

IMMANUEL:
OR, A
DISCOVERY OF TRUE RELIGION,
AS IT IMPORTS A
LIVING PRINCIPLE IN THE MINDS OF MEN.
BY
SAMUEL SHAW.

Memoirs
OF
THE AUTHOR.



THE REV. SAMUEL SHAW, A.M. was born of religious parents at Repton, in Derbyshire, in 1695; and educated at the Free-School there, then the best in that part of England. He went at fourteen years of age to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he was chamber-fellow with Dr. Morton. When he had completed his studies, he went to Tamworth; in Warwickshire, and was usher in the Free-School in 1656. When that reverend person Mr. Blake died, in 1657, Mr. Shaw spoke an eloquent oration at his funeral, after Mr. Anthony Burgess had preached a sermon. They were both printed, and such as have perused them must think a conjunction of three such men, as the deceased and the two speakers, a singular happiness to that neighbourhood. From Tamworth Mr. Shaw removed to Mosely, a small place in the borders of Worcestershire, being invited by Col. Greavis, who showed

him much kindness. On his coming hither, he was ordained by the classical presbytery at Wirksworth; and by the assistance of Mr. Gervas Pigot of Thrumpton, he obtained a presentation from the Protector to the rectory of Long-Whatton, which was in the gift of the crown. He had full possession of this place in June, 1658, and continued in the peaceable enjoyment of it till 1660. Fearing some disturbance in the month of September that year, he got a fresh presentation* under the great seal of England, without much difficulty, as the former incumbent Mr. Henry Robinson was dead, and two more who enjoyed it after him. But though his title was thus corroborated, Sir John Prettyman, by making interest with the lord chancellor, found means to remove Mr. Shaw, about a year before the Act of Uniformity passed; and introduced one Mr. Butler, who had no manner of title to the place. He was a man of such mean qualifications, and so little respected in the parish, that some of them told Sir John, that they heard Mr. Butler had given him a pair of coach-mares to get him the living, but they would give him two pair to get him out, and put Mr. Shaw in again. But he now quitted the church, as he could not satisfy himself to conform to the new terms. He was afterwards

* Copies of both these Presentations may be seen in Calamy.

offered this living without any other condition than re-ordination. But he used to say, He would not lie to God and man, in declaring his presbyterian ordination invalid.

When he left Whatton he removed to Cotes, a small village near Loughborough. Here his family caught the plague of some relations, who came from London to avoid it, about harvest-time in 1665. He then preached in his own house, and afterwards published that excellent book, called *The Welcome to the Plague*, grounded on Amos iv. 12, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." He buried two children, two friends, and one servant of that distemper; but he and his wife survived it; and not being ill both at once, they looked after one another and the rest of the family: which was a great mercy, for none durst come to his assistance. He was in a manner shut up for three months, and was forced not only to attend his sick, but to bury his dead himself in his own garden.*

Towards the latter end of the year 1666, he removed to Ashby-de-la-Zouch in the same county; and was chosen to be the sole master of the free-school in 1668. The revenue was then but small,

* The excellent temper of mind which he expressed under this severe dispensation, is discovered in the above-mentioned work, which is reprinted in vol. i.

the school-buildings quite out of repair, and the number of scholars few. But by his diligence he soon got the salary augmented, not only for himself, but his successors; and by his interest with several gentlemen, he procured money for the building of a good school-house, and a gallery for the scholars in the church. But then he had another difficulty; which was, how to get a licence without subscription to such things as his conscience did not allow of. However, he got over it; for by means of Lord Conway, he obtained from Archbishop Sheldon a licence (which Calamy gives at length), to teach school any where in his whole province; and that without once waiting upon the Archbishop. As he needed a licence also from the bishop of the diocese, he got a friend to make his application to Dr. Fuller, then bishop of Lincoln, who put into his lordship's hands Mr. Shaw's late book occasioned by the plague. The bishop was so much pleased with the piety, peaceableness, humility, and learning there discovered, that he gave him a licence upon such a subscription as his own good sense dictated, and said, that he was glad to have so worthy a man in his diocese upon any terms. He added, that he understood there was another book of his in print, called *Immanuel*, which he desired to see.

Mr. Shaw's learning, piety, and good temper soon

raised the reputation of his school, and the number of his scholars, above any in those parts ; having often one hundred and sixty boys or more under his care. His own house and others in the town, were continually full of boarders from London, and other distant parts of the kingdom. Several divines of the Church of England, (v. g. Mr. Sturges of All-Saints in Derby, Mr. Walter Horton, afterwards one of the canons of Lichfield, &c.) and many gentlemen, physicians, lawyers, and others, owed their school-learning to his good instructions. He endeavoured to make the youth under his care, in love with piety ; to principle them in religion by his advice, and allure them to it by his good example. His temper was affable, his conversation pleasant and facetious, his method of teaching winning and easy. He had great skill in finding out, and suiting himself to, the tempers of boys. He freely taught poor children, where he saw in them a disposition for learning, and afterwards procured them assistance to perfect their studies at the university. He did indeed excellent service in the work of education ; and his school was a great advantage to the trading part of the town.

When the liberty of the Dissenters was settled by act of parliament, he licensed his school-room for a place of worship. The first time he used it,

he preached from Acts xix. 9, “Disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.” He so contrived his meetings, as not to interfere with the establishment, preaching at noon between the services at church, and constantly attending there both parts of the day, with all his scholars, his family, and all his hearers; so that the public assembly was hereby considerably augmented; and the weekly lecture was chiefly attended by him and his scholars. He was upon the most friendly terms with the vicar of the place, and corresponded with Dr. Barlow, the bishop of Lincoln, to whom he presented his book of Meditations, which has been generally esteemed, and read with great profit. Upon which his lordship, who was a great reader, and a good judge of books, wrote him the following letter:—

“My Rev. Brother,

I have received yours, and this comes (with my love and respects) to bring you thanks for the rational and pious book you so kindly sent me. Though my businesses be many, and my infirmities more, being now past 74, yet I have read all your book, and some parts of it more than once, with great satisfaction and benefit. For in your meditations of the love of God and the world, I am neither afraid nor unwilling to confess it, and make

you my confessor,) you have instructed me in several things, which I knew not before, or at least considered not so seriously, and so often as I might and ought. One great occasion or cause why we love our gracious God less, and the world more than we should, is want of knowledge, or consideration. God himself, Isa. i. 2, 3, complains of this, and calls heaven and earth to witness the justice of his complaint. “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” It is strange, and yet most true, that the ox and ass, irrational and stupid creatures, should know their masters, who feed and take care of them, and yet men, rational creatures, even Israel, God’s only church and people, whom he had miraculously preserved and nourished, should neither know nor consider. This consideration is our duty, and the want of it our sin; a sin of omission, and therefore it is no wonder if it be a moral cause and occasion of some consequent sin of commission; so that the best men by reason of the old man, and the remains of corruption in them may, and many times do sin, and come short of fulfilling the law and doing their duty, when they want this consideration, or such a degree and measure of it as is required to the moral

goodness of an action. Suppose a man tempted to commit adultery, murder, perjury, or any such sin; if such a man would seriously consider the nature of the sin he is going to commit, that it is a transgression of the law of God, to whom he owes all he has, both for life and livelihood, that it pollutes his soul, that it dishonours his gracious God and heavenly Father, that it makes him obnoxious to eternal misery, both of body and soul: I say, he who considers this, as all should, would certainly be afraid to commit such impieties. Now of such considerations, you have given us many in your book, and those grounded on the clear light of nature, or on evident reason, or revelation; and it is my prayer and hope that many may read, and to their great benefit remember, and practise them. I am well pleased with your discourse against usury; which, as is commonly managed, I take to be one of the crying sins of our ungrateful nation. Give me leave, faithfully and as a friend to add one thing more. In your second page, there is, I believe, a little mistake. For you seem to say, that James, who wrote the canonical epistle, was brother to John the apostle. Now it is certain, that amongst the apostles there were two of that name.

1. James the son of Zebedee, and brother of John.
2. James the son of Alpheus, Matt. x. 2, 3, who

was called James the less, Mark xv. 40, whose mother was Mary, who was sister to the Virgin Mary ; and so our blessed Saviour and James the son of Alpheus were sisters' children, cousin-germans. Now that James the son of Zebedee, and brother of John, did not write that canonical epistle, will be certain, if we consider, 1. That James, brother of John, was slain by Herod Agrippa, Acts xii. 2, which was Anno Christi 44* or 45. And 2ndly, If it be considered, that the epistle of James was not written till the year of Christ 63: for so Baronius, Simpson, and the best chronologers assure us. They say, that epistle of James was not writ till almost twenty years after James the brother of John was slain by Herod: and therefore it is certain, he neither did nor could write it. I beg your pardon for this tedious, and I fear impertinent, scribble. My love and due respects remembered. I shall pray for a blessing upon you and your studies: and your prayers are heartily desired by and for

Your affectionate friend and brother,

THOMAS LINCOLN.

Buckden, March 16, 1681.

For my Reverend Friend, Mr. SAM. SHAW,
at his House at Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

* Jac. Usserius, Annal. pag. 868, Ed. 1656 ; Baron. Annal. tom. i.

If such a correspondence as this between the bishops of the church of England and the ministers among the Dissenters, had been generally maintained, it might have produced much better effects than the great distance that has been kept up on both sides.—Mr. Shaw was a man of a peaceable disposition. He was frequently employed, and very successful in his endeavours to reconcile differences. He had a public and generous spirit, and was ever ready to encourage any good designs. He was given to hospitality, and was very moderate in his principles. For the space of almost thirty years he spent himself in endeavours to make the world better, though with no great gains to himself. It was his chief aim to live usefully; and he thought that, a considerable reward to itself. He was of a middle stature, and his countenance not very penetrating: like another Melancthon, that could not fill a chair with a big look and portly presence; but his eye was sparkling, and his conversation witty, savoury, affable, and pertinent. He was ready at repartees and innocent jests, with a mixture of poetry, history, and other polite learning. But his greatest excellency was in religious discourse, in praying and preaching. One that knew him well, writes as follows:—

“ I have known him spend part of many days and nights too in religious exercise, when the times were so dangerous that it would hazard an imprisonment to be worshipping God with five or six people like minded with himself. I have sometimes been in his company for a whole night together, when we have been fain to steal to the place in the dark, to stop out the light and stop in the voice, by clothing and fast closing the windows, till the first day-break down a chimney has given us notice to be gone. I bless God for such seasons. If some say it was needless to do so much : I reply, the care of our souls and eternity, which only was minded there, requires more. I say, I bless God for the remembrance of them, and for Mr. Shaw at them, whose melting words in prayer, I can never forget. He had a most excellent faculty in speaking to God with reverence, humility, and a holy awe of his presence, “ filling his mouth with arguments : by his strength he had power with God ; he wept and made supplication ; he found him in Bethel (such were our assemblies,) and there he spake with us.” I have heard him for two or three hours together pour out prayer to God, without tautology or vain repetition, with that vigour and fervour, and those holy words that imported faith and humble bold-

ness, as have dissolved the whole company into tears," &c.—In short, a mixture of so much learning and humility, wit and judgment, piety and pleasantness, are rarely found together, as met in him. He died Jan. 22, 1696, in the fifty-ninth year of his age. His funeral sermon was preached by Mr. William Crosse, his brother-in-law, from Luke xxiii. 28.

PREFACE.

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

too, too evident, that the kingdom of Satan doth more obtain in the world, than the gospel of Christ, either in the letter or power of it. As to the former, if we will receive the probable conjecture of learned inquirers, we shall not find above one-sixth part of the known world yet christianized, or giving so much as an external adoration to the crucified Jesus. As to the latter, I will not be so bold to make any arithmetical conjectures, but judge it more necessary, and more becoming a charitable and christian spirit, to sit down in secret, and weep over that sad but true account given in the gospel, "Few are chosen," Matt. xx. 16; and again, "Few there be that find it," Matt. vii. 14; being grieved, after the example of my compassionate Redeemer, "for the hardness of their hearts," and praying with Joab, in another case, "The Lord make his people an hundred times so many more as they be!" 1 Chron. xxi. 3. It is besides my present purpose to inquire into the immediate causes of the non-propagation of the gospel in the former sense; only it is easy and obvious to guess, that few will enter in by "the way of the tree of life," when the same is guarded with a "flaming sword!" And it were reasonable to hope, that if the minds of Christians were more purged from a selfish bitterness, fierce animosity, and arbitrary sourness, and possessed with a more free, generous, benign, compassionate, condescending, candid, charitable, and Christ-like spirit, which would be indulgent towards such as are, for the pre-

sent, under a less perfect dispensation, as our Saviour's was, Luke ix. 49, 50, 54, 55, would not impose anything harsh or unnecessary upon the sacred and inviolable consciences of men, but would allow and maintain that liberty to men, which is just and natural to them in matters of religion, and no way forfeited by them; then, I say, it might be reasonable to hope, that the innate power and virtue of the gospel would prove most victorious; Judaism, Mahometism, and Paganism, would melt away under its powerful influences, and Satan himself "fall down as lightning" before it, as naturally as the eye-lids of the morning do chase away the blackness of the night, when once they are lifted up upon the earth. But my design is chiefly to examine the true and proper cause of the non-progress of the gospel, as to the power of it, and its inefficaciousness upon the hearts and consciences of those that do profess it. And now, in finding out the cause hereof, I shall content myself to be wise on this side heaven, leaving that daring course of searching the decrees of God, and rifling into the hidden rolls of eternity, to them who can digest the uncomfortable notion of a self-willed, arbitrary, and imperious Deity; which, I doubt, is the most vulgar apprehension of God, men measuring him most grossly and unhappily by a self-standard. And as I dare not soar so high, so neither will I adventure to stoop so low, as to rake into particulars; which are differently assigned, according to the different hu-

mours and interests of them that do assign them ; each party in the world being so exceedingly favourable to itself, as to be ready to say with David, “The earth, and all the inhabitants of it, are dissolved ; I bear up the pillars of it,” Psal. lxxv. 3 ; ready to think that the very interest of religion in the world is involved in them and their persuasions and dogmas, and that the whole church is undone, if but a hair fall from their heads, if they be in the least injured or abridged ; which is a piece of very great fondness, and indeed the more unpardonable, inasmuch as it destroys the design of the gospel, in confining and limiting the Holy One of Israel, and making God as topical, as he was when he dwelt nowhere upon earth but at the temple in Jerusalem.

Waving these extremes therefore, I conceive the true cause in general of the so little prevailing of true religion in the hearts and lives of men, is the false notion that men have of it, placing it there where indeed it is not, nor doth consist. That this must needs be a cause of the not prevailing of the gospel wherever it is found, I suppose every body will grant ; and that it is almost every where to be found, will, I doubt, too evidently appear by that description of the true Christian religion, which the most sacred author of it, the Lord Jesus Christ, made to the poor Samaritaness ; which I have endeavoured briefly to explain, according to the tenor of the gospel, in this small Treatise ; which I first framed for private use, in a season when it was most

important for me to understand the utmost secrets of my own soul, and do the utmost service I was able towards the salvation of those that were under my roof; expecting every day to render up my own or their souls into the arms of our most merciful Redeemer, and to be swallowed up in that eternal life, into which true religion daily springs up, and will, at length, infallibly conduct the christian soul. This work, thus undertaken, and in a great measure then carried on, I have since perfected, and do here present to the perusal of my dear country, having made it public for no private end; but, if it might be, to serve the interest of God's glory in the world; which I do verily reckon that I shall do, if, by his blessing, I may be instrumental to undeceive any soul mistaken in so high an affair and of such importance as religion is, or any way to awaken and quicken any religious soul not sufficiently impressed with the unspeakable glory, nor cheerfully enough springing up into the full fruition of eternal life.

What a certain and undefeatable tendency true religion hath towards the eternal happiness and salvation of men's souls, will, I hope, evidently appear out of the body of this small Treatise; but that is not all (though indeed that were enough to commend it to any rational soul, that is any whit free and ingenuous, and is not so perfectly debauched as to apostatize utterly from right reason;) for it is also the sincerest policy imaginable, and the most

unerring expedient in the world, for the uniting and establishing of a divided and tottering kingdom or commonwealth: to demonstate which was the very design of this Preface. It is well known, (O that it were but as well and effectually believed!) that "godliness is profitable to all things," and that it hath the promises and blessings of the "life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8; that the right seeking of the kingdom of God and his righteousness, hath no less than all things annexed to it, Matt. vi. 33. How unmeasurable is the body and bulk of that blessedness, to which all the comforts of this life are to be as an appendix to a volume! But men are apt to shuffle off general things; therefore I will descend to instances, and show in a few particulars, what a mighty influence religion in the power of it, would certainly have for the political happiness and flourishing state of a nation. Wherein I doubt not but to make appear, that not religion, as some slanderously report, but indeed the want of it, is the immediate troubler of every nation, and individual society; yea, and soul too: according to that just saying of the holy apostle, "From whence come wars and fightings? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" James iv. 1. Here let me desire one thing of the reader, and that is, to bear in his mind all along, where he finds the word religion, that I have principally a respect to the description given of it in the text, and that I mean thereby,

“a divine principle implanted in the soul, springing up into everlasting life.”

