life, wisdom, power, love, themselves are invisible things, which in themselves you cannot see; yet you are not the less

certain that there are such things. And do you not find, that the certain evidence you have, that these things meet in this or that creature, do render it lovely and delightful in your eyes? especially, if you have, or apprehend you may have nearest interest in such a creature? The blessed God not only hath these things in himself, but is these very things himself; therefore must be invisible, as they are. And because he not only hath them, but is them, therefore they are in him perfectly unchangeably and eternally, as being his very essence. Think then of a Being that is pure, original, substantial, life, wisdom, power, love; and how infinitely amiable and delectable should that ever blessed Being be unto you!

Converse with the word of God. Read his descriptions of himself; and do not content yourselves to have the words and expressions before your eyes, or in your mouths, that represent to you his nature and attributes; but make your pauses, and consider the things themselves signified by them; that is, when you read such passages of his own holy Book, as that which tells you his name, that "He is the Lord the Lord God, gracious and merciful, &c." Or that tell you "He is light, he is love, he is God only wise, he is the Almighty, God all-sufficient, he is all in all," and that the "Heavens, and heaven of heavens cannot contain him;" Or wherein you find him admired as "glorious in holiness;" or that say, "he is what he is," that "he is the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega, &c." Labour to fix the apprehension and true import of all such expressions deep in your mind; that you may have an entire and well-formed representation of him before you, unto which you may upon all occasions have recourse, and not be at a loss every time you are to apply yourselves to any converse with him, what or how to conceive of him. And because mere words, though they may furnish you with a more full and comprehensive notion of him, yet it may be not with so lively a one, or that you find so powerfully striking your heart, compare with that account his word gives you of him, the works which your eyes may daily behold, and which you are assured were wrought and done by him. To read or hear of his wisdom, power, goodness, &c. and then to have the visible effects within your constant view, that so fully correspond to what his word hath said of him, and demonstrate him to be what you were told he is; how mighty a confirmation doth this carry with it! You may behold some what of him, in every creature. All his works do not only represent, but even praise and commend him to you.

Above all, since he is only to be seen in his own light, pray earnestly and continually to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that he would give you the spirit of wisdom

and revelation in the knowledge of him. (Eph. 1. 17.) From such as so desire to know him, he will not conceal himself. This is your more direct following on to know the Lord; in which case he hath said, you shall know, and that his going forth shall be prepared as the morning. (Hos. 6. 3.) By your craving looks, and the expecting posture of your waiting eye, you draw forth and invite his enlightening communications, which do but wait for an invitation. For it is most reasonable you should feel your want, and express your desire of what is so precious, before you find it. Hereby you put yourselves amidst the glorious beams of his vital pleasant light; or do open your souls to admit and let it in upon you. Who when he finds it is with you a desired thing and longed for, takes more pleasure in imparting, than you can pains in seeking, or pleasure in receiving it. Nor yet, when you have thus attained to some competent measure of the knowledge of God, are you to satisfy yourselves that now you are not altogether ignorant: but to employ your knowledge; which will be enforced in the following chapter.

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## CHAP. V.

- I. Invitation to those desirous of direction in this holy exercise continued. II. The last thing proposed in the head of contents, chap. III. which was to say something. *Thirdly*, By way of excitation to this duty. 1. The grace breathing in these words, "Delight thyself in the Lord." 2. The thing desired, "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." (1.) Spiritual good things. (2.) External, of an inferior kind so far satisfying of them.

I. **WE** proceed with the subject of invitation to those who are desirous of direction in this holy exercise and say to such;

(3.) Employ your knowledge in frequent and solemn thinking on him; which is one (and the next) end of that knowledge and a further great means to your delighting in him. Your knowledge of God signifies little to this purpose, or any other, if, as it gives you the advantage of having frequent actual thoughts of him, it be not used to this end. Not having this knowledge when you would set yourselves seriously to



think on God, you are lost in the dark, and know not, which way to turn yourselves? And having it, you will be as much strangers to delight in him, if you let your knowledge lie bound up in dead and spiritless notion, and labour not to have it turned into active life and fervent love, by the agitation of your working thoughts. By your musing this fire must be kindled. Do you suppose it possible to delight in God and not think of him? If God be the solace and joy of your souls, surely it must be God remembered and minded much, not neglected and forgotten, My soul (saith the Psalmist) shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee on my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. (Psal. 63. 5. 6.) And he at the same time says his meditation of him shall be sweet; when he says he will be glad in the Lord. (Psal. 104. 34.)

It is not a brutal delight you are here invited to. Even such creatures have their pleasures also; and do need thereto, besides a suitable object, only the help and ministry of their senses. Your delight in God can find no way into your hearts, but by the introduction of your exercised minds. There the matter must be prepared and formed by which your delight is to be nourished and maintained. Hereto then you must apply yourselves with design, and with serious diligence, and take pains with your recoiling thoughts. Do not make that fulsome pretence, to excuse your slothful neglect, that you cannot command your own thoughts. The thing itself is unquestionably true, and that you are not of yourselves sufficient to think any thing that is good, as of yourselves; and so you may truly enough say, that you cannot think any thought at all without God, or so much as draw a breath. Only, as besides your natural dependence on God for the support of your natural life and being, there must be that course taken, and those things done, by which in an orderly course of providence you may live; so for the maintaining of your spiritual life (which very much stands in delight and joy in God) you must join a spiritual dependence for that special influence and concurrence which is necessary hereto, with the doing of such things as by God's appointment and prescription are to serve this end. They who complain therefore they cannot attain to it, to delight in God, or their delight in him is faint and languishing; while in the mean time they use no endeavour to bend and direct their thoughts towards him, do make as idle a complaint, as he that shall say, he is in a miserable starving condition, and nothing nourishes him; who wanting nothing suitable for him, is so wretchedly slothful, that he will be at no pains to prepare, or so much as eat and chew his own necessary food. You may

not imagine, you have all that is needful for the well-governing of your spirits in your own hands and power. Nor ought you therefore to think, that what is simply needful is not to be had. God is not behind-hand with you; he is no such hard task-master, as to require brick and allow no straw: but may most righteously say, ye are idle, and do therefore only complain like the sluggard in his bed, whose hands cannot endure to labour. You dare not deliberately go to God, and tell him, you do all you can to fix the thoughts of your hearts on him, and yet it will not be; or that he gives you no help. Though he can be no way indebted to you, but by his own free promise; he giveth meat to them that fear him, being ever mindful of his covenant, (yea he doth it for ravens and sparrows) he will not then famish the souls that cry to him, and wait on him; their heart shall live that seek God. It is becoming and suitable to the state of things between him and you, that he should put you upon seeking that you may find. Your reasonable nature and faculties (especially being already rectified in some measure, and enlivened by his grace and Spirit) do require to be held to such terms. It is natural to you to think; and there is nothing more suitable to the new creature, than that you apply and set yourselves to think on him, and that your thoughts be set (and held) on work to inquire and seek him out. Know therefore, you do not your parts, unless you make this more your business. Therefore to be here more particular;