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

First then, It is undoubtedly true that religion, deeply radicated in the nature of princes and governors, would most effectually qualify them for the most happy way of reigning. Every body knows well enough what an excellent euchrasy,* and lovely constitution the Jewish polity was in, under the influence of holy David, wise Solomon, devout Hezekiah, zealous Josiah, and others of the same spirit; so that I need not spend myself in that inquiry, and so consequently not upon that argument. Now, there are many ways by which it

* A Greek word, implying a good temperature and condition, or state of the body.

is easy to conceive that religion would rectify and well-temper the spirits of princes.

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

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

The pure and impartial nature of God cannot endure superstitious flatterers, or hypocritical professors; and the princes of the earth, that are regenerated into his image, will also estimate men according to God; I mean, according to his example who loves nothing but the communications of him-

self, and according to their participation of his image, which alone is amiable and worthy of advancement. What God rejected in his fire-offerings, religion will teach princes to dislike in the devotions, as they call them, of their courtiers; I mean, not only the leaven of superstitious pride and dogged morosity, but also the honey of mercenary prostrations and fawning adulations.

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

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

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

But I suppose religion will not have its full and desirable effect upon a nation, by healing the sickly heads of it, except it be like the holy oil poured upon the sacrificer's head, which ran down also upon the skirts of his garments, Psal. cxxxiii. 2. Therefore,

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

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

The first and fundamental distemper here seems to be a want of due reverence toward these vicegerents of God upon earth ; which easily grows up into something positive, and becomes a secret wishing of evil to them. This fault, as light as some esteem it, was severely punished in Queen Michal, who despised her lord, king David, in her heart, and her barren womb went down to its sister the grave under the great reproach of living and dying childless. And if an ordinary hatred be so foully interpreted by the holy apostle, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer," 1 John iii. 15 ; surely disloyal and malignant dispositions towards governors must needs have a fouler face ; and we may say, by a parity of reason, "Whosoever hateth his prince is a rebel and a regicide." Now this distemper, as fundamental and epidemical as it is, the spirit of true religion will heal, and I think I may say that only : for I know nothing in the world that hath, nay, I know that nothing in the world hath that sovereignty and dominion over the dispositions and affections of the soul, as this principle thoroughly ingrafted in the soul, doth challenge to itself. This alone can frame the heart of man into that beautiful temper and complexion of love and loyalty, that he will not curse the king, no, not in his secret thoughts ; no, not though he were well assured that there were no winged messenger to tell the matter, Eccles. x. 20.

Another distemper in subjects, respective to

their governors, is impatience of bearing a yoke ; which is an evil so natural to the proud and imperious spirit of man, that I believe it were safe to affirm, that every irreligious subject could be well content to be a prince ; however there may be many who, utterly despairing of such an event, may with the fox in the fable profess they care not for it. From this principle of pride and impatience of subjection, I suspect it is that the millennarians do so scornfully declaim against, and so loudly decry the carnal ordinances of magistracy and ministry : not that they do verily seek the advancement of Christ's kingdom (which indeed every disorderly, tumultuous, proud, impatient soul doth, *ipso facto*, deny and destroy) but of themselves. To whom one might justly apply the censure which Pharaoh injuriously passes upon the children of Israel, with a little alteration, "Ye are proud, therefore ye say, Let us go, and do sacrifice to the Lord," *Exod. v. 17.* This distemper the power of religion would excellently heal, by mortifying ambitious inclinations, and quieting the impatient turbulences of the fretful and envious soul, by fashioning the heart to a right humble frame and cheerful submission to every ordination of God. You will see in this treatise that a right religious soul, powerfully springing up into everlasting life, hath no list nor leisure to attend to such poor attainments and sorry acquisitions, as the lording it over other men ; being feelingly acquainted with a life far more excellent than

the most princely, and being overpowered with a supreme and sovereign good, which charms all its inordinate ragings, and laying hold upon all its faculties, draws them forth by a pleasing violence, unto a most zealous pursuit of itself. A principle of humility makes men good subjects; and they that are indeed probationers for another world, may very well behave themselves with a noble disdain towards all the glories and preferments of this.

The last distemper that I shall name in subjects towards their governors is discontents about conceited mis-government and mal-administration: which commonly spring from an evil and sinister interpretation of the ruler's actions, and are attended with an evil and tumultuous zeal for relaxation. Now this distemper, as great as it is and destructive to the well-being of a body politic, true religion would heal both root and branch. Were that noble part and branch of the Christian religion, universal charity, rightly seated in the soul, it would not suffer the son of the bond-woman to inherit with it; it would cast out those ireful jealousies, sour suspicions, harsh surmises, and imbittered thoughts which lodge in unhallowed minds, and display itself in a most amicable sweetness and gentleness of disposition, in fair glosses upon doubtful actions, friendly censures or none at all, kind extenuations of greater faults and covering of lesser; for this is the proper genius of this divine principle, to be very unbelieving of evil or easily entertaining

of good reports, gladly interpreting all things to a good meaning that will possibly admit of such a construction; or if you will, in the apostle's phrase, "Charity is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil," 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

And as charity doth cut up this root of discontents, so will faith allay and destroy these discontents themselves, which are about mis-government and ill-administration. This noble principle administers ease and satisfaction to the soul, if she happen to be provoked: for it will not suffer her long to stand gazing upon second causes, but carries her up in a seasonable contemplation to the supreme cause, without whom no disorder could ever befall the world; and there commands her to repose herself, in the bosom of infinite wisdom and grace, waiting for a comfortable issue. He may well be vexed indeed, that has so much reason as to observe the many monstrous disorders which are in the world, and not so much faith as to eye the inscrutable providence of a benign and all-wise God, who permitteth the same with respect to the most beautiful end and blessed order imaginable. Though faith abhors the blasphemy of laying blame upon God, yet it so fixes the soul upon him, and causes her so to eye his hand and end in all mal-administrations of men, that she hath no leisure to fall out with men, or quarrel with instruments.

These discontents, I said, were frequently attended with an evil and seditious zeal for relaxa-

tion, discovering itself in secret treacherous conspiracies, and many times in boisterous and daring attempts. These are at the first sight so directly contrary to the character given of religious men, namely, "the quiet of the land," Psal. xxxv. 20, and the genius of religion, which is wholly made up of "love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance, mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, forbearance, forgiveness, charity, thankfulness, wisdom," Gal. v. 22, 23. Col. iii. 12—16; that it is easy to conceive that religion, in the power of it, would certainly heal this evil disease also. There are many pretenders to religion, whose complaint is still concerning oppression and persecution, their cry is all for liberty and deliverance; but to make it the more passable and plausible, they style it the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. This pretence is so fair, but withal so deceitful, that I count it worth my time to speak a little more liberally to it. And here I do from the very bottom of my soul protest, that I account the advancement of the glory of God and the kingdom of Christ, to be the most desirable thing in the world; and that it is highly becoming the greatest spirits upon earth to employ their very utmost zeal and diligence to assist the accomplishment thereof: yea, so utterly do I abhor irreligion and atheism, that, as the apostle speaks, Phil. i. 18, in somewhat a like case, I do verily rejoice that Christ is professed, though it be but pretended, and

that truth is owned, though it be not owned in truth. I will further add, that the oppressing and obstructing of the external progress and propagation of the gospel is hated of Christ, and to be lamented of all true Christians. Yea, I will further allow men a due sensibleness of their personal oppressions and injuries, and a natural warrantable desire to be redeemed from them. And now having thus purged myself, I entreat the christian reader patiently and without prejudice to suffer me to speak somewhat closely to this matter: yea, I do verily assure myself that I shall be accepted, or at least indulged by all free and ingenuous spirits, who are rightly acquainted with the genius of the christian religion, and do prefer truth before interest.

And, first, for the complaint that is mostly concerning oppression and persecution; certainly religion, if it did rightly prevail in our hearts, would very much heal this distemper, if not by a perfect silencing of these complaints, yet surely by putting them into another tune. I reckon that religion quite silences these complaints, when it engages the soul so entirely in serving the end of God in afflictions, and in a right improvement of them for religious purposes, that she cannot spend herself in fruitless murmurings and unchristian indignation. As fire seizeth upon every thing that is combustible, and makes it fuel for itself, and a predominant humour in the body converts into its own substance whatever is convertible, and makes it

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

As for the cry that is made for liberty and deliverance, I confess I do not easily apprehend what is more, or more naturally desirable than true liberty: yea, I believe there are many devout and

religious souls that, from a right noble and generous principle, and out of a sincere respect to the Author and end of their creation, are almost intemperately studious of it, do prefer it above all preferments, or anything that may be properly called sensual, and would purchase it with anything that they can possibly part with. But yet that I may a little moderate, if not quite stifle this cry, I must freely profess that I do apprehend too much of selfishness generally in it; because this liberty is commonly abstracted from the proper end of it, and desired merely as a naturally convenient good, and not under a right religious conversation. Self-love is the very heart and centre of the animal life; and doubtless this natural principle is as truly covetous of self-preservation, and freedom from all inconveniences, grievances, and confinements, as any religious principle can be. And therefore I may well allude to our Saviour's words, and say, "If you love and desire deliverance," only under the notion of a natural good, "what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans the same?" Matt. v. 47. But were this divine principle rightly exercising its sovereignty in the soul, it would value all things, and all estates and conditions, only as they have a tendency to the advancement and nourishment of itself. With what an ordinary, not to say disdainful eye, would the religious soul look upon the fairest self-accommodations in the world; and be ready to say within itself, What is a mere abstract

deliverance from afflictions worth? wherein is a naked freedom from afflictions to be accounted of? will this make me a blessed man? was not profane and impudent Ham delivered from the deluge of water, as well as his brethren? were not the filthy, shameless daughters of Lot delivered from the deluge of fire, as well as their father? And yet we are so far from rising up and calling these people blessed, that the heart of every chaste and modest Christian is ready to rise against the very mention of their names, when he remembers how both the one and the other, though in a different sense, discovered their father's nakedness. If we did really value ourselves by our souls, and our souls themselves by what they possess of the image of God, if we did rightly prefer the advancement of the divine life before the gratification of the animal, it is easy to conceive how we should prefer patience before prosperity, faith in God before the favour of men, spiritual purity before temporal pleasures or preferments, humility before honour, the denial of ourselves before the approbation of others, the advancement of God's image before the advancement of our own names, an opportunity of exercising gracious dispositions before the exercising of any temporal power or secular authority; and in a word, the displaying of the beauty, glory, and perfections of God, before health, wealth, liberty, livelihood, and life itself. We should certainly be more indifferently affected towards any condition, whether pros-

perity or adversity, and not be so fond of the one, nor weary of the other, if we did verily value them only by the tendency that they had to further religion, and advance the life of Christ in our souls. This would certainly make men more sincerely studious to read God's end in afflicting them, and less longing to see the end of their afflictions.

And as for treacheries, plottings, invasions, usurpations, rebellions, and that tumultuous zeal for relaxation, which this impatience of oppression, and fondness of deliverance do so often grow up into, I dare say there is nothing like religion, in the power of it, for the effectual healing of them. The true spirit of religion is not so weary of oppression, though it be by sinful men, as it is abhorrent from deliverance, if it be by sinful means. May I not be allowed to allude to the Apostle, and say, whereas there is amongst you this zeal, contention, and faction, "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" 1 Cor. iii. 3. Is not this the same which a mere natural man would do, strive and struggle, by right and by wrong, to redeem himself from whatsoever is grievous and galling to the interest of the flesh? Might it not be reasonably supposed, that if religion did but display itself aright in the powerful actings of faith, hope, and humility, it would quench this scalding zeal, and calm these tempestuous motions of the soul, and make men rather content to be delivered up to the adversary, though the flesh should by him be destroyed, so the

spirit might be saved, and the divine life advanced in the way of the Lord. O how dear and precious are the possession and practice of faith, patience, humility, and self-denial to a pious soul, in comparison of all the joys and toys, treasures, pleasures, ease and honour of the world, the safety and liberty of the flesh ! How much more then, when these must be accomplished by wicked means, and purchased at the rate of God's displeasure ? And because the kingdom of Christ is so often alleged to defend and patronize these strange fervours and frenzies, let me here briefly record to all that shall read these lines, the way and method of Christ himself in propagating his own kingdom. It will not be denied but that Christ was infinitely studious to promote his own kingdom in the best and most proper sense : but I no where read that he ever attempted it by force or fraud, by violent opposition or crafty insinuation. Nay, he reckoned that his kingdom was truly promoted, when these tumultuous, impatient, imperious, proud lusts of men were mortified. Nothing had been more easy with him, considering his miraculous power, infallible wisdom, and the mighty interest and party which he could by these have made for himself in the world, than to have raised his own kingdom upon the ruins of the Roman, and to have quite shuffled Caesar out of the world : but indeed nothing more impossible, considering the perfect innocency and infinite sacredness of his temper, nor anything more

contradictious, considering the proper notion of his kingdom ; which he professes not to be secular, and so not to be maintained by fighting : but if you would know in what sense he was a King, he himself seems to intimate it in his answer to Pilate, “Thou sayest that I am a king ; to this end was I born, that I should bear witness unto the truth,” John xviii. 37. So then it seems wherever there are truth and holiness predominant, there is Christ really enthroned, and actually triumphant. Where religion doth vitally inform, animate, and actuate men’s souls, it doth make them rightly to understand that the kingdom of Christ is not the thriving of parties, the strengthening of factions, the advancement of any particular interest, though it seem to be of ever so evangelical a complexion ; no, nor yet the proselyting of the world to the profession of Christianity, or of the Christian world to the purer and more reformed profession of it, though these latter would be a great external honour to the person of Christ : but that it is most properly and happily propagated in the spirits of men ; and that wherever there are faith, patience, humility, self-denial, contempt of this world, and pregnant hopes of a better, pure obedience to God, and sincere benignity to men, here and there is the kingdom of God, Christ regnant, and the gospel in the power and triumph of it. And may not these things be, and be most conspicuously, in a persecuted condition of the church ? That certainly was a high

instance of the mighty power of the divine life in our blessed Saviour, which the apostle Peter records of him, who “when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously,” 1 Pet. ii. 23. The same divine principle dwelling plentifully in our soul, would conduct us to the same behaviour, according to the precept given by the same Apostle, “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing,” &c. 1 Pet. iii. 9. How vainly do men dream that they serve the interest and advance the kingdom of Christ by fierce and raging endeavours to cast off every yoke that galls them, and kicking against every thorn that pricks them, when indeed they serve the interest of the flesh, and do, under a fine cloak, gratify the mere animal life, and sacrifice to self-love, which is as covetous of freedom from all retrenchments and confinements as religion itself can be. It is said indeed that when the churches had rest they were “edified and multiplied,” Acts ix. 31; but when they suffer “according to the will of God,” they are then glorified: for “the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them,” 1 Pet. iv. 14, as the apostle Paul professes of himself in that most noble and heroical passage of his to the Corinthians; “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me,” 2 Cor. xii. 9.

Secondly, Religion will not fail rightly to dis-

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

This principle would teach men to love their friends and accomplices only in the Lord, as his members, not as their own partizans. Are not they strangely devoted to interest that will vindicate anything in a partizan, which they will declaim against in a Dissenter? And yet how is the sacred name of christian friendship reproached every where by reason of this partiality! How much better did true religion instruct the great Apostle, "to know no man after the flesh," 2 Cor. v. 16, no, not Christ himself?

The same principle would not fail to cure the distempers of men relative to those that are of a different way and judgment from themselves; whether of Protestants towards Protestants, or Protest-

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

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

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

And O how excellently would it still the noise of axes and hammers about the temple of God! It would take men off from vain speculations and much eagerness about unnecessary opinions, by employing them in more substantial and important studies. The very being of religion in the soul would indeed decide a world of controversies, which the schools have long laboured in vain to determine. For I reckon that these scholastic wars fitly called polemics, like those civil dissensions spoken of by the apostle James, chap. iv. 1, do, for the most part, spring from men's lusts that war in their members, such as pride, curiosity, wantonness of wit, disobedience, and unsubduedness of under-

standing, and the like. I have observed with great grief, how the spirits of many men, I had almost said sects of men, run out wholly into disputes about ceremonies, *pro* and *con*, about church government, about what is orthodox and what is heterodox, about the true and the false church, (which commonly they judge by something external, and indeed separable from the essence of a true church;) and hereabout are their zeal, their conference, and their very prayers themselves mostly bestowed. Who can doubt but that religion, in the power of it, would find men something else to do? yea, and if it could not perfectly determine these niceties, yet it would much heal our dissensions about them, and bring tears to quench the strange and unnatural heats that are amongst us, and cause such dreadful inflammations in our breasts.

But it may seem that there is such a fatal enmity and irreconcilable feud betwixt Papists and Protestants, that nothing, no, not religion itself, can heal it. And truly if we suppose that it is religion that engages both parties in this enmity, I think it will prove incurable; but God forbid that this pure offspring of heaven should be so blasphemed! It is not religion, but indeed the want of it, that begets this implacable animosity, whatever is pretended. Cruel religion, bloody religion, selfish religion, envious and revengeful religion! Who can choose but cry out of the blasphemy of this contradiction at the very first hearing? Nay, I dare

affirm it without hesitation, that the more religious any Protestant or Papist is, the more abhorrent he is from brutish savageness, wicked revenge, and devilish hatred. The church of Rome judges the reformed heretics are not fit to live; and why? not because they live not well, but because they cannot think and believe as they do. And is this the genuine product of true religion? nothing less. For a desire of ruling over men's consciences, and of subjecting the faith of others to themselves, is certainly compatible to a mere natural man, nay, to the devil himself, who is as lordly, cruel, and imperious as any other. The reformed churches, on the other hand are, I doubt, generally more offended at the Papists for their persecutions of them, than for their real persecuting and crucifying Christ afresh by their sins; and so, consequently, do rather write and fight against them, than either pity or pray for them. I hope there are as many well-spirited Christians in England, at least proportionably, as in any church upon earth; and yet I fear there are far more that could wish the Papists out of this world, than that earnestly desire that they might be fitted for, and so counted worthy of a better. And doth this spring from a religious principle, think ye, or a selfish? Doth it not agree well to the animal life, and natural self, to be tender of its own interests and concernments, to wish well to its own safety, to defend itself from violence? May I not allude to our Saviour's words and say,

“If ye hate them that hate you, how can that be accounted religious? Do not even the publicans the same?” Matt. v. 46. I doubt we know not sufficiently what spirit we should be of. The power of religion, rightly prevailing in the soul, would mould us into another kind of temper; it would teach us as well to love, and pity, and pray for Papists, as to hate Popery. I know the prophecy indeed, that the beast and the false prophet shall be cast alive into the lake burning with brimstone, and the remnant shall be slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, Rev. xix. 20, but, inasmuch as that sword is said to proceed “out of his mouth,” Rev. xix. 21; I would gladly interpret it of “the word of God,” Eph. vi. 17, which kills men unto salvation. However, let the interpretation of that text, and others of the like importance, be what it will, I reckon it very unsafe to turn all the prophecies and threatenings of God into prayers, lest perhaps we should be found to contribute to the damning of men’s souls. Yea, when all is said concerning the sovereign decrees of God, and his essential and inflexible punitive justice, and all those texts that seem to speak of God’s revenging himself with delight, are interpreted to the utmost harshness of meaning that the cruel wit of man can invent; yet it remains a sealed, and to me a sweet truth, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God,” Ezek. xviii. 32; and again, “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no

pleasure in the death of the wicked," Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Wherefore, to wave all those dreadful glosses (that do rather describe the bitter and revengeful temper of man that makes them, than interpret the pure and perfect nature of God upon whom they are made,) let us attend to that beautiful character that is every where given of religion, which is our highest concern, in the person of Moses, of Paul, and of Christ Jesus himself, the author and exemplar of it; who by his incarnation, life, and death, abundantly demonstrated the infinite benignity and compassionate ardors of his soul towards us, when we were worse than Papists, as being out of a possibility of salvation without him; and "let that mind be in us, which was in him also," Phil. ii. 5. Though it be not directly our Saviour's meaning in my text, yet I believe it is reductively, that this pure and divine principle, religion, springs up into everlasting life, not only our own, but other men's also. But, however religion is described, sure I am it is most unnatural to the religious soul that is regenerated into the pure spirit of piety, pity, and universal charity, to be of a cruel, fierce, revengeful, condemning disposition. And therefore whatever are the ranting and wrathful strains of some men's devotions, I beseech the reader to endeavour with me, that charity towards men's souls may go along in conjunction with zeal and piety towards God, when we present ourselves before the throne of his grace; and so, I am confident, it will if we pray

sincerely to this purpose, namely, "That God would cause the wickedness of the wicked to come to an end, that he would consume the Antichrist, but convert the Papist, and make the wonderers after the beast to become followers of the Lamb!" I doubt there are many that think they can never be too liberal in wishing ill of the Papists, nay, they count it a notable argument of a good Protestant, I had almost said an evidence of grace, to be very furious and vehement against them. Alas! how miserably do we bewray ourselves in so doing, to be nothing less than what we pretend to by doing it. For are not we ourselves herein antichristian, whilst we complain of their cruelties, our own souls, in the very act, boiling over with revengeful and scalding affections? If we do indeed abhor their cruelty, because it is contrary to the holy precepts of the gospel, and the true kingdom of Christ, we ought to be as jealous at the same time lest anything like unto it should be found in ourselves; otherwise are we not carnal? For mere nature, as I have often said, will abhor anything that is contrary to itself, and will not willingly suffer its delicate interest to be touched. The apostle tells us, that no man speaking by the "Spirit of Christ, calleth Christ accursed," 1 Cor. xii. 3; but I doubt it is common to curse Antichrist, and yet by a spirit that is antichristian, I mean carnal, selfish, cruel, and uncharitable. For there is a spiritual Antichrist, or, if you will, in the Apostle's phrase, a "spirit of Anti-

christ," 1 John iv. 3, as well as a political Antichrist; and I doubt the former prevails most in the world, though it be the least discerned and banned. Men do by Antichrist as they do by the devil, defy him in words, but entertain him in their hearts, run away from the appearance of him, and, in the mean time, can be well content to be all that in the very deed which the devil and Antichrist is. All this evidently appears to be for want of the true power and spirit of religion which I commend for so great a healer, even the τὸ πανακὲς of our distempers.

Perhaps no papist will find in his heart to read this epistle written by a heretic; yet possibly too, some one or other may: therefore I will adventure briefly to prescribe this same medicinal divinity to them also; though perhaps I might be excused upon other accounts, all that I have hitherto said to distempered Protestants being rightly enough, *mutatis mutandis*, applicable to them. But moreover, whereas they value their church, and the truth and rightness of it, by its universality and prosperity; the power of religion would make men to value themselves and their adherents, only by the divine impressions of piety and purity, and to account such only worthy of the glorious title of apostolical, and children of God, who are sincere followers of the apostles wherein they were followers of Christ, namely, in true holiness and righteousness. Are they industrious and zealous for the proselyting of the world, and spreading of their in-

terest far and near? And are not all wicked men, yea, and the devil himself so too? The fairest and most flourishing state of a church is nothing to God, and so consequently not to a pious soul, in comparison of those excellent divine beauties wherewith religion adorneth the world. But whereas the greatest complaint, and the most dreadful charge which the Protestants bring against the Papists, is their inhumanity and most unchristian cruelty, exercised against all whom they can but make shift to esteem heretics; and they, on the other hand, allege, that the interest of religion, and the catholic faith doth require it, and that they do not so properly murder men, as sacrifice them to the honour of God: it will be proper to spend a little time, at least, to clear religion of this blame; that as wisdom is at all times justified of, and in her children, so she may be sometimes justified by them, especially when the aspersions are so monstrously foul. And indeed she has sufficiently instructed us how to justify her from all such imputations; having so fairly pourtrayed herself by the pen of the apostle James, both negatively and affirmatively. She is void of "strife, envyings, bitterness, and every evil work;" but she is "pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy," James iii. 14—17. This is the proper description of heavenly wisdom, or pure religion: and O that all Christians would estimate themselves to be wise according to

their consonancy and conformity thereunto ! then I would easily believe, that none would be papists in practice, whatever they might be in opinion. What, sirs, is the God of the Christians become like a devil, that he should delight in cruelty, and drink the blood of men ? Is the butchering of reasonable creatures that reasonable service which he requires ? Rom. xii. 1. Is the living sacrifice of your own bodies turned into the dead sacrifice of other men's ? It was wont to be said, " What communion hath Christ with Belial ? " 2 Cor. vi. 15. And is the Prince of peace now become very Satan, the author of enmity, malignity, confusion, and every evil work ? Did he shed his blood for his enemies, to teach us that goodly lesson of shedding the blood of ours ? Did he come " to seek and to save that which was lost," Luke xix. 10, to set us an example that we might seek to destroy, and that only to repair our own losses ? Be it so ; that the Protestant churches have apostatized from you : this, I hope, is not a greater crime than the apostacy of mankind from God, which yet he expiated, not with the blood of the apostates, but with his own. Religion was formerly a principle springing up into eternal life. How is the world changed, that it should now be a principle springing up into massacres, and temporal death ? or is religion now become a principle springing up into secular power, worldly dominion, temporal greatness, and all manner of fleshly accommodations ? This was of old the

description of sensuality, and a heathen genius, “for after all these things do the Gentiles seek,” Matt. vi. 32. Are there so many mighty engines in the gospel to engage the hearts of men to believe, profess, and obey it, and must they all now give place to fire and sword? Are these the only gospel methods of winning men to the catholic faith? What! are we wiser for Christ, or more zealous than he himself was? Did he forbid fire from heaven, and will you fetch it even from hell to consume Dissenters? Did he sheath his sword that was drawn in his own defence, and set a dreadful seal upon it too, “All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword;” and will you adventure to draw it in a way of revenge and persecution, and count it meritorious too, as if you should therefore never perish because you take it? Is it not written in your Bibles, as well as ours, that “no murderer shall enter into the kingdom of God?” And do you think by murders to propagate this kingdom upon earth, and have a more abundant entrance into it yourselves hereafter? Can hell dwell with heaven? Shall bloody cruelty ever come to lodge in the bosom, or lie down in the sacred arms of eternal love? Be not deceived, sirs, with a false heaven; but take this for an indubitable and self-evidencing aphorism of truth, No soul of man hath any more of heaven, no, nor ever shall have, than he hath of God, and of his pure, placable, patient, benign, and gracious nature. And this is that everlasting life which a

religious principle is always springing up into ; so that it hereby appears plainly, that religion, in the power of it, would heal these feverish distempers also, and so restore a most excellent constitution, both personal and political.

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

Let nothing satisfy your souls, Christians, let nothing administer rest or settlement to your hearts, that is common to the natural man, or compatible to the mere animal life. There are a great many high strains of zeal and seeming devotion, by which many men judge themselves to be some great ones, and concerning which they are ready to say, These things are the great power of God ; which, if they be well looked into, will be found to grow upon no better root than natural self, and to spring from no

higher principle than this animal life. It is impossible for me to give an exact catalogue of all these; many of them I have occasionally recorded in the latter end of the ensuing treatise; to which yet many more might be added, if I had a fair opportunity. But at present let me in general commend to you this description given by our Saviour of true religion, as the rule whereby I do earnestly intreat you faithfully to examine yourselves, your actions, affections, zeal, confidence, professions, performances. Let me speak freely; all pomp of worship, all speculative knowledge, though ever so orthodox, is as agreeable to the animal life as the divine: and all external models of devotion, humble confessions, devout hymns, pathetical prayers, raptures of joy, much zeal to reform indecencies in worship or superstitions, a fierce raging against the political Antichrist, do as well suit a natural man as a spiritual, and may be as fairly acted over apparently, by a mere selfish carnal principle, as by that which is truly divine. When Diogenes trampled upon Plato's stately bed, saying *calco Platonis fastum*, it was answered him very sharply, *sed majore fastu*, he was prouder in treading upon it, than Plato was in lying upon it. I doubt it may be applied too truly to a great deal of that cynical and scornful zeal, that is in the world at this day; men declaim against the pride, and pomp, and grandeur of anti-christian prelates, with a pride no whit inferior to theirs whom they thus decry. However it is plain,

that those things which are imitable by a sensual heart, and indeed performable by the mere magic of an exalted fancy, are not to be rested in by a sincere Christian. Read over therefore, I beseech you, the fruits of the Spirit recorded by the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter, Gal. v. 22, &c. 2 Pet. i. 5, 6; and estimate yourselves by them; these things are utterly incompatible to the mere animal man; all the natural men and devils in the world cannot be humble, meek, self-denying, patient, charitable, lovers of God more than of themselves, or of their enemies as themselves. Would you judge rightly of the goodness of any opinion? then value it by the tendency that is in it to advance the life of God: particularly thus judge of the millenarian opinion, which begins to be so much hugged in the world: concerning which I will only say thus much at present, that, in the common notion of it, as it promises a state of much ease, liberty, power, prosperity, and freedom from all persecutions and oppressions, it is as grateful to the fleshly palate, and will be as gladly embraced by the mere animal man, as by the greatest saint upon earth. And therefore, supposing it to be true, yet I cannot but wonder how it comes to administer so much satisfaction, and afford such a marvellous relish to minds divinely principled, as many seem to taste in it. By this same tendency to advance the divine life in your souls, judge also of all your enjoyments, riches, honours, liberties, friends, health, children,

&c. and value them, if it be possible, only under this consideration. But to hasten to an end, I will endeavour to enforce this general exhortation by two or three weighty considerations. First, it is utterly impossible that any speculation, opinion, profession, enjoyment, ornament, performance, or any other thing, but the transformation of the mind into the very image and nature of God, should ever be able to perfect our souls, or commend us unto God. They cannot perfect our souls, as being most of them exterior, and all of them inferior to it. They cannot commend a man to God, who loves us, and whom we so far know and love, as we partake of his nature, and resemble him: this is the love of God, this is the worship of God, and this is really the soul's acquaintance with him, and nothing but this. Secondly, the advancement of the divine life is that which God mainly designs in the world. I need instance but in two things: 1. The sending of his own Son into the world for this very end and purpose, "that he might take away our sins," says the Apostle John; and again, "that he might destroy the works of the devil;" and again, says the Apostle Paul, "That he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." 2. It appears that this is the grand design of God in the world, inasmuch as he doth not deliver his faithful servants out of their afflictions and tribulations; which he would not fail to do, did he not intend them a greater good thereby,

and design to lead them on and raise them up to a higher life. Now, what can more ennoble these souls of ours, than to live upon the same design with God himself?

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

Thy servant,

In his work and for his sake,

SAMUEL SHAW.

IMMANUEL.

CHAP. I.

The occasion of the words of the text—The principal contents of it—The origin of true religion—All souls the offspring of God, and a more especial portraiture of him; but pious souls yet more especially—God the author of religion from without, in several respects; God the author of it from within, enlightening the faculty—Religion something of God in the soul—A discovery of religious men by the affinity they have to God—God alone to be acknowledged in all holy accomplishments—The origin of sin from hence discovered.

JOHN IV. 14.

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

THIS chapter contains an excellent, profitable familiar discourse of the blessed Saviour of the world, into whose lips grace was poured, and he ceased not to pour it out again. That which is said of the wise, is fully verified of wisdom itself, His lips dispersed knowledge. A poor woman of Samaria comes to draw water, and our Saviour takes occa-

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

In which words we find the true christian religion unfolded in the origin, nature, properties, consequences, and end of it. The origin of it is found in those words, "I shall give him;" the nature of it is described by "a well of water;" the properties of it will be found in the phrase of

“springing up;” the consequence of it, that the man that is endowed with it “shall never thirst;” the end or perfection of it is “everlasting life.” Of all these, by God’s assistance, in this order.

First, I begin at the origin of it, as it seems meet I should; for indeed it is first found in the words, “The water that I shall give him.” And here the proposition that I shall go upon must be, “That the true Christian religion is of divine origin.” All souls are indeed the offspring of God. Those noble faculties of understanding, and a will free from constraint, do more resemble the nature of God than all the world besides. There is more of the glory, beauty, and brightness of God in a soul, than there is in the sun itself. The Apostle allows it as a proper speech spoken in common of all men, “for we are also his offspring.” God hath transferred more lively prints of himself, and his divine essence, upon a rational soul, than he hath upon the whole creation: so that the soul of man, even as to its constitution, doth declare and discover more of the nature of God, than all the other things that he hath made, whereof the Apostle speaks. He that rightly converseth with his own soul, will get more acquaintance with God, than they that gaze continually upon the material heavens, or traverse the dark and utmost corners of the earth, or “go down unto the sea in ships;” the serious consideration of the little world will teach more of him than the great one could do; so that I hesitate not

to take the Apostle's words concerning the word of God, and apply them to the nature of God—"Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven," to bring a discovery of God from thence? or, "who shall descend into the deep," to fetch it up from thence? The nature and essence of God is nigh thee, even in thine own soul, excellently displayed in the constitution and frame, powers and faculties thereof: God hath not made any creatures so capable of receiving and reflecting his image and glory, as angels and men: which hath made me often to say, "That the vilest soul of man is much more beautiful and honourable than the most excellent body, than the very body of the sun at noon-day." And, by the way, this may render sin odious and loathsome; because it hath defiled the fairest piece of God's workmanship in the world, and hath blurred the clearest copy which he had drawn of himself in the whole creation.

But though all rational souls be the children of God, yet all of them do not imitate their father; though their constitution do express much of the essence of God, yet their disposition doth express the image of the devil. But pious souls, who are followers of God, are indeed his dear children. Holy souls, who are endowed with a divine and God-like disposition, and do work the works of God, these are most truly and properly his offspring. And in this respect God's children are his "workmanship created unto good works." Religion is of

a divine origin: God is the author and father of it, both from without and from within.

1. God is the author of it from without. When man had fallen from God by sin, and so had lost his way, and was become both unwilling and unable to return, God was pleased to set up that glorious light, his own Son, "the Sun of righteousness," in the world, that he might guide our feet into the way of peace, who is therefore called, "A light to lighten the Gentiles," and compared to a candle set upon a candlestick. God of his infinite free grace, and over-flowing goodness, provided a Mediator, in and by whom these apostate souls might be reconciled, and re-united to himself; and "to as many as receive him, to them he giveth power to become the sons of God."