[1.] Solemnly set yourselves at chosen times to think on God. Meditation is of itself a distinct duty, and must have a considerable time allowed it among the other exercises of the Christian life. It challenges a just share and part in the time of our lives; and he in whom we are to place our delight, is you know, the prime and chief object of this holy work. Is it reasonable that he who is our life and our all, should never be thought on, but now and then, as it were by chance, and on the bye? "My meditation on him shall be sweet." Doth not that imply that it was with the Psalmist a designed thing to meditate on God? that it was a stated course? whereas it was become customary and usual to him, his ordinary practice to appoint times for meditating on God, his well-known exercise, (which is supposed) he promises himself satisfaction and solace of soul herein. Let your eyes herein therefore prevent the night-watches. Reckon you have neglected one of the most important businesses of the day, if you have omitted this, and that to such omissions you owe your little delight in God. Wherein therefore are you to repair yourselves but by redressing this great neglect?

[2] Think often of him amidst your other affairs. Every one as he is called (be his state or way of living what it will, be he bond or free) is required therein to abide with God. (1. Cor. 7. 20.) And how is that but by often thinking of him, as being a great part (and fundamental to all the rest) of what can be meant by this abode? How grateful a mixture would the thoughts of God make with that great variety of other things which we are necessarily to be concerned in, while we are in this world! If they be serious and right thoughts they will be accompanied with some savour and relish of sweetness, and at least, tend to keep the heart in a disposition for more delightful, solemn intercourses with God. It is a sad truth (than which also nothing is more apparent) that whatsoever there is, either of sinfulness or uncomfortableness in the lives of those who have engaged and devoted themselves to God, doth in greatest part proceed from their neglect to mind God. A thing, if due heed were taken about it, so easy, so little laborious, and the labour whereof (so much as it is) were sure to be recompenced with so unspeakable pleasure: that they are so often lost in darkness, drowned in carnality, buried in earthliness, and overwhelmed with miseries and desolations of spirit, and all this for want of a right employing of their thoughts, is from hence only; they set their thoughts upon things that tend either to corrupt and deprave their spirits, or to disquiet and afflict them.

At this in-let, and by the labour of their own thoughts, sins and calamities are brought in upon them as a flood; which very thoughts if they were placed and exercised aright, would let in God upon them, fill them with his fulness, replenish their souls with his light, grace and consolations. And how much more easy an exercise were it to keep their thoughts employed upon one object that is ever full, delectable and present; than to divide them among many, that either lie remote, and out of their power, to be pursued with anxiety, toil, and very often with disappointment; or being nearer hand, are to be enjoyed (if they be things that have an appearance of good in them) with much danger and damage to their spirits, and with little satisfaction; or (if they appear evil) to be endured with pain and sorrow! So that the labour of their thoughts, among those many things, brings them in torture, when their rest (Psal. 13.) upon God alone, would be all pleasure delight and joy: here their souls might dwell at ease or (as those words import) rest in goodness (even with that quiet repose which men are wont to take by night; for so the word we read *dwell* peculiarly signifies,) after the weariness which we may suppose to have been contracted by the labour of the foregoing day. And if no such sweet and pleasant fruit were to be hoped for from the careful

government and ordering of our thoughts, is the obligation of God's law in this matter nothing with us? whom we are bound to fear, and love, to trust and obey above all things, of him are we not bound so much as to think? And what is loving God with all our mind, so expressly mentioned in that great summary of our duty towards him? Or what can it mean, after the required love of all the heart, and all the soul, to add so particularly, and with all thy mind, when as the mind we know is not the seat of love? Surely it cannot at least, but imply, that our thoughts must be much exercised upon God even by the direction of our love, and that our love must be maintained by thoughts of him; that our minds and hearts must continually correspond and concur to the loving of God; and so our whole soul be exercised and set on work therein.

What doth it mean that our youth is challenged to the remembrance of him? (Eccl. 12. 1) What, is our riper age more exempt? Do we as we longer live by him owe him less? Doth it signify nothing with us that (as was hinted formerly) the wicked bear this brand in the Scriptures, they that forget God: (Psal. 9. 16.) that it is a differencing character of his own people, that they thought on his name? Why do we suppose our thoughts exempt from his government, or the obligation of his laws? Why should it be reckoned less insolent to say "Our thoughts, than our tongues are our own, who is Lord over us?" May we do what we will with our thoughts? Who gave us our thinking power, or made us capable of forming a thought? And now, will we assume the confidence to tell God we think on him all that we can? How many idle thoughts in the day might we have exchanged for thoughts of God! and every thought have been to us a spring of pleasure, and holy delight in him! Know then that if ever you will do any thing in this great matter of delighting in God, you must arrest your thoughts for him, and engage them in more constant converse with him: and withal mix prayers with those thoughts; or let them often be praying, craving thoughts, such as may carry with them annexed desires; or wherein your heart may breathe out requests, such as that (for instance) Rejoice the soul of thy servant; for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul, (Ps. 86. 4) See they be spiritual thoughts that carry life in them, and aim to draw more. But now our thoughts may be conversant about him under very various considerations, and all of them very delightful. And this variety may much increase our delight, while our minds converse with him, now under one notion, then under another. They are apt to tire and grow weary, being long employed the same way upon the same thing. And it were an injury to the blessed God himself, when he presents

himself under various aspects and appearances, so to take notice of any one, as to overlook and neglect the rest. Therefore,