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

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

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

2. God is the author of religion from within. He doth not only reveal himself and his Son to the soul, but in it; he doth not only make discoveries to it, but lively impressions upon it; he doth not

only appoint, and point out the way of life, but breathes in the breath of life. He hath not only provided a Saviour, a Redeemer, but he also draws the soul unto him. He hath not only appointed pastors and teachers, but he himself impregnates their word, and clothes their doctrine with his own power, using their ministry as an instrument whereby to teach; so that the children of God are said to be "all taught of God." Ministers can only discover, and as it were, enlighten the object; but God enlightens the faculty, he gives the seeing eye, and does actually enable it to discern. Therefore the work of converting a soul is still ascribed to God in scripture; he begets us again; he draws the soul, before it can run after him; Christ apprehends the soul, lays powerful hold of it. God gives a heart of flesh, a new heart; he causes men to walk in his statutes. He puts his law into their inward parts, and writes it in their hearts. To which I might add many more quotations of the same value.

But yet, methinks, we are not come to a perfect discovery of religion's being the offspring of God in the minds of men. For it is God who enlighteneth the faculty as to the learning of all other things also; he teacheth the grammar and the rhetoric, as well as the divinity; he instructeth even the husbandman to discretion in his affairs of husbandry, and teaches him to plough, and sow, and thrash, &c. Not only the gift of divine know-

ledge, but indeed “every good gift cometh from the Father of lights.” God doth from within give that capacity, illumination of the faculty, ingenuity, whereby we comprehend the mysteries of nature, as well as of grace.

Therefore we may conceive of the origin of religion in a more inward and spiritual manner still. It is not so much given of God, as itself is something of God in the soul; as the soul is not so properly said to give life, as to be the life of man. As the conjunction of the soul with the body is the life of the body, so verily the life of the soul stands in its conjunction with God by a spiritual union of will and affections. God doth not enlighten men’s minds as the sun enlightens the world, by shining unto them and round about them, but by shining into them, by enlightening the faculty, as I said before, yea, which seems to be somewhat more, by shining in their hearts, as the Apostle phraseth it. He sets up a candle, which is his own light within the soul; so that the soul sees God in his own light, and loves him with the love that he hath shed abroad in it; and religion is no other than a reflection of that divine image, life, and light, and love, which from God are stamped and imprinted upon the souls of true Christians. God is said to enlighten the soul, but it is not as the sun enlightens, that you see; so he draws the soul too, but not *ab extra* only, as one man draweth another with a cord, as Jupiter in Homer draws men up to heaven

by a chain, and Mahomet, his disciples by a lock of hair; but he draws the soul, as the sun draws up earthly vapours by infusing its virtue and power into them; or, as the loadstone draws the iron, by the powerful insinuations of his grace. God doth not so much communicate himself to the soul by way of discovery, as by way of impression, as I said before; and indeed not so much by impression either, as by a mystical and wonderful way of implantation. Religion is not so much something from God, as something of God in the minds of good men, for so the scripture allows us to speak: it is therefore called his image, and good men are said to “live according to God in the spirit;” but, as if that were not high enough, it is not only called his image, but even a participation of his divine nature, something of Christ in the soul, an Infant-Christ as one calls it, alluding to the Apostle, where the saving knowledge of Christ is called Christ himself,—“until Christ be formed in you.” True religion is, as it were, God dwelling in the soul, and Christ dwelling in the soul, as the Apostles St. John and St. Paul do express it: yea, God himself is pleased thus to express his relation to the pious soul—“I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a humble spirit;” and again—“As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them.” Pure religion is a beam of the Father of lights, *lumen de lumine*; it is a drop of that eternal fountain of goodness and holiness, the breath of the

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

capable of such communications of God as a rational immortal spirit is; and the highest that angel or spirit, or any created nature can be made capable of, is to be holy as God is holy. So then, if the poet may call the soul, and St. Paul allows him in it, a particle of the Divine essence; sure one may rather speak at that rate of religion, which is the highest perfection that the soul can attain to, either in the world that now is, or that which is to come. One soul, any one soul of man, is worth all the world beside for glory and dignity; but the lowest degree of true holiness, pure religion, conformity to the divine nature and will, is more worth than a world of souls, and to be preferred before the essence of angels. I have often admired three great mysteries and mercies, God revealed in the flesh, God revealed in the word, and God revealed in the soul: this last is the mystery of godliness which I am speaking of, but cannot fathom; it is this that the Apostle says transcends the sight of our eyes, the capacity of our ears, and all the faculties of our souls too, "Eye hath not seen," &c. Christ Jesus formed in the soul of man, incarnate in a heart of flesh, is as great a miracle, and a greater mercy, than Christ formed in the womb of a virgin, and incarnate in a human body. There was once much glorying concerning Christ in the world, the hope of Israel; but let us call out to the powers of eternity, and the ages of the world to come, to help us to celebrate and magnify Christ in us "the hope

of glory ;” or, if you will, Christ in us the first-fruits of glory. What has been said may,

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

can work, the same do bear witness which is she. I am ready to say with the man that had been blind, “herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not” religion who she is, and yet she is the mighty power of God opening the eyes, changing the hearts, and as it were edifying the souls of men. Why do we not also go about enquiring which of those many stars is the moon in the firmament? If ye ask which is the religious party? I will point you to the blessed and eternal God, and say, As he is, so are they, in their capacity, each one resembling the children of a king; or, I will point out the religious Christian by the same token as Christ himself was marked out to John the Baptist—“Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining, the same is he.” If ye enquire about the children of God, the Apostle shall describe them for you, the followers of God are his dear children. That which is most nearly allied to the nature and life of God, that call religion, under whatsoever disguises or reproaches it may go in the world. Examine the world by no lower a mark, than that character that is given of David, and the man that doth appear to be after God’s heart, namely, conformable to his image, compliant with his will, and studious of his glory, pitch upon him, for that is the man, under what name soever he goes, of what party or faction soever he is. And let no soul examine itself by any lower marks than this, *ἔστι τις Θεός ἑνδον*, “participation of the divine nature, conformity to

the divine image." Examine what alliance your soul hath to God, "whose is the image and superscription." Religion is a divine accomplishment, an efflux from God, and may, by its affinity to heaven, be discerned from a brat of hell and darkness. Therefore, Christians, if you will form a judgment of your state, lay your hearts and lives to the rule, the eternal goodness, the uncreated purity and holiness, and see whether you resemble that copy: for conformity to the image and will of God, that is religion; and that God will own for his, when all the counterfeits and shadows of it will fly away, and disappear for ever. I fear it may be imputed as a great piece of vanity and idle curiosity to many counterfeit speculative Christians, that they are very inquisitive, prying into the hidden rolls of God's decrees, the secrets of predestination, to find out the causes and method of their vocation and salvation; in the mean time they are not solicitous for, nor studious of the relation and resemblance that every religious soul bears unto God himself, the heaven that is opened within the pious soul itself, and the whole plot and mystery of salvation transacted upon the heart of a true Christian. There is a vanity which I have observed in many pretenders to nobility and learning, when men seek to demonstrate the one by their coat of arms, and the records of their family, and the other by a gown, or a title, or their names standing in the register of the university, rather than by the accomplish-

ments and behaviour of gentlemen or scholars. A like vanity, I doubt, may be observed in many pretenders to religion: some are searching God's decretals, to find their names written in the book of life; when they should be studying to find God's name written upon their hearts, holiness to the Lord engraven upon their souls: some are busy in examining themselves by notes and marks without them; when they should labour to find the marks and prints of God and his nature upon them: some have their religion in their books and authors, which should be the law of God written in the tables of the heart: some glory in the bulk of their duties, and in the multitude of their pompous performances, and religious achievements, crying, with Jehu, "Come, see here my zeal for the Lord;" whereas it were much more excellent, if one could see their likeness to the Lord, and the characters of divine beauty and holiness drawn upon their hearts and lives. But we, if we would judge rightly of our religious state, must view ourselves in God, who is the fountain of all goodness and holiness, and the rule of all perfection. Value yourselves by your souls, and not by your bodies, estates, friends, or any outward accomplishments, as most men do: but that is not enough; if men rest there, they make an idol of the fairest of God's creatures, even their own souls; therefore value your souls themselves by what they have of God in them. To study the blessed and glorious God in his word, and to con-

verse with him in his works, is indeed an excellent and honourable employment ; but O what a blessed study it is to view him in the communications of himself, and the impressions of his grace upon our own souls ! All the thin and subtile speculations which the most eminent philosophers have of the essence and nature of God are a poor, and low, and beggarly employment and attainment, in comparison of those blessed visions of God which a pious soul hath in itself, when it finds itself partaker of a divine nature, and living a divine life. O labour to view God and his divine perfections in your own souls, in those copies and transcripts of them which his Holy Spirit draws upon the hearts of all pious men. This is the most excellent discovery of God that any soul is capable of ; it is better and more desirable than that famous discovery that was made to Moses in the cleft of the rock. Nay, I should much rather desire to see the real impression of a God-like nature upon my own soul, to see the crucifying of my own pride and self-will, the mortifying of a mere sensual life, and a divine life springing up in my soul instead of it ; I would much rather desire to see my soul glorified in the image and beauty of God put upon it, which is indeed a pledge, yea, and a part of eternal glory, than to have a vision from the Almighty, or hear a voice witnessing from heaven, and saying, “ Thou art my beloved Son, in whom my soul is well pleased.” This that I am speaking

of is a true foundation of heaven itself in the soul, a real beginning of happiness ; for happiness, heaven itself, is nothing else but a perfect conformity, a cheerful and eternal compliance of all the powers of the soul with the will of God : so that as far as a pious soul is thus conformed to God, and filled with his fulness, so far is he glorified upon earth. *Sed heu quantum distamus ab illo !*

Secondly, Let wisdom then be justified of her children ; let the children of God, those that are his genuine offspring, rise up and call him blessed, in the imitation of their Lord and Saviour, that eldest Son of God, that “ first-born amongst many brethren,” who rejoiced in spirit, and said, “ I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast revealed these things,” or, according to the style of the apostle Peter, “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again !” There is no greater contradiction in the world, than a man pretending religion, and yet ascribing it to himself ; whereas pure religion is purely of a divine origin : besides, religion doth principally consist in the subduing of self-will, in conformity to, and compliance with the divine will, in serving the interest of God’s glory in the world. Then, and not till then, may a soul be truly called religious, when God becomes greatest of all to it and in it, and the interest of God is so powerfully planted in it, that no other interest, no self-interest, no creature-love,

no particular private end, can grow by it, no more than the magicians could stand before Moses, when he came in the power of God to work wonders. So that what Solomon saith of self-seeking, "For men to seek their own glory is not glory;" the like I may safely say upon that double ground that I have laid down, self-religion is not religion. How vainly and madly do men dream of their self-religion carrying them to heaven; when heaven itself is nothing else but the perfection of self-denial, and God's becoming all things to the saints. Instead of advancing men towards heaven, there is nothing in the world that doth more directly make war against heaven, than that *γίγαντώδης ψυχὴ*, (as Siracides calls it) that proud and petulant spirit of self-will that rules in the children of disobedience. So that when the Holy Ghost would describe David one of the best men, to the best advantage, he describes him with opposition to self and self-will, "a man after God's own heart;" and again, "he served the will of God in his generation."

There have been of old a great number of philosophical men, who being raised up above the speculations of their own souls, which is the logical life, unto a contemplation of a deity; and being purged, by a lower kind of virtue and moral goodness, from the pollutions that are in this world through lust, did yet ultimately settle into themselves, and their own self-love. They were full indeed, but it was not with the fulness of God, as the Apostle speaks,

but with a self-sufficiency; the leaven of self-love lying at the bottom made them swell with pride and self-conceit. Now these men, though they were free from gross external enormities, yet did not attain to a true knowledge of God, nor any true religion, because they set up themselves to be their own idols, and carried such an image of themselves continually before their eyes, that they had no clear and spiritual discerning of God. They did, as it is storied of one of the Persian kings, enshrine themselves in a temple of their own. But what speak I of heathen philosophers? Is there not the same unclean spirit of self-adoration to be found amongst many Christians, yea, and teachers of Christianity too? witness that whole brood, those men, who, whilst they suspend the grace of God upon man's free will, do utterly rob him of his glory. Some of these have impudently given a short, but unsavoury answer to the Apostle's question, "Who maketh you to differ from another?" "I make myself to differ?" These men, while they pretend to high attainments, do discover a low and most ignoble spirit: to fasten and feed upon anything in the creature, is the part of a low and degenerate spirit; on the other hand, it is the greatest perfection of the creature, not to be its own, not to be anything in itself, or any way distinct from the blessed God, the Father and Fountain of light and grace. Holy Paul is all along in a different strain, as, "I, yet not I, but the grace of God

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

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

Thirdly, By this discovery of the origin of religion, we come to understand the origin of sin and wickedness. And here, according to the method wherein I spoke of the origin of religion, I might show you how the origin of sin from without is of the devil, who first ushered it into the world, and ceaseth not to tempt men to it continually; as also of men, who are his instruments; and that it does, in a sense, spring from many occasions without. But these things are more improperly said to be the

causes of sin. The inward cause is the corrupt heart of man, that unclean spirit, that diabolical nature, which is indeed the worst and most pernicious devil in the world to man. It is an old saying, one man is a devil to another; which though it be in some sense true, yet it is more proper to say, man is a devil to himself; taking the spirit and principle of apostacy, that rebellious nature, for the devil, which indeed doth best deserve that name. But yet, if we inquire more strictly into the origin and nature of this monster, we shall best know what to say of it, and how to describe it, by what we have heard of religion. Sin then, to speak properly, is nothing else but a degeneration from a holy state, an apostacy from a holy God. Religion is a participation of God, and sin is a straggling off from him. Therefore it is wont to be defined by negatives, a departure from God, a forsaking of him, a living in the world without him, &c. The soul's falling off from God, describes the general nature of sin; but then as it sinks into itself, or settles upon the world, and fastens upon the creature, or anything therein; so it becomes specified, and is called pride, covetousness, ambition, and by many other names. All souls are the offspring of God, were originally formed into his image and likeness; and when they express the purity and holiness of the divine nature, in being perfect as God is perfect, then are they called the children of God: but those impure spirits that

do lapse and slide from God, may be said to implant themselves into another stock by their own low and earthly lives, and are no more owned for the children of God, but “are of their father the devil.” By which you may understand the low and base origin of sin: nothing can be so vile as that which, to speak properly, is nothing else but a perfect falling off from glory itself. By this you may also by the way, take notice of the miserable condition of unholy souls. We need not call for fire and brimstone to paint out the wretched state of sinful souls. Sin itself is hell and death, and misery to the soul, as being a departure from goodness and holiness itself: I mean from God, in conjunction with whom the happiness, and blessedness, and heaven of a soul consist. Avoid it therefore, as you would avoid being miserable.

CHAP. II.

True religion described, as to the nature of it, by water ; a metaphor usual in the scriptures—1. By reason of the cleansing virtue of it—The defiling nature of sin, and the beauty of holiness manifested.—2. By reason of the quenching virtue of it—This briefly touched upon, and the more full handling of it referred to its proper place—The nature of religion described by a well of water—that it is a principle in the souls of men, proved by much scripture—An examination of religion by this test—by which examination are excluded all things that are merely external reformatations and performances instanced in—A godly man hath neither the whole of his business, nor his motives lying without him—In the same examination many things internal found not to be religion—it is no sudden passion of the mind—no, not though the same amount to an ecstacy—nor anything begotten and maintained by fancy, and the mere power of imagination.

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

I. Pure religion, or gospel grace, is described by water. This is a comparison very familiar in the holy scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New. By this similitude, gospel grace was typified

in the ceremonial law, wherein both persons and things, ceremonially unclean, were commanded to be washed in water, as is abundantly to be seen in that administration. Under this notion, the same grace is prayed for by the Psalmist, when he had defiled himself in the bed of a stranger—"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." He had drunk water out of a strange cistern, as his son Solomon describes that unclean act; and now he calls out for water from the fountain of grace to undefile him: he now cries out for water from the fountain of grace, the blessed Messiah, that sprung up into the world at Bethlehem, and that with more earnestness than formerly we read that he wished for the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate. In the same phrase the same grace is promised by the ministry of the Prophets, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto us. Thus we read of the fair and flourishing state of the church—"Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not;" and of the fruitful state of the gospel proselytes—"All the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim." Which promises, that they are understood of the grace of sanctification, the prophet Ezekiel sheweth plainly—"I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you:" for ordinary

elementary water cannot cleanse men from idols. The prophet Isaiah also puts it out of doubt, whose prophecy, together with the interpretation of it, we find both in one verse—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring." By the same ceremony, the gospel dispensation shadows out the same mystery in the sacrament of baptism; and, by the same phrase our Saviour offers and promises the same grace—"If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink:" and his apostles after him, who, in allusion to water, call this grace the "washing of regeneration." To which I might add 1 Pet. iii. 21, and many other texts if it required.

Now, as the grace of God is compared to fire, because of its refining nature, and consuming the dross and refuse of depravity in the soul; and to other things for other reasons: so it is compared to water, especially for those two properties, namely, cleansing and quenching; for observe this by the way, that it is a very injurious thing to the Holy Ghost, to press the metaphors which he useth in scripture, further than they do naturally and freely serve. Neither are we to adhere to the letter of the metaphor, but to attend unto the scope of it. If we tenaciously adhere to the phrase, wanton wits will be ready to quarrel with absurdities, and so unawares run into strange blasphemies: they will cry out presently, How can fire wash? when they read

that of the Prophet—"The Lord will wash away the filth of the daughter of Zion, by the spirit of burning." But who art thou, O man! that wilt teach him to speak who formed the tongue? The Spirit of God intends the virtue and property of things, when he names them; and that we must mainly attend to.