(4.) Look often to him according as absolutely considered he is in himself the most excellent Being : and as in reference to his creatures, he is the supreme Author and Lord of all. There is an unspeakable pleasure to be taken in him so beheld. Too many while their distrust, or their carnality and strangeness to God holds them in suspence concerning their own special relation to him, are apt to fancy themselves excused of delighting in him. It belongs not to them they think, but to some familiar friends, and great favourites of his to whom he expresses special kindness, and on whom he places the marks of his more peculiar good-will. But do you think so to shift and wave the obligation of a universal law upon mankind, and all reasonable nature ? You are to remember (as hath been said) your delight in God is not to be considered only as your privilege but as an act of homage to him that made you, and put an intelligent apprehensive spirit into you, by which you are capable of knowing who made you, and of beholding your Maker's excellency with admiration and delight. And if now you are become guilty and vile ; will you run into darkness and hide yourselves from him, or close your eyes, and then say, the sun doth not shine, and deny the blessed, glorious God to be what most truly and unchangeably he is ? Whatever you are or have desired he should be towards you, yet do him right. Behold and confess his glorious excellency, every way most worthy to be delighted in. Nor have you rendered yourselves so vile, nor had so much cause of apprehending his displeasure towards you, by any thing so much as this, your not having taken delight in him all this while ; and your neglect to take the ways (spoken of before) tending to bring you thereto. If you think you have no special relation to him, do you think you ever shall if you continue, in the temper of your spirits, strangers to him, and look upon him as one in whom you are to take no delight ? Surely it is your dutiful affection towards him and complacency in him, that must give you ground to hope you are his, and he is yours ; and therefore the beginnings and first degrees of that complacency and delight must be in you before ; being begotten by the view of that excellency which he hath in himself antecedently to his being related to you. Yea, and if your relation to him were already as sure and evident to you as can be supposed ; yet are you to take heed of confining your delight in him to that consideration of him only ; or of making it the chief reason of that your delight. For so your delight in him will be more for your own sakes, or upon your own account than his. Learn to look upon things as they are, and not according to their aspect

upon your affairs. Is it not a greater thing that he is God, than that he is yours ?

It is a purer, a more noble and generous affection to him you are to aim at, than what is measured only by your private interest. Is that boundless fulness of life, glory, and all perfection (treasured up in the eternal and incomprehensible Being) to be all estimated by the capacity and concerns of a silly worm ? That consideration, therefore, being sometimes laid aside, sit down and contemplate God as he is in himself, not disowning (as it is not fit you should) but only waving the present consideration of any more comfortable relation, wherein you may (though most justly) suppose him to stand to you ; and see if you cannot take pleasure in this, that he is great and glorious, and to have a Being so every way perfect before your eyes. Try if it will not be pleasant to you to fall down before him, and give him glory ; to join your praises and triumphant songs to those of saints and angels : and how much yet also it will add to your satisfaction to behold and acknowledge him exalted above all blessing and praise. How great delight hath been taken in him upon such accounts ! In what transports have holy souls been upon the view and contemplation of his sovereign power and dominion ; his wise and righteous government ; his large and flowing goodness, that extends in common to all the works of his hands ! Labour to imitate the ingenuous and loyal affection of this kind, whereof you find many expressions in the sacred Volume. For what hath been matter of delight to saints of old, ought surely still as much to be accounted so. To give instances :

You sometimes find them in a most complacential adoration of his wonderful wisdom and counsels. O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! (Rom. 11. 33.) And again, to God only wise be glory, through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. (ch. 16. 27.) To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God be honour and glory for ever &c. (1 Tim. 1. 17.) To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power now and ever, &c. (Jude 25.) Elsewhere we have them in transports admiring his holiness. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods ! Who is like thee glorious in holiness ! There is none holy as the Lord ; for there is none besides thee, neither is there any rock like our God ! (Exod. 15. 11.—1 Sam. 2. 2.) And this is recommended and enjoined to his holy ones as the special matter of their joy and praise : rejoice in the Lord ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. (Psal. 97. 12.) At other times we have their magnificent

celebrations of his glorious power, and that by way of triumph over the paganish gods; our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased. (Psal. 115.) Their idols are silver and gold, &c. Be thou exalted, O God, in thine own strength. We will sing and praise thy power. (Psal. 21. 13.) Forsake me not until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come, &c. (Psal. 71. 18.) This is given out as the song of Moses and the Lamb; Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, &c. And how do they magnify his mercy and goodness both towards his own people, and his creatures in general. O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, that thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the children of men! (Psal. 31. 19.) Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright: praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery,---the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. (Psal. 33. 1.) I will extol thee my God, O King, I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts, they shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. (Psal. 145. 1. &c.) To insert all that might be mentioned to this purpose, were to transcribe a great part of the Bible. And in what raptures do we often find them, in the contemplation of his faithfulness and truth, his justice and righteousness, his eternity, the boundlessness of his presence, the greatness of his works, the extensiveness of his dominion, the perpetuity of his kingdom, the exactness of his government; Who is a strong God like unto thee, and to thy faithfulness, round about thee! (Psal. 69.) Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and thy faithfulness reaches unto the clouds. (Psal. 36.) Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth, or the world, from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. (Psal. 90. 2.) But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee. (1 Kings 8.) The works of the Lord are great, sought out of them, that have pleasure therein. (Psal. 111.) His work is honourable and glorious, &c. All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee; they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power, (Psal. 145.) to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious Majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.



And his glory in the general (which results from his several excellencies in conjunction), how loftily is it often celebrated with the expression of the most loyal desires that it may be every where renowned, and of greatest complacency, in as far it is apprehended so to be. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever. They shall sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord. Be thou exalted above the heavens, let thy glory be above all the earth. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is excellent, his glory is above the earth and the heavens. \* When you read such passages as these (whether they be elogies or commendations of him, or doxologies and direct attributions of glory to him), you are to bethink yourselves, with what temper of heart these things were uttered ! with how raised and exalted a spirit ! what high delight and pleasure was conceived in glorifying God, or in beholding him glorious ! How large and unbounded a heart, and how full of his praise doth still every where discover itself in such strains ; when all nations, when all creatures, when every-thing that hath breath, when heaven and earth are invited together, to join in the concert, and bear a part in his praises ! And now eye him under the same notions under which you have seen him so magnified, that in the same way you may have your own heart wrought up to the same pitch and temper towards him. Should it not provoke an emulation, and make you covet to be amidst the throng of loyal and devoted souls, when you see them ascending as if they were all incense ! when you behold them dissolving and melting away in delight and love, and ready to expire, even fainting that they can do no more ; designing their very last breath shall go forth in the close of a song ! I will sing unto the Lord, as long as I live, I will sing praise to my God while I have my being ! (Psal. 104. 3. 3.) How becoming is it, to resolve, "This shall be my aim and ambition, to fly the same, and if it were possible, a greater height." Read over such psalms† as are more especially designed for the magnifying of God ; and when you see what were the things that were most taking to so spiritual and pious hearts ; thence receive instruction, and aim to have your hearts alike affected and transported with the same things. Frame the supposition, that you are meant, that the invitation is directed to you, "O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise to him with psalms ; for the Lord is a great God, and a great king above all Gods, &c. And think with yourselves, is he

\* Psal. 104. 31.—138. 5.—57. 7. 11.—148. 13.