1. Therefore, by the phrase *water*, is the cleansing nature of religion commended to us: it is the undefiling of the soul, which sin and wickedness hath polluted: sin is often described in scripture by filthiness, loathsomeness, abomination, uncleanness, a spot, a blemish, a stain, a pollution; which indeed is a most proper description of it. The spots of leprosy, and the scurf of the foulest scurvy, are beauty spots in comparison of it; Job upon the dunghill, furnished cap-a-pee with scabs and boils, was not half so loathsome as goodly Absalom, in whose body "there was no blemish from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head;" but his soul was stained with the sanguine spots of malice and revenge, and festered with the loathsome carbuncle and tumour of ambition. Lazarus, lying at the gates full of raw and running sores, was a far more lovely object in the pure eyes of God, than dame Jezebel, looking out at the window, adorned with spots and paints. If the best of a godly man that he hath of his own, even his righteousness, be as a filthy rag, whence shall we borrow a phrase foul enough to describe the worst of a wicked man, even

his wickedness? I need say no more of it, I can say no worse of it, than to tell you it is something contrary to God, who is the eternal Father of light, who is beauty, and brightness, and glory itself; or, to give it you in the Apostle's phrase, "a falling short of the glory of God." Which hath made me many times to wonder, and almost ready to cry out with the Prophet, "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this!" when I have seen poor, ignorant, wicked, and profane wretches, passing by a person or a family visited with some loathsome disease, in a mixture of fear and disdain, stopping their breath, and hastening away; when their own souls have been more vile than the dung upon the earth, spotted with ignorance and atheism, swollen with the risings of pride and self-will, and contempt of God and his holy image. This might well be matter of wonder to any man, till he consider with himself, that one part of these men's uncleanness, is that very blindness which keeps them from discerning it: I speak principally of the defilement of the soul; though indeed the same do pollute the whole conversation: every action springing from such an unclean heart, thereby becomes filthy; even as Moses's hand, put into his bosom, became leprous; or rather as one that is unclean by a dead body, defileth all that he toucheth.

Now, religion is the cleansing of this unclean spirit and conversation; so that, though the soul were formerly as filthy and odious as Augeus's

stable, when once those living waters flow into it, and through it, from the pure fountain of grace and holiness, the Spirit of our God, one may say of it as the Apostle of his Corinthians, "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified," &c. The soul that before was white as leprosy, is now white as wool. The soul that before was like Moses' hand, leprous as snow, is now like David's heart, white as snow; yea, and whiter too. O what a beauty and glory is upon that pious soul that shines with the image and brightness of God upon it! Solomon, in all his glory, was not beautiful like such a soul; nay, I dare say, the splendor of the sun, in its greatest strength and altitude, is a miserable glimmering, if it be compared with the day-star of religion, that even in this life arises in the heart; or, if you will, in the Prophet's style, "the Sun of righteousness, which ariseth with healing in his wings," upon them that fear the name of God. To speak without a metaphor, the pious soul, having received into itself, the pure effluxes of divine light and love, breathes after nothing more than to see more familiarly, and love more ardently: its inclinations are pure and holy; its motions spiritual and powerful; its delights high and heavenly; it may be said to rest in its love; and yet it may be said, that love will not suffer it to rest, but is still carrying it out into a more intimate union with its beloved object. What is said of the ointment of Christ's name, is true of

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

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

2. By the phrase *water*, the quenching nature of religion is commended to us. God hath endued the immortal soul with a restless appetite, and raging thirst after some chief good, which the heart of every man is continually groping after, and catching at, though indeed few find it, because they seek it where it is not to be found. If we speak properly, it is not gold or silver, or popular applause, which the covetous or ambitious mind doth ultimately aim at, but some chief good, happiness, sufficiency, and satisfaction in these things; wherein they are more guilty of blasphemy than atheism: for it is clear that they do not deny a Supreme Good; for that which men do chiefly and ultimately aim at, is their god, be it what it will; but they do verily blaspheme the true God, when they place their happiness there where it is not to be found, and attribute that fulness and sufficiency to something else besides the living God. Sin hath not destroyed the nature and capacity of the rational soul, but hath diverted the mind from its adequate object, and hath sunk it into the creature, where it wanders hither and thither, like a banished man, from one den and cave to another, but is secure nowhere. A wicked man, who is loosed from his centre by sin, and departed from the fountain of his life, flies low in his affections, and flutters perpetually about the earth, and earthly objects, but can find no more rest for the foot of his soul, than Noah's dove could find for the sole of her foot.

Now, religion is the hand that pulls this wandering bird into her own ark from whence she was departed; it settles the soul upon its proper centre, and quenches its burning thirst after happiness. And hence it is called water in scripture, as appears from these expressions—"The Lord shall satisfy thy soul in drought;" and—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;" compared with—"Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Religion is a taste of infinite goodness, which quenches the soul's thirst after all other created and finite good; even as that taste which honest Nathanael had of Christ's divinity, took him off from the expectation of any Messiah to come, and made him cry out presently, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." And every religious soul hath such a taste of God, even in this life, which, though it do not perfectly fill him, yet doth perfectly assure him where all fulness dwells. But of this I shall have occasion to discourse more largely, when I come to treat of the consequences of true religion.

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

The water that Christ pours into the soul is not

like the water that he pours upon our streets, that washes them, and runs away; but it becomes a cleansing principle within the soul itself; every drop from God becomes a fountain in man; not as if man had a kind of *αυτοζωή* in himself, or were the first spring of his own motions towards God: I find not any will in the natural man so divinely free. God hath indeed given this to his own Son, his only begotten Son, to have “life in himself,” but not to any of his adopted ones. If you ask me concerning man in his natural capacity, I am so far from thinking that he hath a self-quickenings power, a principle of life in himself, that I must needs assert the contrary with the Apostle, that he is “dead in trespasses and sins;” so far from thinking that he hath in himself a well of water, that I must call him, with the Prophet, “thirsty and dry ground.” As for the regenerate man, I will not enter into that deep controversy concerning the co-operation of man’s will with the Spirit of God, and its subordination to that in all gracious acts, or what description of cause this renewed will of man may be safely called; only I will affirm, that repenting and believing are properly man’s acts, and yet they are performed by God’s power; first, Christ must give this water ere it can be a well of water in the soul; which is enough, I suppose, to clear me from siding with either of those parties, whether those that ascribe to God that which he cannot do, or those that ascribe to free will that

which God alone can do. But I fear nothing from these controversies; for that way wherein I shall discourse of this matter, will nothing at all border upon them. This, then, I affirm, that religion is a living principle in the souls of good men. I cannot better describe the nature of religion, than to say it is a nature; for so does the Apostle speak, or at least allows us to speak, when he calls it a participation of a divine nature. Nothing but a nature can partake of a nature; a man's friend may partake of his goodness and kindness, but his child only partakes of his nature; he that begets, begets a nature; and so doth he that procreates again. The sun enlightens the world outwardly, but it does not give a sun-like nature to the things so enlightened; and the rain doth moisten the earth, and refresh it inwardly, but it does not beget the nature of water in the earth: "But this water that I give," says our Saviour, "becometh a well of water in the soul." Religion is not anything without a man, hanging upon him, or annexed to him; neither is it every something that is in a man, as we shall see anon; but it is a divine principle informing and actuating the souls of good men, a living and lively principle, a free and flowing principle, a strong and lasting principle, an inward and spiritual principle. I must not speak of all these distinctly in this place, for fear of interfering in my discourse. When I say religion is a principle, a vital form acting the soul, and all the powers of it, an inward nature, &c.; saith not the

scripture the same here, a well or fountain of water? And elsewhere, a "new man, the hidden man of the heart, the inward man." As the soul is called an inward man, relative to the body, so religion is called an inward man, relative to the soul itself. It is a man within man. The man that is truly alive to God, hath in him not only inward parts, for so a dead man hath, but an inward man, an inward nature and principle. Again, it is called a root, Job xix. 28; or, if not there, yet plainly in Mark iv. 17, where temporary professors are said to have no root in themselves. And this is by the same propriety of speech whereby a wicked principle is called, "a root of bitterness." Again, it is called a seed, "the seed of God;" where this seed of God is called an abiding or remaining principle. In the first creation, God made the trees of the earth, having their seed in themselves; and in the new creation, these trees of righteousness of God's planting, are also made with seed in themselves, though not of themselves; it is said to be the seed of God indeed, but remaining in the pious soul. Again, it is called a treasure, in opposition to an alms or annuity, that lasteth but for a day or year, as a well of water, in opposition to a draught of water; and a treasure of the heart, in opposition to all outward and earthly treasures. It is a treasure affording continual expences, not exhausted, yea, increased by expences; wherein it exceeds all treasures in the world. By the same propriety of speech, sin is called a trea-

sure too, but it is an evil treasure, as our Saviour speaks in that same place. Do you not see what a stock of wickedness sinful men have within themselves, which, although they have spent upon ever since they were born, yet it is not impaired, nay, it is much augmented thereby; and shall not the second Adam bestow something as certain and permanent upon his offspring, as the first Adam conveyed to his posterity? Though men have something without them, to guide them in the way of life, yet it is some living principle within them, that denominates them living men. The scripture will abundantly inform you which is the true circumcision, the true sacrifice to God. And indeed the law itself is not so much to be considered as it was engraven in tables of stone, as “being written in the heart.” The Jews needed not have taken up their rest in the law, considered as an outward rule or precept; for they knew or might have known, that God requireth “truth in the inward parts,” as one of themselves, a prophet and king of their own, acknowledgeth. But I doubt many Christians are also sick of the same disease, whilst they view the gospel as a history, and an external dispensation; whereas the Apostle, when he opposeth it to the law, seems altogether to make it an internal thing, a vital form and principle seated in the minds and spirits of men. The law was an external rule or dispensation that could not give life, though it

showed the way to it; but the gospel, in the most proper notion of it, seems to be an internal impression from God, a living principle, whereby the soul is enabled to express a real conformity to God himself. If we consider the gospel in the history of it, and as a piece of book learning, it is as weak and impotent a thing as the law was; and men may be as remiss and formal in the profession of this as they were of that, which we see by daily sad experience. But if we consider the gospel as an efflux of life and power from God himself upon the soul, producing life wherever it comes, then we have a clear distinction between the law and the gospel; to which the Apostle seems to refer, when he calls the Corinthians “the epistle of Christ, not written with ink, nor in tables of stone, but with the Spirit of the living God, in fleshly tables of the heart.” According to which notion of the law and gospel, I think we may, with a learned man of our own, come to a good understanding of that tormented text, Jer. xxx. 31, quoted by the Apostle—“This is the covenant that I will make, I will put my law into their minds,” &c. The gospel doth not so much consist in words as in virtue; a divine principle of religion in the soul, is the best gospel: and so Abraham and Moses under the law, were truly gospellers; and, on the other hand, all carnal Christians that converse with the gospel only as a thing without them, are as truly legal, and as far short of the righteousness

of God, as ever any of the Jews were. Thus we see that religion is a principle in the souls of good men—"shall be in him a well of water."

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

1. Then we must exclude all things that are merely external; these are not it. Religion is not something annexed to the soul, *ab extra*, but a new nature put into it. And here we shall glance at two things:—

(1.) A pious soul does not find the whole of his business lying *without* him. Religion does not consist in external reformatations, though ever so many and specious. A false and slight religion may serve to tie men's hands, and reduce their outward actions to a fair seemliness in the eyes of men: but true religion's main dominion and power is over the soul, and its business lies mostly in reforming and purging the heart, with all the affections and motions thereof. It is not a battering ram coming from without, and serving to beat down the out-

works of open and visible enormities of life, but it enters with a secret and sweet power into the soul itself, and reduces it from its rebellious temper, and persuades it willingly to surrender itself, and all that is in it. Sin may be beaten out of the outward conversation, and yet retire and hide itself in the secret places of the soul, and there bear rule as perfectly by wicked loves and lusts, as ever it did by profane and notorious practices. A man's hands may be tied by some external cords cast upon them, from visible revenge, and yet murders may lodge in the temple of his heart, as murderers lodged in the temple of old: men's tongues may be tied up from the foul sin of giving fair words concerning themselves; very shame may chastise them out of proud boastings, and self-exaltings, when, in the meantime, they swell in self-conceit, and are not afraid to bear an unchaste and sinful love towards their own perfections, and adore an image of self set up in their hearts. What a fair outside the Pharisee had, himself will best describe, for indeed it is one of his properties to describe himself, "God, I thank thee that I am not," &c. But if you will have a draught of his inside, you may best take it from our Saviour, Matt. xxiii. 23. Neither doth religion consist in external performances, though ever so many, and seemingly spiritual. Many professors of Christianity, I doubt, sink all their religion into a constant course of duties, and a model of performances, being mere strangers to the life, and

strength, and sweetness of true religion. Those things are needful, and useful, and helpful, yea, and honourable, because they have a relation and some tendency to God ; but they are apt to become snares and idols to superstitious minds, who conceit that God is some way gratified by these ; and so they take up their rest in them. That religion, which only varnishes and beautifies the outside, tunes the tongue to prayer and conference, instructs and extends the hands to diligence and alms-deeds, which awes the conversation into some external righteousness or devotion, is here excluded, as also by the Apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. Much less can that pass for religion, which spends itself about forms, and opinions, and parties, and many disputable points, which we have seen so much of in our own generation. The religion that runs upon modes, and turns upon interests, as a door turns upon its hinges, is a poor narrow scant thing, and may easily view itself at once, altogether from first to last. Men may be as far from the kingdom of heaven in their more spiritual forms, and orthodox opinions, as they were in their more carnal and erroneous, if they take up their rest in them : neither is it the pursuing of any interest that will denominate them religious, but the grand interest of their souls.

(2.) A pious soul in its more inward and spiritual acts, hath not its motive *without* it : for a man may be somewhat more inward in his emotions, and yet as outward in his motives as the former. Religious

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

for us, and under those common carnal notions of delectableness and dreadfulness, they are no higher nor better motives to us, than the carnal Jews had in the wilderness, when they turned their backs upon Egypt, where they had been in bondage, and set their faces towards Canaan, where they hoped to find milk and honey, peace, plenty, and liberty. A soul is not carried to heaven, as a body is carried to the grave, upon men's shoulders; it is not borne up by props, whether human or divine; nor carried to God in a chariot, as a man is carried to see his friend; the holy fire of ardent love, wherein the soul of Elijah had been long carried up towards God, was something more excellent, and indeed more desirable, than the fiery chariot by which his body and soul were translated together. Religion is a spring of motion which God hath put into the soul itself.

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

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

(1.) It is not a fit, a start, a sudden passion of the mind, caused by the power and strength of some present conviction in the soul, which, in a hot mood, will needs set out after God in all haste. This may fitly be compared to the rash and rude motion of the host of Israel, who, being chidden for their slothfulness over night, rose up early in the

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

(2.) If religion be a principle, a new nature in

the soul, then it is not mere mechanism, a piece of art. Art imitates nature: nothing more common, I doubt, than for religion itself, that new nature, to go into an art. I need not tell you how all the external acts and shootings forth of religion, may be dissembled and imitated by art, and be acted over by a mimical apish Pharisee, who finds nothing at all of the gentle and mighty heat, nor the divine and noble life of it in his own soul, whereby he may fairly deceive the credulous world, as I have partly hinted already. But it is possible, I wish it be not common, for men that are somewhat more convinced, enlightened, and affected, to imitate the very power and spirit of religion, and to deceive themselves too, as if they possessed some true, living principle; and herein they exceed the most exquisite painters. Now, this may be done by the power of a quick and raised fancy; men hearing such glorious things spoken of heaven, the city of the great King, the new Jerusalem, may be carried out by the power of self-love to wish themselves there, being mightily taken with a conceit of the place. But how shall they come at it? Why, they have seen in books, and heard in discourses, of certain signs of grace, and evidences of salvation; and now they set their fancies to work, to find or make some such things in themselves. Fancy is well acquainted with the several affections of love, fear, joy, grief, which are in the soul, and having a great command over the animal spirits, it can send

them forth to raise up these affections, even almost when it listeth ; and when it hath raised them, it is but putting to some thoughts of God and heaven, and then these look like a handsome platform of true religion drawn in the soul, which they presently view, and fall in love with, and think they do even taste of the powers of the world to come, when indeed it is nothing but a self-fulness and sufficiency that they feed upon. Now, you may know this artificial religion by this : these men can vary it, alter it, enlarge it, straiten it, and new-mould it at pleasure, according to what they see in others, or, according to what themselves like best ; one while acting over the joy and confidence of some Christians, anon the humiliation and broken-heartedness of others. But this fanciful religion, proceeding indeed from nothing but low and carnal conceits of God and heaven, is of a flitting and vanishing nature. But true Christians are gently, yet powerfully moved by the natural force of true goodness, and the excellencies of God, and move on steadily and constantly in their way to him and pursuit of him. The spirit of regeneration in good men spreads itself upon the understanding, and sweetly diffuses itself through the will and affections, which makes true religion to be a consistent and thriving principle in the soul, as not being acted upon the stage of imagination, but upon the highest powers of the soul itself, and it may be discerned by the evenness of its movements, and the immortality of its nature ;

for a good man, though indeed he cannot go on always with like speed and cheerfulness in his way, yet is not willing at any time to be quite out of it.

By this same nature of true religion you may examine all those spurious and counterfeit religions, that spring from a natural belief of a deity, from convictions, observations, fleshly and low apprehensions of heaven, book-learning, and the precepts of men, as the Prophet calls them, and the rest, which are seated in the fancy, and swim in the brain; whose effect is but to gild the outward man, or, at best, but to move the soul by an external force, in an unnatural, inconstant and transient manner. In a word, all these pretenders to religion may seem to have water, but they have no well: as there are others, deep men, principled indeed with learning, policy, ingenuity, &c. but not with true goodness, whom the Apostle calls wells, but without water. But the truly pious, and God-like soul, hath in itself a principle of pure religion. “The water that I shall give him, shall be a well of water, springing up into eternal life.”

CHAP. III.

Containing the first property mentioned of true religion—namely, The freeness and unconstrainedness of it—this discovered in several outward acts of morality and worship—as also in the more inward acts of the soul—This freedom considered first as to its author—in which is examined how far the command of God may be said to upon act a pious soul.—Secondly, Considered as to its object—Two cautionary concessions—1. That some things without the soul may be said to be motives—how far afflictions and temporal prosperity may be said to be so—2. That there is a constraint lying upon the pious soul—which yet takes not away its freedom—An inquiry into forced devotion—first, into the causes of it, namely, Men themselves, and that upon a threefold account, other men, or the providences of God—and next, into the properties of it, proving that it is for the most part dry and spiritless, needy and penurious, uneven, and not permanent.

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

The first property of it, couched under this phrase, is, that it is free and unconstrained. Religion is a principle, and it flows and acts freely in the soul, after the manner of a fountain; and, in the day of its mighty power, makes the people a willing people, and the soul, in whom it is truly seated, to become a free will-offering unto God. Alexander the Great subdued the world with force of arms, and made men rather his tributaries and servants, than his lovers and friends; but the great God, the King of souls, obtains an amicable conquest over the hearts of his people, and overpowers them in such a manner, that they love to be his servants, and do willingly and readily obey him, without dissimulation or constraint, without mercenariness or morosity: in which they are unlike to the subjects of the kingdoms of this world, who are kept in their duties by fear and force, not from a pure kindness and benevolence of mind, to whom “the present yoke is always grievous.” Hence it is that the increase of this people is called their flowing unto the Lord, “The mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established, and all nations shall flow unto it;” and again, “They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord.” And the disposition of this people is described to be a hearty and willing frame, Eph. vi. 6, 7, and elsewhere often to the same purpose. Now this willingness or freeness of pious souls might be explained and confirmed by the consideration both of their outward and inward acts.

1. As to the outward acts of service which the true Christian doth perform, he is freely carried out towards them, without any constraint or force. If he keep himself from the evil of the place, and age, and company, wherein he lives and converses, it is not by a restraint which is upon him merely from without him, but by a principle of holy temperance planted in the soul: it is the seed of God abiding in him that preserves him from the commission of sin. He is not kept back from sin as a horse by a bridle, but by an inward and spiritual change made in his nature. On the other hand, if he employ himself in any external acts of moral or instituted duty, he does it freely, not as of necessity or by constraint. If you speak of acts of charity, the pious man gives from a principle of love to God, and kindness to his brother, and so cheerfully, not grudgingly, or of necessity. An alms may be wrung out of a miser; but it proceeds from the liberal soul as a stream from its fountain: therefore he is called a deviser of liberal things, and one that standeth upon liberalities, as those last words of Isa. xxxii. 8, are rendered by the Dutch translators. If you speak of righteousness or temperance, he is not overruled by power, or compelled by laws, but indeed actuated by the power of that law which is written and engraven upon his mind. If you speak of acts of worship, whether moral or instituted, in all these he is also free, as to any constraint. Prayer is not his task, or a piece of

penance, but it is the natural cry of the new-born soul ; neither does he take it up as a piece of policy, to bribe God's justice, or engage men's charity, to purchase favour with God or man, or his own clamorous conscience : but he prays, because he wants, and loves, and believes ; he wants the fuller presence of that God whom he loves ; he loves the presence which he wants ; he believes that he that loves him will not suffer him to want any good thing that he prays for. And therefore he does not bind up himself severely, and limit himself penuriously to a morning and evening sacrifice and solemnity, as unto certain rent-seasons, wherein to pay a homage of dry devotion ; but his loving and longing soul, disdaining to be confined within canonical hours, is frequently soaring in some heavenly raptures or other, and sallying forth in holy ejaculations : he is not content with some weak essays towards heaven, in set and formal prayer, once or twice a-day, but labours also to be all the day long drawing in those divine influences, and streams of grace, by the mouth of faith, which he begged in the morning by the tongue of prayer ; which has made me sometimes to think it a proper speech to say, the faith of prayer, as well as the prayer of faith ; for believing, and hanging upon divine grace, doth really drink in what prayer opens its mouth for, and is, in effect, a powerful kind of praying in silence : by believing we pray, as well as in praying we believe. A truly religious

man hath not his hands tied up merely by the force of a national law, no, nor yet by the authority of the fourth commandment, to keep one in seven, a day of rest ; as he is not content with mere resting upon the Sabbath, knowing that neither working, nor ceasing from work, doth of itself commend a soul to God, but doth press after intimacy with God in the duties of his worship ; so neither can he be content with one Sabbath in a week, nor think himself absolved from holy and heavenly meditations any day in the week ; but labours to make every day a Sabbath, as to the keeping of his heart up unto God in a holy frame, and to find every day to be a Sabbath, as to the communications of God unto his soul : though the necessities of his body will not allow him, it may be, (though indeed God hath granted this to some men) to keep every day as a Sabbath of rest ; yet the necessities of his soul do call upon him to make every day, as far as may be, a Sabbath of communion with the blessed God. If you speak of fasting, he keeps not fasts merely by virtue of civil, no, nor a divine institution ; but, from a principle of godly sorrow afflicts his soul for sin, and daily endeavours more and more to be emptied of himself, which is the most excellent fasting in the world. If you speak of thanksgiving, he does not give thanks by laws and ordinances, but having in himself a law of thankfulness, and an ordinance of love engraven upon, and deeply radicated in his soul, delights to live unto God, and

to make his heart and life a living descant upon the goodness and love of God ; which is the most divine way of thank-offering in the world ; it is the hallelujah which the angels sing continually. In a word, wherever God hath a tongue to command, true godliness will find a hand to perform ; whatever yoke Christ Jesus shall put upon the soul, religion will enable to bear it, yea, and to count it easy too ; the mouth of Christ hath pronounced it easy, and the Spirit of Christ makes it easy. Let the commandment be what it will, it will not be grievous. The same spirit doth, in some measure, dwell in every Christian, which without measure dwelt in Christ, who counted it his meat and drink to do the will of his Father.

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

itself raise and lay this spirit at pleasure ; which made the poet complain of himself, as if he were not sole emperor at home.

Though the outward bodily acts of religion are ordinarily compelled, yet this pure, chaste, virgin affection cannot be forced ; it seems to be kind a of a peculiarity in the soul, though under the jurisdiction of the understanding. By this property of it, it is elegantly described by the Spirit of God, “ If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.” It cannot be bought with money, or money-worth, cannot be purchased with gifts or arts ; and if any should offer to bribe it, it would give him a sharp and scornful check, in the language of Peter to Simon, “ Thy money perish with thee ;” love is no hireling, no base-born mercenary affection, but noble, free, and generous. Neither is it low-spirited and slavish, as fear is : therefore, when it comes to full age, it will not suffer the son of the bond-woman to divide the inheritance, the dominions of the soul with it ; when it comes to be “ perfect, it casteth out fear,” says the Apostle. Neither indeed is it directly under the authority of any law, whether human or divine : it is not begotten by the influence of a divine law, as a law, but as holy, just, and good, as we shall see more anon : the law of love ; or, if you will, in the Apostle’s phrase, “ the spirit of love, and of power,” in opposition to the spirit of fear, doth more influence the believer in his pur-

suit of God than any law without him : this is as a wing to the soul ; whereas outward commandments are but as guides in his way, or, at most, but as spurs in his sides.

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

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

The author of this noble and free principle is God himself, who hath made it a partaker of his own nature, the agency of which is free ; himself is the fountain of his own acts. The uncreated life and liberty hath given this privilege to the religious soul, in some sense, to have life and liberty in itself, and a dominion over its own acts. I do not know that any created being in the world hath more of

divinity in it than the soul of man, as Cicero expresses himself; nor that anything in the soul doth more resemble the divine essence, than the noble freedom which the soul hath in itself; which freedom is never so divine and generous, as when it has God himself for its object. This excellent freedom is something of God in the soul of man, and therefore may justly claim the free spirit for its author; or the Son of God for its origin, according to that expression in John viii. 36, “If the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed.”

But here it may be demanded, whether the command of God doth not actuate the pious soul, and set it upon its holy emotions? I confess indeed that the command of God is much eyed by a godly man, and is of great weight with him, and does in some sense lay a constraint upon him; but yet I think not so much the authority of the law, as the reasonableness and goodness of it, prevail principally with him. The religious soul does not so much eye the law under the notion of a command, as under the notion of holy, just, and good, as the Apostle speaks, and so embraces it, chooses it, and longs to be perfectly conformable to it. I do not think it so proper to say that a good man loves God, and all righteousness and holiness, and religious duties, by virtue of a command to do so, as by virtue of a new nature that God hath put into him, which doth instruct and prompt him so to do. A religious soul being reconciled to the nature of

God, does embrace all his laws by virtue of the equitableness and perfection that he sees in them; not because they are commanded, but because they are in themselves to be desired, as David speaks, Psal. xix. 10. In which Psalm the holy man gives us a full account why he did so love and esteem the laws and commandments of God, namely, because they are perfect, right, pure, clean, true, sweet, and lovely, as you will find, ver. 7—10. To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and strength, and mind, is not only a duty, by virtue of that first and great commandment that doth require it; but indeed the highest privilege, honour, and happiness of the soul. To this purpose may that profession of the Psalmist's be applied—"I have chosen thy precepts;" and, "I have chosen the way of truth." Choosing is an act of judgment and understanding, and respects the quality of the thing, more than the authority of the command. David did not stumble into the way of truth accidentally, by virtue of his education, or acquaintance, or the like circumstance; nor was he lashed or driven into it by the mere severity of a law without him; but he *chose* the way of truth, as that which was indeed most eligible, pleasant, and desirable. What our blessed Saviour says concerning himself, is also true of every true Christian in his measure; he makes it his meat and drink to do the will of God. Now, we know that men do not eat and drink because physicians prescribe it as a means to preserve life; but the sensual

appetite is carried out towards food, because it is good, sweet, and suitable: and so the spiritual appetite is carried out towards spiritual food, not so much by the force of an external precept, as by the attractive power of that higher good which it finds suitable and sufficient for it. As for the object of this free and generous spirit of religion, it is no other than God himself principally and ultimately, and other things only as they are subservient to the enjoyment of him. God, as the Supreme Good, able to fill, and perfectly satisfy all the wants and indigencies of the soul, and so to make it wholly and eternally happy, is the proper object of the soul's most free and cheerful movements. The soul eyes God as the perfect and absolute Good, and God in Christ as an attainable good, and so finds every way enough in this object, to encourage it to pursue after him, and throw himself upon him. Religion fixes upon God, as upon its own centre, as upon its proper and adequate object; it views God as the infinite and absolute Good, and so is drawn to him without any external force. The pious soul is overpowered indeed, but it is only with the infinite goodness of God, which exercises its sovereignty over all the faculties of the soul: which overpowering is so far from straitening or pinching it, that it makes it truly free and generous in its motions. Religion wings the soul, and makes it take a flight freely and swiftly towards God and eternal life: it is of God, and by a sympathy that it hath with

him, it carries the soul out after him, and into conjunction with him. In a word, the pious soul being loosed from self-love, emptied of self-fulness, beaten out of all self-satisfaction, and delivered from all self-confining lusts, wills, interests, and ends, and being mightily overcome with a sense of a higher and more excellent good, goes after that freely, centres upon it firmly, grasps after it continually, and had rather be that than what itself is, as seeing that the nature of that Supreme Good is infinitely more excellent and desirable than its own.

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

1. It must be granted, that some things without the soul may be motives, in our common sense, and encouragements to the soul to quicken, and hasten, and strengthen it in its religious acts. Though grace be an internal principle, and most free from any constraint, yet it may be excited, or stirred up, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Tim. i. 6, by such means as God hath appointed hereunto, as prayer, meditation, reading, as the Apostle intimates in the body of that fore-quoted Epistle. But perhaps there will a question arise concerning some other things, which may seem to lay a constraint upon the spirits of men. I deny not but that the seemingly religious emotions of many men are merely violent, and their

devotion is purely forced, as we shall see by and by ; but I affirm, and I think have confirmed it, that true and sincere religion is perfectly free and unconstrained. This being premised ; now, if you ask me, what I think of afflictions ; I confess God doth ordinarily use them as means to make good men better, and it may be sometimes to make bad men good : these may be as weights to hasten and speed the soul's motion towards God, but they do not principally originate such motions. If you ask me of temporal prosperity, commonly called mercies and blessings, of promises and rewards propounded ; I confess they may be as oil to the wheels, and ought to quicken and encourage to the study of true and powerful godliness ; but they are not the spring of the soul's emotions ; they ought to be unto us, as dew upon the grass to refresh and fructify the soul ; but it is the root which properly gives life and growth.

2. It may be granted, that there is a kind of constraint and necessity lying upon the pious soul in its holy and most excellent motions : according to that of the Apostle—"The love of Christ constraineth us ;" and again—"Necessity is laid upon me" to preach the gospel. But yet it holds good, that grace is a most free principle in the soul, and that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. For the constraint that the Apostle speaks of is not opposed to freedom of soul, but to not acting ; now although the soul, so principled and spirited,

cannot but act, yet it acts freely. Those things that are according to nature, though they be done necessarily, yet are they done with the greatest freedom imaginable. The water flows, and the fire burns necessarily yet freely. Religion is a new nature in the soul; and the religious soul being touched effectually with the sense, and impressed with the influences of divine goodness, fulness, and perfection, is carried indeed necessarily towards God, as its proper centre, and yet its motions are pure, free, generous, and with the greatest delight and pleasure conceivable. The necessity that lay upon Paul to preach the gospel is not to be understood of any external violence that was done to him, much less of bodily necessity, by reason of which many men serve their own bellies in that great function, more than the Lord Jesus; for though he preached the gospel necessarily, yet did he preach freely and willingly, as he often professeth. The pious man cannot but love God as his chief good, yet he delights in this necessity under which he lieth, and is exceeding glad that he finds his heart framed and enlarged to love him. I say enlarged, because God is such an object, as does not contract and pinch and straiten the soul, as all created objects do, but ennoble, amplate, and enlarge it. The sinful soul, the more it lets out, and lays out, and spends itself upon the creature, the more it is straitened and contracted, and the native freedom of it is enslaved, debased, and destroyed; but grace does establish

and ennoble the freedom of the soul, and restore it to its primitive perfection : so that a pious soul is never more at large, more at rest, more at liberty, than when it finds itself delivered from all self-confining creature-loves and passions and under the most powerful influences and constraint of infinite love and goodness.

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

(1.) Men force themselves, many times, to some things in religion that are besides, yea, and against their nature and genius. I need not instance in a slight conformity to the letter of the law, and some external duties which they force themselves to perform, as to hear, pray, give alms, or the like : in all which the violent and unnatural obedience of a Pharisee may be more popular and specious, than the true and genuine obedience of a free-born disciple of Jesus Christ. If going on hunting, and catching of venison might denominate a good and dutiful son, Esau may indeed be as acceptable to

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

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

Now there seem to be three things in a formal hypocrite that do especially force a kind of devotion, and show of religion from him, namely, consciousness of guilt, self-love, and false apprehensions of God. 1st. There is in all men a natural consciousness of guilt, arising from that imperfect and glimmering light they have of God, and of their duty towards him; which, though it be in some men more quick and stinging, in others more remiss and languid, yet, I think, is not utterly extinguished and choked, no, not in the worst and most dissolute men, but that it doth sometimes beget a bitter sadness in the midst of their sweetest merriments, and doth disturb their most supine and secure rest, by fastening its stings in their very souls at some time or other, and filling them with agonies and anguish, and haunting them with dreadful apparitions, which they cannot be perfectly rid of, any more than they can run away from themselves. This foundation of hell is laid in the

bowels of sin itself, as a preface to eternal horror. Now, although some more profligate and desperate wretches do furiously bluster through these briars, yet others are so caught in them, that they cannot escape these pangs and throes, except they make a composition, and enter into terms to live more honestly, or at least, less scandalously. In which undertaking they are carried on in the second place, by the power of self-love, or a natural desire of self-preservation : for the worst of men hath so much reason left him, that he could wish that himself were happy, though he hath not so much light as to discover, nor so much true freedom of will as to choose, the right way to happiness. Conscience having discovered the certain reward and wages of sin, self-love will easily prompt men to do something or other to escape it. But now, what shall they do? why, religion is the only expedient that can be found out ; and therefore they begin to think how they may become friends with God ; they will up and be doing. But how come they to run into so great a mistake about religion? why, their false and gross apprehensions of God, in the third place, do drive them from him, in the way of superstition and hypocrisy, instead of leading them in the way of sincere love, and self-resignation to him. Self being the great Diana of every natural man, and the only standard by which he measures all things, he knows not how to judge of God himself, but by this ; and so he comes to fancy God in a dreadful

manner, as an austere, passionate, surly, revengeful majesty, and so something must be done to appease him: but yet he fancies this angry Deity to be of an impotent, mercenary temper like himself, and not hard to be appeased either; and so imagines that some cheap services, specious oblations, external courtesies, will engage him, and make him a friend; a sheep, or a goat, or a bullock, under the Old Testament; a prayer, or a sacrament, or an alms, under the New: for it is reconciliation to an angry God that he aims at, not union with a good God; he seeks to be reconciled to God, not united to him, though indeed these two can never be divided. Thus we see how a man void of the life and spirit of religion, yet forces himself to do God a kind of worship, and pay him a kind of homage.