† Psal. 8. 48. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. &c.



not as great as he was ? Is he not as much our Maker as he was theirs ? Is it not now as true, that "The Lord reigneth, and is high above all the earth, and exalted far above all gods." Now since these were the considerations upon which so great complacency was taken in him, set the same before your own eyes. And since these were proposed as the matter of so common a joy, and the creation seems designed for a musical instrument of as many strings as there are creatures in heaven and earth ; awake, and make haste to get your heart fixed : lest "the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad, the world and all that dwell therein : lest the sea roar, and the fulness thereof, the floods clap their hands, the fields and the hills be joyful together, and all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord", while you only are silent and unconcerned.

And seriously consider the kind and nature of that joy and delight in God wherewith the hearts of holy men did so exceedingly abound ; which is to be collected from the expressed ground and reasons of it, for the most part, wheresoever you have any discovery of that joy itself. This general and principal character may be given of it, that it was a sincerely devout and a loyal joy ; not a mean, narrow, selfish pleasure, a hugging of themselves in this apprehension merely, it is well with me or I am safe and happy whatsoever becomes of the world. This was still the burden of the song ; the Lord is great and glorious and excellent ; is exalted and most high over all. And it is to be observed, that as this was the common and more usual strain and temper of holy souls, in the ages whereof the Scriptures give us any account ; so were doubts and fears, and troubled thoughts concerning their own interest in God, a great deal less usual and common in those days. So that in proportion to the other pious and holy exercises of such as were true fearers of God and devoted to him, there is little account given us of any thing of that kind in the sacred writings, and especially in the new testament of our Lord. An argument, that such as were sincerely religious were most taken up about the interest of God and Christ in the world, rejoicing either in the observation of its growth and increase, or in the hope and confidence that it shall grow : and that they were much less concerned about their own interest ; yea and that this course did thrive best with them, while they were most intent upon the affairs of their common Lord, their own were well enough provided for.

We cannot hereupon but note therefore by the way, how altered a thing religion is now become. Almost the whole business of it, even among them that more seriously mind any thing belonging to it, is a fear of going to hell ; and hence perpetual, endless scruples, doubts and inquiries about marks and

signs, and how to know what is the least degree of that grace which is necessary to their being saved. As if the intention were to beat down the price to the very lowest, and dodge always, and cheapen heaven to the utmost, it may be feared (as too many) with a design not to aim at any thing higher than what is merely necessary to that purpose only, and never to mind being excellent, but only being saved. And yet also it were well, in a comparative sense, if that itself were minded in good earnest by many that profess beyond the common rate; and that whereas their own interest is the thing they most mind, it were not their meanest and least considerable interest, even that of their sense and flesh, and secular advantage; and that under the pretence too (which makes the matter so much the worse) of much love and zeal Godward, and devotedness to his interest; which they supposed involved and wrapt up wholly with theirs. Whence also all their delight and joy is measured only by the aspect of the world, and of public affairs upon them and their private ones. And they are either overwhelmed with sorrow, or transported with joy, according as the state of things doth either frown upon, or favour their concerns. In the days when the interest of Christ lay more entirely and undividedly among one sort of men; and more apparently, their contests being less among themselves, and chiefly with the infidel world; and they had, for the most part, no enemies but those in common of the Christian name and cause: so that any common state of suffering to them, was the visible prejudice of that cause and interest: why, what, did they delight and please themselves in nothing but a warm sun and halcyon seasons? Surely they had matter little enough for that sort of joy. And what, did they therefore dejectedly languish and despond, and give themselves up to sorrow and despair? Nor that neither; unless they had all had but one neck, and that also perfectly in the enemies power, it had been an impossible thing to stifle and extinguish their delight and joy. So fully did Christ make it good to them, that their sorrow should be turned into joy, and their joy should no man take from them. For even that increased it which aimed at its suppression; and the waters thrown upon their flame, became rivers of oil. They had got a secret way of "rejoicing in tribulation, of counting it all joy when they fell into divers temptations, or taking pleasure in reproaches for the sake of Christ," of turning difficulties and hazards into matter of triumph, of taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and glorying to be counted worthy to suffer any thing for so excellent a name. Insomuch, that though their Head and Lord, was in a most ignominious way taken from them, and they left as a despised party of men in the midst of an outrageous world,

under the (seemingly hopeless) profession of addictedness to the interest of a man that died upon a cross among thieves but the other day : and though many of them never saw his face, but had their knowledge of him by report and hearsay, yet believing they rejoiced; with joy unspeakable and full of glory. (1. Pet. 1: 8;) The matter and ground of their joy were not so uncertain and changeable a thing, nor so light and unsubstantial as the world's kindness and favour, and the smooth face of a serene sky. These were true lovers of Christ ; and such as counted him worthy for whom they should do all that lay in their power, and suffer all which it was in the power of any others to do against them upon his account.