(2.) Sometimes men may be said, in a sense, to be forced by other men, to put on a mask of holiness, a dress of religion. And this constraint men may lay upon men by their tongues, hands, and eyes. By their tongues, in the business of education, often and ardent exhortation and inculcation of things divine and heavenly; and thus an unjust man, like the unjust judge in the gospel, though he fear not God sincerely, yet may be overcome by the importunity of his father, friend, minister, tutor, to do some righteous acts. This seems to have been the case of Joash king of Judah, the spring-head of whose religion was no higher than the instructions of his tutor and guardian Jehoiada the high-priest.

By their hands ; that is, either by the enacting and executing of penal laws upon them, or by the holy example which they continually set before them. By their eyes ; that is, by continually observing and watching their behaviour ; when many eyes are upon men, they must do something to satisfy the expectations of others, and purchase a reputation to themselves. It may be said, that sometimes God doth lay an external force upon men ; as particularly by his severe judgments, or threatenings of judgments, awakening them, humbling them, and constraining them to some kind of worship and religion. Such a forced devotion as this was the humiliation of Ahab, and the supplication of Saul. For God himself acting upon men, only from without them, is far from producing a living principle of free and noble religion in the soul.

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

1. This forced religion is, for the most part, dry and spiritless. I know, indeed, that fancy may be screwed up to a high pitch of joy and transport, so as to raise the mind into a kind of rapture, as I have formerly hinted in my discourse upon these words. A mere artificial and counterfeit Christian may be so strongly acted on by imagination, and the power of self-love, that he may seem to himself to be fuller of God than the sober and constant soul. You may see how the hypocritical Pharisees, swol-

len with self-conceit, gloried over the poor man that had been blind, but now saw more than all they : “Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?”—and indeed over the whole people, “This people that knoweth not the law is cursed.” A counterfeit Christian may rise high as a meteor, and blaze much as a comet, which is yet drawn up by mere force from the surface of the earth or water. And as to the external and visible acts and duties of religion, which depend much upon the temper and constitution of the body, it may easily be conceived and accounted for, how the mimical and mechanical Christian may rise higher in these, and be more zealous, watchful, and cheerful, than many truly religious and sincere men, as having greater power of quickness and fancy, and a greater portion of animal spirits ; upon which the motions and actions of the body do mainly depend. The animal spirits may so nimbly serve the soul in these corporal acts, that the whole transaction may be a fair imitation of the motions of the divine Spirit, and one would verily think there were a gracious principle in the soul itself. This seems to be notably exemplified in Captain Jehu, whose religious actions, as he would fain have them be esteemed, were indeed rather fury than zeal, and proceeded more from his own fiery spirits, than from that spirit of fire, or spirit of burning, which is of God. But commonly this forced devotion is jejune and dry, void of zeal and warmth, and drives on heavily in pursuit of the God

of Israel, as Pharaoh did in pursuit of the Israel of God, when his chariot-wheels were taken off. God's drawing the soul from within, as a principle, doth indeed cause that soul to run after him, but you know the motion of those things that are drawn by external force is commonly heavy, slow, and languid.

2. This forced religion is penurious and needy. Something the slavish-spirited Christian must do to appease an angry God, or to allay a storming conscience, as I hinted before; but it shall be as little as may be. He is ready to grudge God so much of his time and strength, and to find fault that Sabbaths come so thick, and last so long, and that duties are to be performed so often: so he is described by the Prophet, "When will the Sabbath be past, and the new moon gone?" But yet I will not deny, but that this kind of religion may be very liberal and expensive too, and run out much into the branches of external duties, as is the manner of many trees that bear no fruit; for so did the base spirit of the Pharisees, whose often fasting, and long praying, is recorded by our Saviour in the gospel, but not with approbation. Therefore these are not the things by which you must take measure, and make estimate of your religion. But in the great things of the law, in the grand duties of mortification, self-denial, and resignation; here this forced religion is always very stingy and penurious. In the duties that do nearly touch upon their beloved lusts, they will be as strict with God as may

be, they will break with him for a small matter : God must have no more than his due, as they blasphemously phrase it in their hearts ; with the slothful servant in the gospel, “Lo, there thou hast that is thine ;” self and the world sure may be allowed the rest. They will not part with all for Christ. Is it not a little one ? let me escape thither, and take up my abode there, said Lot. They will not give up themselves entirely unto God ; “the Lord pardon me in this one thing,” cries Naaman ; so they, in this or that, let God hold me excused. The slavish-spirited Christian is never more shrunk up within himself, than when he is to converse with God indeed : but the pious soul is never freer, larger, gladder, than when he doth most intimately and familiarly converse with God. The soul that is free as to liberty, is free also as to liberality and expenses ; and that not only in external, but internal and spiritual obedience, and compliance with the will of God ; he gives himself wholly up to God, knows no interest of his own, keeps no reserve for himself, or for the creature.

3. This forced religion is uneven, as depending upon inconstant causes. As land-floods, that have no spring within themselves, vary their motions, are swift and slow, high and low, according as they are supplied with rain ; even so these men’s motions in religion, depending upon fancy for the most part, than which nothing is more fickle and flitting, have no constancy nor consistency in them.

I know indeed, that the spirits of the best men cannot always keep one pace, nor their lives be always of one piece ; but yet they are never willingly quite out of the call or compass of religion. But this I also touched upon formerly. Therefore,

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

CHAP. IV.

The active and vigorous nature of true religion proved by many scriptural phrases of the most powerful importance—more particularly explained in three things—1. In the soul's continual care and study to be good—2. In its care to do good—3. In its powerful and incessant longings after the most full enjoyment of God.

I COME now to the second property of true religion, which is to be found in this phrase, “springing up,” or leaping up; wherein the activity and vigorousness of it is described. Religion, though it be compared to water, yet is no standing pool of water, but “a well of water springing up.” And here the proposition that I shall establish, is, “That true religion is active and vigorous.” It is no lazy and languid thing, but full of life and power: so I find it every where described in scripture, by things that are most active, lively, vigorous, operative, spreading, powerful, and sometimes even by motion itself. As sin is, in scripture, described by death and darkness, which are a cessation and privation of life, and light, and motion: so religion is described by life, which is active and vigorous; by an angelical life, which is spiritual and powerful; yea, a divine life, which is, as I may say, most lively and vivacious. “Christ liveth in me,” and the production of

this new nature in the soul is called a quickening, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" and the reception of it, a "passing from death unto life." Again, as sin and wickedness are described by flesh, which is sluggish and inactive, so this holy principle in the soul is called spirit, "The spirit lusteth against the flesh;" yea, the "spirit of power," and the "spirit of life,"—"The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." How can the power and activity of any principle be more commended, than by saying it is life, and the "spirit of life," and "the law of the spirit of life" in the soul? which hath made me sometimes to apply those words of the Prophet, as a description of every pious soul, "I am full of power and might by the Spirit of the Lord."

Yea, further, the holy Apostle seems to describe a godly principle in the soul by activity and motion itself, Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14; where he gives this excellent character of himself, and this lively description of his religious disposition, as if it were nothing else but activity and fervour; I follow after, that I may apprehend; I forget those things that are behind, and reach forth unto those things that are before; I press towards the mark, &c. It were too much to comment upon those phrases of like importance, "labouring, seeking, striving, fighting, running, wrestling, panting, longing, hungering, thirsting, watching," and many others, which the

Holy Ghost makes use of in the scriptures, to express the active, industrious, vigorous, diligent, and powerful nature of this divine principle, which God hath put into the souls of his people. The streams of divine grace, which flow forth from the throne of God, and of the Lamb, into the souls of men, do not cleanse them, and so pass away, like some violent land-flood, that washes the fields and meadows, and so leaves them to contract as much filth as ever; but the same becomes a “well of water,” continually springing up, boiling, and bubbling, and working in the soul, and sending out fresh rivers, as our Saviour calls them—“Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

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

1. The active and sprightly nature of true godliness, or religion planted by God in the soul, shows itself in a continued care and study to be good, to conform more and more to the nature of the blessed God, the glorious pattern of all perfection. The nature of God being infinitely and absolutely perfect, is the only rule of perfection to the creature. If we speak of goodness, our Saviour tells us, that God alone is good; of wisdom, the Apostle tells us, that God is only wise; of power, he is omnipotent; of mercy and kindness, he is

love itself. Men are only good by way of participation from God, and in a way of assimilation to him: so that, though good men may be imitated, and followed, yet it must be with this limitation, as far as they are followers of God: the great Apostle durst not press his example any further—"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." But the nature of God being infinitely and absolutely perfect, is to be eyed and imitated singly, entirely, universally, in all things wherein the creature is capable of following him, and becoming like unto him. So Christians are required to look up unto the Father of lights, the fountain of all perfections, and to take from him the pattern of their dispositions, and conversation, and to eye him, continually, and eyeing him, to derive an image of him, not into their eye, as we do by sensible objects, but into their souls, to polish and frame them into the most clear and lively resemblances of him; that is, in the language of scripture, to be "perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect," to be "holy as God is holy." And thus the genuine children of God are described by the Holy Ghost, they are "followers of God." This is the shortest, but the surest and clearest mark that can be given of a good man, "a follower of God." They are not owned for the children of God, who are created by him, nor they who have a notional knowledge of him, who profess him, or exhibit some external worship and service to him in the world, but

they that imitate him: the true children of Abraham were not those that were descended from him, or boasted of him, but they that did the works of Abraham, John viii. 39; even so are they only the offspring of heaven, the true and dear children of the living God, who are followers of him; “be ye followers of God as dear children.” A pious soul having its eyes opened, to behold the infinite beauty, purity, and perfection, of that good God, whose nature is the very fountain, and must, therefore, be the rule of all goodness, presently comes to undervalue all created excellencies, both in itself, and all the world besides, as to any satisfaction that is to be had in them, or any perfection that can be acquired by them, and cannot endure to take up with any lower good, or live by any lower rule than God himself. A pious man, having the unclean and rebellious spirit cast out, and being once reconciled to the nature of God, is daily labouring to be more intimately united thereunto, and to be all that God is, as far as he is capable,—the nature of God being infinitely more pure and perfect, and more desirable than his own. Religion is a participation of life from him, who is life itself, and so must needs be an active principle, spreading itself in the soul, and causing the soul to spread itself in God: and, therefore, the kingdom of heaven, which, in many places of the gospel, I take to be nothing else but this divine principle in the soul, which is both the truest heaven, and most properly a kingdom (for thereby

God doth most powerfully reign and exercise his sovereignty, and most excellently display and manifest his glory in the world) is compared to “seed sown in good ground,” which both springeth up into a blade, and bringeth forth fruit; to mustard-seed, which spreadeth itself, and groweth great, so that the birds of the air may lodge in the branches thereof; to leaven, spreading itself through the whole quantity of meal, and leavening the whole, and all the parts of it. By a like similitude, the path of the just is compared to a shining light, whose glory and lustre increaseth continually, “shining more and more unto the perfect day;” which continual growing up of the holy soul into God, is excellently described by the Apostle, in an elegant metaphor, “We all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory;” that is, from one resemblance of divine glory to another. The gracious soul not being contented with its present attainments, and having in its eye a perfect and absolute good, forgets that which is behind, and labours, prays, strives, and studies, to get the perfections of God more clearly copied out upon itself, and itself, as much as may be, swallowed up in the divinity. It covets earnestly these best things, to be perfected in grace and holiness, to have divine characters more fair and legible, divine impressions more deep and lively, divine life more strong and powerful, and the communicable image of the blessed

God spread quite over it, and through it. A pious soul is not content to receive of Christ's fulness, but labours to be filled with the fulness, with all the fulness of God; he rejoices indeed that he hath received of Christ grace for grace, as a child hath limb for limb with his father; but this his joy is not fulfilled, except he find himself adding daily some cubits to his infant-stature; nor indeed then either, nor can it be, until he come to the measure of the stature of his Lord, and be grown up unto him in all things who is the head, even Christ. He delights and glories in God, beholding his spices growing in his soul; but that does not satisfy him, except he may see them flowing out also. He is neither barren nor unfruitful, as the Apostle Peter speaks; but that is not enough, he desires to be fat and fruitful also, as a watered garden, as the Prophet expresseth it, even as the garden of God. The spirit lusteth against the flesh, and struggles with it in the same womb of the soul, as Jacob with Esau, until he had cast him out. The seed of God warreth continually against the seed of the serpent, raging and restless, like Jehu, shooting, and stabbing, and strangling all he meets with, till none at all remain of the family of that Ahab who had formerly been his master. O how does the pious and devout soul long to have Christ's victory carried on in itself, to have Christ going on in him conquering and to conquer, till at length the very last enemy be subdued, that the Prince of Peace

may ride triumphantly through all the coasts and regions of his heart and life, and not so much as a dog move his tongue against him ! This holy principle which is of God in the soul, is actually industrious too ; it doth not fold the arms together, hide its hand in its bosom, faintly wishing to obtain a final conquest over its enemies, but advances itself with a noble stoutness against lusts and passions, even as the sun glorieth against the darkness of the night, until it have chased it all away. The pious soul puts itself under the banner of Christ, fights under the conduct of the angel of God's presence, and so marches up undauntedly against the children of Anak, those earthly loves, lusts, sensual affections, which are indeed taller and stronger than all other enemies that encounter it in this wilderness state : and the gracious God is not wanting to such endeavours, he "remembering his promise, helpeth his servant," even that promise, that "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." A true Israelitish soul, impregnated with this noble and heroic principle, is not like those slothful Israelites, that were content with what they had got of the holy land, and either could not, or cared not to enlarge their border. But he makes war upon the remainder of the Canaanites, and is never at rest until he have, with Sarah, cast out the bond-woman and her son too. You may see an emblem of such a soul in Moses holding up his hands all the day long, till Amalek was quite discomfited ;

Exod. xvii. 12. As often as the floods of temptation, springing from the devil, the world, or the flesh, do offer to come in upon him, he opposeth them in the strength of Christ; or, if you will, in the Prophet's phrase, "The Spirit of the Lord lifteth up a standard against them;" so that he is not carried down by them, or, at least, not overwhelmed with them. In the beginning of my discourse upon this head, I hinted to you the reason why the pious soul continually studies conformity to God, even because he is the perfect and absolute Good, and the soul reckons that its happiness consists only in being like unto him, in partaking of a divine nature. But I might also here take occasion to speak of three things, which I will but briefly name, and so pass on.