They that rejoice and place their delight in the blessed God himself through Jesus Christ, have for the object of their joy the everlasting I AM, him who is the same yesterday, and to day and for ever. And whose excellent glory may be clouded indeed and eclipsed to the world and the eye of sense ; but still shines in itself, and to the eye of faith, with the same bright and undiminished lustre. That delight will then be continued and permanent, and ever springing up in fresh liveliness and vigour, which is taken in this blessed object, considered as it is in itself ; and that hath place in a soul that acts in a steady direct course towards that object, without sinister respects, or any selfish ones, of even the highest kind, otherwise than in that subordination which will be suitable to the vast disproportion and inequality between God's interest and ours ; that is, (looking upon our own external concernments as unworthy to be named in the same day) that though we reckon what there is delectable in God will make for our eternal advantage ; yet to consider that advantage of ours so much less ; and to be so much more pleased and satisfied, that he is in himself blessed and glorious, as it is in itself a thing more considerable that he be so, than it is what becomes of us, or of any creature, or of this whole creation. We are not indeed concerned, nor may think it warrantable to put ourselves upon any such severe and unnatural trials of our love and fidelity to him, as to put the question to our own hearts, could we be content to lie in hell, or be in the state of the damned for ever for his glory? For it were a most injurious and vile supposition of somewhat inconsistent with his own most blessed nature, and eternal, essential felicity, (for his happiness cannot but be much placed in the benignity of his nature) to imagine that he ever can be pleased, or esteem himself glorified by the everlasting miseries of any one that truly loves him. We ought to abhor the mention or imagination of such a thing as a blasphemy against his infinite goodness ; the denial whereof were to deny his Godhead. And it were also an absurd and

self-contradicting supposition: for none can be in the state of the damned, but they must be also in a state of extreme enmity to God, and of all wickedness and malignity arrived and grown up to its highest pitch; which indeed is the very horror and inmost centre of hell: wickedness and eternal misery differing (for the most part) but in degree, as grace and glory do. So that to put ourselves upon this trial of sincerity towards God, were to ask ourselves, whether we would be willing to express our sincere love to God, by everlasting hatred of him; and the truth of our grace by being as maliciously wicked as the devil and his angels? The expressions of Moses and Paul so frequently alleged can be withdrawn to no such sense. This is no place to discuss the importance of them. But it were certainly most imprudent (whatsoever they import) to seek marks of sincere love to God thence, which may be fetched from so many plain texts of Scripture. But it is out of question that we may and ought to mind and take complacency in our own blessedness, in a degree inferior and subordinate to that which we take in the glory of the blessed God, without making the sinful and absurd supposition of their inconsistency: or that we can ever be put to choose the absence or privation of the one as a means to the other. And such complacency and delight in God as arises upon such grounds is of the right stamp and kind.

See then that yours be a well complexioned delight, and such as inwardly partakes of the true nature of religion, that is, that hath in it entire devotedness to God as the very life, soul, spirit of it. And if this be not the thing but merely self-satisfaction which you chiefly have in pursuit under the name of delight in God; you beat the air, and do but hunt after a shadow. For there is no such thing as real, solid delight in God anywhere existing, or ever will be, separately and apart from a supreme love and addictedness of heart to him and his interest as our chief and utmost end. Which temper of spirit towards him, must be maintained and improved, by our fixed intuition and view of his glorious greatness, and absolute excellency and perfection; and the congruity and fitness which we thereupon apprehend, that we and all things (as all are of him) should be wholly to him, that he alone may have the glory.

(5.) And though you are not to prefer the consideration of your own interest in God as a good suitable to you, or to give it the highest place in your delight; yet also you must take heed of neglecting it, or of denying it any place at all. For though we may plainly observe, as hath been said; that it was the usual temper of holy men of old, to be most taken up in admiring God upon the account of his own excellency and glory in itself, considered; and may thence collect that to be the genuine

right temper of a gracious heart when it is most itself: yet also it is as evident, that they were far from neglecting their own interest in God, and that they counted it not a small matter; yea that it had (though not the principal) a very great influence upon their delight and joy in him. No one can read the Bible, and not have frequent occasion to take notice of this. For how often do we find him spoken of under the names of their portion, heritage, &c. And in what raptures of joy do we often find them upon that account! So the Psalmist considers him, when he says, the lines are fallen to him in pleasant places, and he had a goodly heritage. (Psal. 16. 6.) How often do we find them glorying in their relation by covenant, and making their boasts of him as their God; I will love thee, O Lord, my strength, &c. (Psal. 18.) You have *my* no less than nine times repeated in the beginning (the first and second verses) of that psalm, my strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, &c. And afterwards how glorious a triumph is there raised, and in what exultation do we behold them upon this! "Who is God save the Lord, and who is a rock save our God?" And again, "The Lord liveth and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted." And this was some of the last holy breath uttered by that anointed one of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel; he hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure: and this is all my salvation and all my desire. (2. Sam. 23. 5.) With this, how well satisfied and pleased did he expire, and go down to the grave! And the people of God are sometime represented as so taken with this apprehension of their peculiar relation to God that they cannot be content to know, but they proclaim it; nor was it enough the present age should know, but they must have it told the following generation; let mount Sion rejoice, &c. Mark—That ye may tell the generation following—For this is our God. (Psal. 48.) See their ostentation of him, this God! As if he had said, "Behold what a God have we! view him well, and take notice how glorious a God he is." And as they glory in the greatness of the God to whom they were related, so they do in the eternity of the relation. This God is our God for ever and ever! &c. And how unexpressible was the inward pleasure wherewith we may suppose those words to have been uttered, God even our own God shall bless us! (Psal. 67. 6.) How delightful an appropriation! as if it were intended to be said, the blessing itself were less significant, it could not have that savour with it if it were not from our own God. Not only therefore allow but urge your spirits thus to look towards God, that you may both delight in him, as being in himself the most excellent one, and also as being yours; for

know, you are not permitted only, but obliged to eye, accept and rejoice in him as such. It is his first and great law, and the form of his covenant which he requires you to enter into with him, to take him for your God. Herein to be shy and decline, is to rebel. And when he offers himself in all his rich fulness to be your portion and your God, how vile ingratitude were it to neglect and overlook the kindness of the overture. It is his glory to have indigent souls satiating themselves in him, drawing from him their vital breath, living upon him as their all: confessing they cannot live, but by his vouchsafed communications. And if you should say you love him, but so he be ever glorious in himself, you care not to be happy; it would sound like a hollow compliment. You are not to deal with a God upon such terms. It becomes you not; nor is suitable to him. It is fit for you to own it to him, that he is your life, that you are a mere nothing in yourself, and must seek your all in him. Your song and your prayer must be directed to him as the God of your life. (Psal. 42. 8.) You do not own him as God, except you own and adore him as your all-sufficient good, and that fulness which filleth all in all. You detract from the glory of his Godhead, if you attribute not this to him; and if accordingly, as one that cannot live without him, you do not seek union with him, and join yourself to him, and then rejoice and solace yourself in that blessed conjunction.

And if you be not sure as yet that he is yours, your delighting in him is not therefore to be suspended and delayed till you be. But in the mean time delight in him as willing to become yours. To disbelieve that he is willing, is to give him the lie. It is the great design of his gospel so to represent him to you. See that your hearts do embrace and close with that as a most delightful and lovely representation: the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth offering himself in all his fulness to be thine! thy portion and thy God for ever! How transporting should this be to you! Nor, if you suspect the sincerity of your own heart towards him (which is the only thing you can have any pretence to suspect, for it were a blasphemy to his truth and goodness to intimate a suspicious thought of him) may you therefore spend all your time in anxious inquiries, or in looking only upon your own evil heart: but look most, and with a direct and steady eye towards him. Behold and view well his glory and his love, that by this means your heart may be captivated and more entirely won to him.

This makes delight in God a strange thing in the hearts and practice of many. They find too much cause of complaint concerning their own hearts, that they are disaffected, and disinclined Godward. And what is the course they take hereupon? Their re-

ligion is nothing but complaint : and all their days are spent in beholding that they are bad, without ever taking the way to become better. They conclude their case to be evil and full of danger, because they find they can take no delight in God and they will take no delight in him because they have that apprehension of the danger of their case. And so their not delighting in God resolves into itself. And they delight not in him because they delight not in him. It is strange the absurdity of this is not more reflected on. And what now is to be done in this case ? To rest here is to be held in a circle of sin and misery all your days : and would signify as if delighting in God were a simple impossibility, or as if not to delight in God, were a thing so highly rational as to be its own sufficient self justification ; and that it were reason enough not to delight in him because we do not. There can be no other way to be taken but to behold him more in that discovery of him which his gospel sets before your eyes and in that way seek to have your hearts taken with his amiableness and love, and allured to delight in him. And labour in this way to have that delight increased to that degree, that it may cease to be a question or doubt with you, do I delight in God or no ? Whence when you reflect and find that you do ; then shall you have that additional matter of further delight ; that whereas you before took delight in him because being in himself so excellent a one he hath freely offered himself to you to become yours ; you may now delight in him also, because you are sure he is so : whereof you cannot have a more satisfying assurance than from his so express saying, *I love them that love me ; and we love him because he loved us first.* (1 Joh. 4. 19.—Prov. 8. 17.)

(6.) Take especial heed of more apparent and grosser transgressions. Nor account your security from the danger of them so much to stand in your being ordinarily out of the way of temptations to them, as in an habitual frame of holiness, and the settled aversion of your heart to them. Endeavour a growing conformity to God in the temper of your spirit, and to be in love with purity ; that your heart may no more endure an impure thought, than you would fire in your bosom. If you be herein careless and remiss, and suffer your heart to grow dissolute, or more bold and adventurous, in admitting sinful cogitations ; or if you have more liking or less dislike of any wicked course wherein others take their liberty, you are approaching the borders of a dangerous precipice. And if some greater breach hereupon ensue between God and you, what becomes of your delight in him ? A sad interruption of such pleasant intercourse cannot but follow, both on his part and on yours. On *his part*, a suspension and restraint of those communications of



light and grace which are necessary to your delight in him. He will be just in his way of dealing towards those of his own family, as well as merciful. It appears how much David's delight in God was intermitted, upon his great transgression, through God's withdrawing from him, when he prays he would restore the joy of his salvation. (Psal. 51. 12.) And on *your part*, will ensue both less liking of God's presence, and a dread of it. Your inclination will not be towards him as before; though the act of sin be soon over, the effect will remain; even a carnal frame of spirit that disaffects converse with God, and cares not to come nigh him. And if that were not, a guilty fear would hold you off; so that if you were willing, you would not dare to approach him. Your liberty taken to sin would soon infer a bondage upon your spirit God-ward, unless conscience be wholly asleep; and you have learned a stupid, insolent confidence to affront God, which surely would signify little to your delight in him. Thou shalt put away iniquity from thy tabernacles. Then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty; and shalt lift up thy face unto God. (Job. 22.) The conscience of unpurged iniquity, will not let you lift up your face or appear in that glorious presence.

(7.) Cherish the great grace of humility; and be ever mean and low in your own eyes. That temper carries in it even a natural disposition to delight in God. How sweet complacency will such a soul take in him! His light and glory shine with great lustre in the eyes of such a one while there is not a nearer, imagined lustre to vie therewith. Stars are seen at noon, by them that descend low into a deep pit. They will admire God but little that admire themselves much: and take little pleasure in him, who are too much pleased with themselves. And how sweet a relish have his love and grace to a humble, lowly soul, that esteems itself less than the least of his mercies! With what ravishing delight, will divine mercy be entertained, when it is so unexpectedly vouchsafed; when this shall be the sense of the soul now caught into the embraces of God's love, What I, vile creature! impure worm! what, beloved of God! Expectation, grounded especially upon an opinion of merit, would unspeakably lessen a favour, if it were afforded, as also expected evils seem the less when they come. But the lowly soul, that apprehends desert of nothing but hell, is surprized and overcome with wonder and delight, when the great God expresses kindness towards it. Besides that he more freely communicates himself to such: To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, &c. (Isa. 66. 1. 2.) And he looks to such with a design of habitation; heaven and earth are not to him so pleasant a dwelling. Down



then into the dust, there you are in the fittest place and posture for delightful converse with God.

(8.) Reckon much upon an eternal abode in that presence where is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore. Enjoy by a serious, believing foresight the delights of heaven, labour to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Look beyond this your present state. Confine not your eye and delight to what is now to be enjoyed, but think of what shall be. Set before your eyes the glorious prospect of the blessed God communicating himself to that vast assembly of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, in clearest discoveries of his glory, and richest effusions of his goodness. The best appearance of things in this world, makes but a dull scene in comparison of this. If you look towards God according to what now appears of his glory in the frame of the universe, and the course of his administrations and government over his creatures, he hath not, it is true, left himself without witness. And you may behold much that would be to you the matter of delightful admiration; if your eye be clear, and can pierce through clouds and darkness and a manifold veil. He hath made this world and is every where in it, but it knows him not. His light shines in darkness, that doth not comprehend it. Beams of his glory do every where break forth, through every creature, providence, law and ordinance of his. But much of his glory that shines in the creation is hid by a train of second causes, through which few look to the first. His laws, men judge of according to their interests and inclinations, while the holy, glorious majesty that enacted them is out of sight. His work in the world is carried on in a mystery. His interest lives, but is depressed. They who are most devoted to him are supported indeed by his invisible hand, but are, in the mean time, low, for the most part, and afflicted. If you now limit and confine your apprehensions of him to his present appearances, the matter of your delight is real, but much diminished. But conceive of him (as your faith can behold him at a distance) in that posture wherein having settled the eternal state of things he will finally shew himself. Conceive him as having now gathered home all that have been recovered to him out of the apostacy, and joined them to those numberless legions of innocent and pure spirits about his throne that never offended. Conceive him as dispensing rewards, pouring out blessings upon the loyal heads and hearts of them that expressed fidelity and duty to him in the time and state of trial and temptation; letting his glory shine out with bright and direct beams, to so many beholding and admiring eyes; giving forth the full and satisfying communications of his love, and making rivers of pleasure flow perpetually to the replenish-

ing the vast enlarged capacities, of so innumerable a multitude of grateful adoring spirits, to whom it is now sensibly to be perceived how his fulness filleth all in all. Take this view of him; and let your faith and hope thus enter into that which is within the veil. And remember there is only a little time between you and that blessed state; that then you are to enter into the joy of your Lord; so that the very element and region wherein you are to live for ever, shall be nothing else but delight and joy. In this way of believing foresight, and by this lawful and allowed prepossession of future blessedness, much surely would be added to your present delight in God. Should not the thoughts of him be pleasant to you from whom you are expecting so great things? If your delight in him be any at all, upon what you have already found and experienced of his goodness; it should be abundantly the more upon what you are by his word encouraged to look for.

II. And having thus given some account in what way delight in God is to be exercised and improved; it were a charitable hope that there would be little need to propound arguments to persuade unto it. But it were a hope not grounded upon common experience, which too plainly tells us, that though such directions as these are plain and obvious, not unknown to christians; but only less considered (whence it was not needless here to recommend them) yet delight in God obtains little place in the practice of the most. There will therefore too probably be still much need of saying something,

*Thirdly.* By way of excitation to it. And yet because it is not a multitude of words that is likely to do the business, but the weight of things, urged on by a more powerful hand than that of man, and that much may be collected to this purpose from what hath been said of the sinfulness of the omission; I shall with great brevity, offer these things only to be considered.

1. Is it not a merciful vouchsafement that the holy God allows you to place your delight on him, and invites you to it? How much grace and love breathes in these words, "Delight thyself also in the Lord!" Trust in him was recommended before, and now this being added also; how plain is it that your ease and rest is the thing designed! Is it fit to receive so much kindness with neglect? Again, he delights in you, I speak to such of whom this may be supposed. And it is indefinitely said his delights were with the sons of men. (Prov. 8.31.) Think what he is, and what you are; and at once, both wonder and yield. Ah what else have you to delight in? what thing will you name that shall supply the place of GOD, or be to you in the stead of him? Moreover, who should delight in him but you? his friends? his sons? those of his own house? Think what life

and vigour it will infuse into you ; and that, the joy of the Lord will be your strength. (Nehem. 8. 10.) How pleasantly will you hold on your course ! and discharge all the other duties of this your present state ! You must serve him. Dare you think of throwing off his yoke ? How desirable is it then to take delight in him whom I must serve ! which only makes that service acceptable to him, and easy to myself ! Further, this is a pleasure none can rob you of ; a joy that cannot be taken from you. Other objects of your delight are vanishing daily. Neither men nor devils can ever hinder your delighting in God, if your hearts be so inclined. And were you never brought to take pleasure in any person or thing to which you had a former aversion ? One that had wronged you might yet possibly win you by after kindness. Give a reason why you should be more difficult towards the blessed God that never wronged you ! and whose way towards you hath constantly imported so much good will !

And consider that your condition on earth is such, as exposes you to many sufferings and hardships ; which by your not-delighting in him, you can never be sure to avoid, (for they are things common to men) but which, by your delighting in him, you may be easily able to endure. Besides all this, seriously consider, that you must die. You can make no shift to avoid that. How easily tolerable and pleasant, will it be to think, then, of going to him with whom you have lived in a delightful communion before ! And how dreadful to appear before him, to whom your own heart shall accuse you to have been (against all his importunities and allurements) a disaffected stranger !

2. To these I add the consideration in the other part of the verse ; “ And he shall give thee the desire of thine heart.” By desire it is plain we are to understand the thing desired which is usual. By the thing desired, we must not be so unreasonable as to think is meant, any thing whatsoever it be, that, even with the greatest extravagancy, we may set our hearts upon ; as worldly possessions, riches, honours, &c. For it were most unbecoming that delight in God should be so mercenary ; or be propounded as the price of so mean things ; yea, and if the matter were so to be understood, delight in God were a means to the attaining of these things as the end ; which were to make the blessed God an inferior good to these. Nor can we suppose that one who delights in God should ever esteem any reward or recompence of another kind, greater than what he finds in this very delight itself. And besides, we are very prone to desire things that (as the case may be) would prove very hurtful to us. If God should gratify us with every thing

we fancy he would many times please us to our ruin. And do we believe that when he hath won a person to place his delight and take pleasure in himself, he will requite him with a mischief? Since then we may not understand him to mean that whatsoever we desire, if we delight in him, we shall have; we are to inquire further. And it is plain the things that can be supposed to be desired by such persons as are here spoken to, must be of one of these two sorts: either things of a spiritual nature, that tend directly to the gratification and advantage of of the inward man; or else external good things, that make for the support and comfort of this present life. We will suppose it to be the one or the other of these. And shall shew that whichsoever sort it be that is desired, delighting in God doth naturally infer the satisfaction (some way or other) of such desires.

(1.) Supposing they be spiritual good things that are desired, delight in God is most directly the satisfaction itself of such desire. Whatsoever purely spiritual good we can desire is either God himself, or somewhat in order to him. If it be God himself we desire, so far as we delight in him we enjoy him, and have what we would have; and can only enjoy him more fully, by more entire and composed rest and delight in him. If it be somewhat in order to him, he is still supremely and ultimately desired in that very desire; so that in delighting in him, we have our end, and that upon which this desire doth lastly terminate. And now should not this be a great inducement to us to delight in God, that hereby our desires, the motions of our working hearts directed towards him, do immediately find in him a peaceful and pleasant rest, and turn into a satisfying fruition;

(2.) Supposing the things we desire be those of an inferior kind; delight in God doth not a little to the satisfying of them also. It doth not, as was said, entitle us to the things themselves we desire whatever they be, or how unsuitable soever to us. But,

[1.] It moderates these desires, makes them sober, prudent, and rational, and capable of being satisfied with what is fit for us. He that is much habituated to delight in God is not apt to foolish, extravagant desires. This is the sense of such a one, "Not my will Lord, but thine be done." He may desire the same thing that others do, yet not with the same peremptory and precipitant desire, but with a desire tempered with submission, and with a reserved deference of the matter to the divine pleasure: "This thing, Lord, I desire if thou see good," So that the general object of such a one's desire is only that

which in the divine estimate is fit and good for him. And though he desire this or that particular thing, yet not as it is this thing, but as supposing it possible this thing may be judged fit for him by the supreme wisdom, whereto he hath referred the matter. But if it shall be judged otherwise; this thing falls without the compass of the general object of his desire, and in just construction he desires it not. For he desires it not otherwise than on that condition that God sees it meet for him; and not longer than till he find he does not. In which case the sobriety and submissiveness of his former desire, appears in his cheerful, patient want of the thing which he finds God hath thought fit to deny him. So that even then, his desire is satisfied, that is, it doth not (as often it is with a carnal heart) turn, being crossed, into rage and madness; but into a complacential peace, and rest in the divine will. He is satisfied in what God hath thought fit to do. Yea the very thing is done which he would have done: God hath given him his heart's desire. For let the question be put to such a person, Do you desire such a thing though God judge it will be hurtful to you or unfit for you? And no doubt he will, not in faint words that have no sense under them (as almost any other man would) but from his very heart and soul say, No. And if he deliberate the matter of his own accord, or by any one's inquiry be occasioned to do so, this will be found the sense of his heart, (though his desire hath inclined to this or that thing in particular,) and this would be his prayer in such a case, "Lord, if thy wisdom, which is infinitely more than mine, see this thing not fit, cross me, deny me in this desire of mine." And this general desire at least, which is the measure of the particular one, is sure to be accomplished to one that hath God for his delight. For the promise is express and cannot fail, All things shall work together for good, to them that love God. Rom. 8. 28.

And this love to God, or delight in him, as it entitles such to that his care and concern for them which is expressed in this promise; so it doth in its own nature dispose their hearts to an acquiescence and satisfiedness therein. For love to God, where it is true, is supreme, and prevails over all other love to this or that particular good. Whence it cannot be, but, if this love be in act, (as, the text must be understood to call unto actual and exercised delight in God) it must subdue, and keep the heart so far subject to the divine good pleasure, as that its desire and addictedness to this particular, lesser good (concerning which there may also be a just and rational doubt whether it will be now a good to him yea or no) shall never be a matter of con-

troversy and quarrel with him who is, unquestionably, the supreme and universal Good. How will that one thought overcome, if such a one shall but apprehend God saying to him, "Dost thou love me above all things, and wilt yet contend with me for such a trifle!"

And we may by the way note, that upon this ground of the dubious mutability of external good things, (which, by circumstances, may become evil to this or that person,) as they are not here, so nor can they be anywhere the matter of a general absolute promise, to be claimed indefinitely by any one's faith. The nature of the thing refuses it. For suppose we, that what may, in this or that case, become evil or prejudicial to this or that person, doth now actually become so, and is the matter of an absolute promise, now claimable by such a person, what would follow? That an evil is now the actual matter of a promise! than which what can be said or supposed more absurd? when nothing can further or otherwise be the matter of a promise, than as it is good. Wherefore that promise would, in the supposed case, degenerate (as the matter of it is by the present circumstances varied) and turn into a threatening. Wherefore when that condition or proviso is not expressly added to a promise concerning a temporal good, the very nature of the thing implies, and requires it to be understood. For it is not, otherwise than as qualified by that condition, any way a promise. Now he that is in the present exercise of delight in God, hath his heart so set upon God and alienated from earthly things, as that the present temper of it bears proportion to the natural tenour of such promises; and is not otherwise than by the cessation of this delight, liable to the torture of unsatisfied desire in reference to these lower things: Although the fig-tree shall not blossom---yet I will rejoice in the Lord, &c. (Hab. 3. 17. 18.) And as delight in God doth thus reduce and moderate desires in reference to any inferior good; so that, if it be withheld, they admit a satisfaction without it, and the want of it is easily tolerable: so,

[2.] If it be granted; delight in God adds a satisfying sweetness to the enjoyment. A lover of God hath another taste and relish, even of earthly good things, than an earthly-minded man can have. He hath that sweet savour of the love of God upon his spirit, that imparts a sweetness to all the enjoyments of this world, beyond what such things in their own nature have with them. This makes the righteous man's little, better than the great revenues of many wicked. (Psal. 37. 16.)

Upon the whole therefore, this is, if duly weighed, a mighty and most persuasive argument to delight in God. For it im-

ports thus much, which I add for a close to this discourse. If you place your delight here ; you are most certainly delivered from the vexation and torment of unsatisfied desire. The motions of your souls are sure to end in a pleasant rest. Your lesser desires will be swallowed up in greater, and all in the divine fulness ; so that you will now say, Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none on earth I desire besides thee. (Psal. 73. 25.) If you take no delight in God, your own souls will be a present hell to you. And it may be it is not enough considered, how much the future hell stands also in unsatisfied desire ; which desire (all suitable objects being for ever cut off from it) turns wholly to despair, rage and torture. And that ravenous appetite, which would be preying upon external objects that now fail, turns inward, and as an insatiable vulture, gnaws everlastingly the wretched soul itself. And the beginnings of this hell you will now have within you, while you refuse to delight in God. The sapless, earthly vanities upon which your hearts are set, give you some present content, which allays your misery for a little while, and renders it less sensible to you : but they have nothing in them to answer the vast desires of a reasonable, immortal spirit. Whereby you certainly doom yourselves to perpetual disrest. For in these false, vanishing shadows of goodness, you cannot have satisfaction, and in the blessed God you will not.