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

(2.) A godly man reckons that the image of God is the glory and ornament of the soul; it is the

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

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

2. The active and industrious nature of true godliness, or religion, manifests itself in a good man's continual care, and study to do good, to serve the interest of the holy and blessed God in the world. A good man being mastered with the sense of the

infinite goodness of God, and the great end of his life, cannot think it worth while to spend himself for any inferior good, or bestow his time and strength for any lower end than that is; and therefore, as it is the main happiness of his life to enjoy God, so he makes it the main business of his life to serve him, to be doing for him, to lay out himself for him, and to display, and propagate his glory in the world. And, as he is filled with apprehensions of the Supreme Goodness, which doth infinitely deserve, and may justly challenge, all that he can do or expend for him, so he doth indeed really partake of the active and communicative nature of that blessed Being, and himself becomes active and communicative too: a pious soul, sluggish and inactive, is as if one should say, a pious soul altogether unlike to God; a pure contradiction. I cannot dwell upon any of those particular designs of serving the interest of God's glory, which a good man is still driving on in the world: only this, in general, whether he pray, or preach, or read, or celebrate Sabbaths, or administer private reproof or instruction, or indeed plough or sow, eat or drink, all this while he lives not to himself, but serves a higher interest than that of the flesh, and a higher good than himself, or any created being. A true christian activity doth not only appear in those things which we call duties of worship, or religious performances; but in the whole frame of the heart contriving, and the conversation expressing and unfolding the glory

of God. A holy, serious, heavenly, humble, sober, righteous, and self-denying course of life, does most excellently express the divine glory, by imitating the nature of God, and most effectually calls all men to the imitation of it; according as our Saviour hath nakedly stated the case, “Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit:” by which fruits are not to be understood only preaching, praying, conference, which are indeed high and excellent duties; but also righteousness, temperance, self-denial, which things are pure reflections of the divine image, and a real glorifying of God’s name and perfections. A good Christian cannot be content to be happy alone, to be still drawing down heaven into his own soul; but he endeavours also by prayer, counsel, and holy example, to draw up the souls of other men heaven-ward. This God witnesseth of Abraham, “I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord. And this Moses doth excellently witness of himself in that holy rapture of his, “Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them;” By such examples as these a good man desires to live, yea, by higher precedents than either Abraham or Moses, even by the example of the Father and of the Son: he admires and strives to imitate that character which is given of God himself, “Thou art good, and dost good:” and that which is given of Christ

Jesus, the Lord of life, who “went about doing good :” who also witnessed elsewhere concerning himself, that he came not into the world to do his own will, nor seek his own glory, but the will and glory of him that sent him : and again, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business ?” O how happy would the pious soul count itself, if it could but live and converse in the world, in the same manner, and with the same devout, fervent, exalted spirit, as Christ Jesus did, whose meat and drink it was still to be doing the will, and advancing the glory of his Father ! But, alas ! the poor soul finds itself ensnared by passions, and selfish affections from within, clogged with an unwieldy body, and distracted with secular affairs from without, that it cannot rise so nimbly, run so swiftly, nor serve the infinite and glorious God so cheerfully, nor liberally, as it would ; and therefore the poor prisoner sighs within itself, and wishes that it might escape : but finding a certain time determined upon it in the body, which it must be content to live out, it looks up, and is ready to envy the angels of God, because it cannot live as they do, who are always upon God’s errand, and almost thinks much that itself is not a ministering spirit, serving the pure and perfect will of the Supreme Good, without grudging or ceasing. The pious soul, under these powerful apprehensions of the nature of God, the example of Christ, and the honourable office of the holy angels, is ready to grudge

the body that attendance that it calls for, and those offices which it is forced to perform to it; as judging them impertinent to its main happiness, and most excellent employment; it is ready to envy that more cheerful and willing service, which it finds from the heavy and drossy body with which it is united; and to cry out, O that I were that to my God, which my body, my eyes, hands, and feet, are to me! for I say to one of these, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Do this, and he doth it. In a word, a good man being acquainted feelingly with the highest Good, eyeing diligently the great end of his coming into the world, and his short time of being in it, serves the eternal and blessed God, lives upon eternal designs, and by consecrating all his actions unto God, gives a kind of immortality to them, which are in themselves flitting and transient: he counts it a reproach to any man, much more to a good man, to do anything insignificantly, much more to live impertinently; and he reckons all things that have not a tendency to the highest Good, and a subserviency to the great and last end, to be impertinencies, yea, and absurdities in an immortal soul, which should continually be “springing up into everlasting life.”

3. The active and vigorous nature of true religion manifests itself in those powerful and incessant longings after God, with which it fills that soul in which it is planted. This I superadd to the two former, because the religious man, though he be

formed into some likeness to God, yet desires to be more like him; and though he be somewhat serviceable to him, yet desires to be more instrumental in doing his will: though he be good, yet he desires to be better; and though he do good, yet he desires to do better, or at least more. And, indeed, I reckon that these sincere and holy hungerings after God, which I am going to speak of, are one of the best signs that I know in the world of spiritual health, and the best criterion of a true Christian: for, in this low and animal state, we are better acquainted with lovings and languishings, than with fruition or satisfaction; and the best enjoyment that we have of God in this world is but scant and short, indeed but a kind of longing to enjoy him. Love is certainly a high and noble affection; but, alas! our love, whilst we are here in the body, is in its non-age, in its weak and sickly state, rather a longing than a loving, much unlike to what it will be when it shall be grown up unto its perfect stature in glory. But this sickly kind of languishing affection is a certain symptom of a healthful constitution; or as the Apostle calls it, of “the spirit of a sound mind.” Pious souls are thirsty souls, always gasping after the living springs of divine grace, even as the parched desert gapeth for the dew of heaven, the early and the latter rain. One would wonder what kind of magic there was in Elijah’s mantle, that the very casting of it upon Elisha should make him leave oxen and plough,

yea, father and mother, and all, to run after a stranger: Elijah himself seems to wonder at it, "What have I done to thee?" O but what a mighty charm is there in divine love! which when it is once shed abroad in the soul, makes the soul to spread itself in it and to it, as the sun-flower attending the motions of the sun, and turning itself every way towards it, welcoming its warm and refreshing beams. Elijah passing by Elisha as he was at plough, and catching him with his mantle, is but a scant resemblance of the blessed God passing by a carnal mind, and wrapping it in the mantle of his love, and thereby causing it to run, yea, to fly swiftly after him. If divine grace do but once touch the soul, the soul presently adheres to it, as the needle to the loadstone. They that heard Christ Jesus chiding the winds and the waves, cried out, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" but if one had been present when he called James and John from their nets, Matthew from the custom-house, and Zaccheus from the tree, and by calling made them willing to come, he surely would have cried out, What manner of God is this! that, by his bare word makes poor men leave their trades and livelihood, and rich men their gainful exactions, usuries, oppressions, to follow him, and shows them no reasons why. What a mighty virtue is there in the ointment of Christ's name, that as soon as it is poured out, the virgins fall in love with him? Micah cried out when he was in pur-

suit of his gods, and should they ask him what ailed him? And will ye wonder that a holy soul, in pursuit of the holy God, should be in earnest; that he should run, and cry as he runs? as I have seen a fond child whom the father or mother have endeavoured to leave behind them. God breathing into the soul, makes the soul breathe after him, and in a mixture of holy disdain and anger, to thrust away from itself all distracting companions, occasions, and concerns, saying with Ephraim to her idols, "Get ye hence." The soul thus inspired is so far from prostituting itself to any earthly, sensual, selfish lusts, and loves, that it cannot brook anything that would weaken it in the prosecution of the highest good; it is impatient of every thing that would either stop or slacken its motions after God. The pious man desires still to be doing something for God indeed; but if the case so fall out, that he cannot spend his life for God as he desires, yet he will be spending his soul upon him: though he cannot perpetually abide upon the knee of prayer, yet he would be continually upon the wing of faith and love: when his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth, that he cannot speak for God, yet his soul will cleave unto him, and complain because it can speak no longer; for faith and love are knitting graces, and do long to make the soul as much one with their object, as is possible for the creature to be with its Creator. Religion puts a restless appetite into the soul after a higher Good,

and makes it throw itself into his arms, and wind itself into his embraces, longing to be in a more intimate conjunction with him, or rather entirely wrapped up in him; itself is an insatiable and covetous principle in the soul, much like to the daughter of the horseleech, crying continually, "Give, give." What the Prophet speaks rhetorically of hell, is also true concerning this offspring of heaven in the soul, "it enlargeth itself, and openeth its mouth without measure." The spirit of true godliness seems to be altogether such that it cannot rest in any measure of grace, or be fully contented with any of its attainments in this life; but ardently longs to receive the more plentiful communications of love, the more deep and legible impressions of grace, the more clear and ample experiences of divine assistance, the more sensible evidences of divine favour, the more powerful and transporting illapses and incomes of divine consolation into itself; "let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." Such is the spirit of true godliness, that the weakest that is endued with it, longs to be as David, and the Davids to be as God, as the angel of the Lord, according to that promise, "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." The pious soul, that is in his right senses, under the powerful apprehensions of the loveliness

of God, and the beauty of holiness, cannot be content to live by any lower instance than that of David, whose soul even broke for the longing that it had unto the Lord, or that of the spouse, who was even sick of love. You have read of the mother of Sisera looking out at the window, waiting for his coming, and crying through the lattice, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?" But this is not to be compared to the earnest expectation of the creature, the new creature, waiting for the manifestation of God; which the Apostle elegantly expresseth, and yet seems to labour for words, as if he could not sufficiently express it either, Rom. viii. 19. You have read of the Israelites marching up towards the promised land, and murmuring that they were held so long in the wilderness; but the true Israelitish soul makes more haste with less discontent, marches as under the conduct of the angel of God's presence, and longs to arrive at its rest: but, alas! it is held in the wilderness too; and therefore cannot be fully quiet in itself, but sends forth spies to view the land, the scouts of faith and hope, like Caleb and Joshua, those men of another spirit; and these go and walk through the holy land, and return home to the soul, and come back, not as Noah's dove with an olive leaf in her mouth, but with some clusters in their hands they bring the soul a taste of the good things of the kingdom, of the glories of her eternal state: yea, the soul itself marches up

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

falling into one of these fainting fits, and crying out mainly for some cordial from heaven to keep up her sinking spirits, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." O beautiful and blessed sight, a soul working towards God, panting, and longing, and labouring after its proper happiness and perfection! Well, the sinking soul is relieved; Christ Jesus reacheth forth his left hand to her head, and his right hand embraceth her; and now she recovers, her hanging hands lift up themselves, and the beauties of her fading complexion are restored; now she sits down "under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto her taste." See here the fairest sight on this side heaven; a soul resting, and glorying, and spreading itself in the arms of God, growing up in him, growing great in him, growing full in his fulness, and perfectly transported with his pure love! O my soul, be not content to live by any lower instance? "Did not our hearts burn within us," said the two disciples one to the other, "whilst he talked with us?" But the soul in which the sacred fire of love is powerfully kindled, doth not only burn towards God, whilst he is more familiarly present with it, and, as it were, blows upon it; but if he seem to withdraw from it, it burns after him still; "My beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; I sought him; I called him." And if the fire begin to languish, and seem as if it would go out, the holy soul is startled presently, and labours, as the Apostle speaks, to

revive it, and blow it up again, calls upon itself to awake, to arise and pursue, to mend its pace, and to speed its heavy and sluggish motions. This divine active principle in the soul maintains a continual striving, a holy struggling and stretching forth of the soul towards God, a bold and ardent contention after the Supreme Good ; religion hath the strength of the divinity in it, its motions towards its object are quick and potent. That elegant description which the Prophet makes of the wicked heart, with some change, may be brought to express this excellent temper of the pious soul ; it is like the working sea which cannot rest : and although its waters do not cast up mire and dirt, yet in a holy impatience, they rise and swell, and cast themselves up high towards heaven. In a word, that I may comprize many things in few expressions, no man so ambitious as the humble, none so covetous as the heavenly-minded, none so voluptuous as the self-denying : religion gives a largeness and wideness to the soul, which sin, and self, and the world, had straitened and confined ; but his ambition is only to be great in God, his covetousness is only to be filled with all the fulness of God, and his voluptuousness is only to drink of the rivers of his pure pleasures : he desires to enjoy the God whom he sees, and to be satisfied with the God whom he loves. O now, how are all the faculties of the soul awakened to attendance upon the Lord of life ! It hearkens for the sound of his feet com-

ing, the noise of his hands knocking at the door ; it stands upon its watch-tower waiting for his appearing, waiting more earnestly than they that watch for the morning, and rejoices to meet him at his coming ; and having met him, runs into his arms, embraces him, holds him, and will not let him go, but brings him into the house, and entertains him in the guest-chamber : the soul complains that itself is not large enough, that there is not room enough to entertain so glorious a guest, no, not though it have given him all the room that it hath : it receives him with the widest arms, and the sweetest smiles ; and if he depart and withdraw, fetches him again with the deepest sighs, Return, return, O Prince of Peace, and make me an everlasting habitation of righteousness unto thyself !

It will not be amiss here briefly to touch upon the reason of the pious soul's so ardent pantings after God. And here I might show first, negatively, that it springs not from any carnal ambition of being better and higher than others, not from any carnal hope of impunity and safety, nor merely from the bitter sense of pressing and tormenting afflictions in this life. But I shall rather insist upon it affirmatively. These earnest breathings after God spring from the feeling apprehensions of self-indigency and insufficiency, and the powerful sense of divine goodness and fulness ; they are produced by the divine bounty and self-sufficiency, manifesting itself to the spirits of men, and con-

ceived and brought forth by a deep sense of self-poverty; one might almost apply the Apostle's words to this purpose, "We receive the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in him." I shall not discourse upon these two heads disjointly, but frame them into one idea, and so you may take it thus; these holy longings of the pious soul after God, do arise from the sense of its distance from God. To be so far distant from God who is life and love itself, and the proper and full happiness of the soul, is grievous to the soul that is rightly affected towards him: and hence it is that the soul cannot be at rest, but still longs to be more intimately joined to him, and more perfectly filled with him: and the clearer the soul's apprehensions are of its object, and the deeper its sense is of its own unlikeness to him, and distance from him, the more strong and impatient are its breathings; insomuch that not only fear, as the Apostle speaks, but even love itself sometimes seems to itself to have a kind of agony and torment in itself; which made the Church cry she was sick of love, that is, sick of every thing that kept her from her love, sick of that distance at which she stood from her beloved Lord. The pious soul being delighted with the infinite sweetness and goodness of God, longs to be that rather than what itself is, and beholding how it is estranged from him, by many sensual loves, selfish passions, corporeal clogs, and distractions, bewails its distance, and cries out

within itself, “O when shall I come and appear before God!” O when will God come and appear gloriously to me and in me! “Who will deliver me from this body of death!” O that mortality were swallowed up of life! David’s soul waited for God as earnestly, and more properly than they that watch for the morning; they may be said rather to be weary of the long, and cold, and troublesome night, than properly covetous of the day; but he, out of a pure and spiritual sense of his estrangement from God, longs to appear before him, and be wrapped up in him. Heal the godly man of all his afflictions, grievances, and adversities in the world, that he may have nothing to trouble him, nor put him to pain, yet he is not quiet, he is in pain because of the distance at which he stands from God: give him the whole world, and all the glory of it, yet he has not enough; he still cries, and craves, Give, give; because he is not entirely swallowed up in God: he openeth his mouth wide, as the Psalmist speaks, and all the silver, and gold, peace, health, liberty, preferment, that you impart to it, cannot fill it; because they are not God, he cannot look upon them as his chief good. In a word, a pious man doth not so much say, in the sense either of sin or affliction, “O that one would give me the wings of a dove, that I might fly away, and be at rest!” as in the sense of his dissimilitude to, and distance from God, O that one would give me the wings of an angel, that I might fly away towards heaven!

CHAP. IV.

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

WE have seen in what respects religion is an active principle in the soul where it is seated: give me leave to enlarge a little here for conviction or reprehension. By this property of true religion we shall be able to discover much that is false and counterfeit in the world. If religion be no lazy, languid, sluggish, passive thing, but life, love, the spirit of power and freedom, a fire burning, a well of water springing up, as we have sufficiently seen, what shall we say then of that heavy, sluggish, spiritless kind of religion that most men take up with? Shall we call it a spirit of life, with the Apostle; and yet allow of a religion that is cold and dead? Shall we call it a spirit of love and power with the Apostle; and yet allow of it, though it be indifferent, low, and impotent? Or will such pass for current with the wise and holy God, if we should

pass a favourable censure upon it? And why should it ever pass with men, if it will not for ever pass with God? But, indeed, how can this inactivity and sluggishness pass for religion amongst men? Who can think you are in pursuit of the infinite and Supreme Good, that sees you so slow in your motions towards it? Who can think that your treasure is in heaven, that sees your heart so far from thence? The more anything partakes of God, and the nearer it comes to him who is the fountain of life, and power, and virtue, the more active, powerful, and lively will it be. We read of an atheistical generation in Zeph. i. 12, who fancied to themselves an idle and slothful God, that minded not the affairs of the world at all, saying, "The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil;" which was also the false and gross conceit of many of the heathen, as Cicero confesses of some of the philosophers themselves, "who maintain that God has no power in himself, and can impart no power to any other:" and, indeed, though it be not so blasphemous, yet it is almost as absurd, to fancy an idle saint, as an idle deity. Sure I am, if it be not altogether impossible, yet it is altogether a shameful and deformed sight, a holy soul in a lethargy, a pious soul that is not in pursuit of God. Moses indeed bids Israel "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord;" but there is no such divinity in the holy scriptures as this, 'stand still and see the salvation of the soul,' though some have violently

pressed those words, *Exod. xiv. 13*, to serve under their slothful standard: no, no, the scripture speaks to us in another manner, “work out your own salvation:” and indeed the Spirit of God doth every where describe religion by the activity, industry, vigour, and quietness of it, as I hinted in the very beginning of this discourse, and could abundantly confirm and explain, if there were need of it.

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

1. The children of this world, earthly and sensual men, are not so slothful, so lazy, so indifferent in the pursuit of earthly and sensual objects. You say you have laid up your treasure in heaven; we know they have laid up their treasure in the earth: now, who is it that behaves himself most suitably and seemly towards his treasure? you or they? You say you have a treasure in heaven, and are content to be able to say so, but make no haste to be fully and feelingly possessed of it, to enjoy the benefit and sweetness of it. But they “rise up early and sit up late,” and either pine themselves, or eat the bread of sorrow, to obtain earthly and perishing inheritances; they compass the world, travel far, sell all to purchase that part which is of so great price with them: and when they have accomplished it, O how do they set their heart upon

it, bind up their very souls in the same bags with their money, and seal up their affections together with it: yea, and they are not at rest either, but find a gnawing hunger upon their hearts after more still, to add house to house, and land to land, and one bag to another: the covetous miser is ready to sit down and wring his hands, because he hath no more hands to scrape with; the voluptuous Epicure is angry that he hath not the neck of a crane the better to taste his dainties; and ambitious Alexander, when he domineers over the known world, is ready to sit down and whine, because there are no more worlds to conquer. What Christian but must be ashamed of himself, when he reads the description which Plautus the comedian gives of a covetous worldling, under the person of Euclio, how he hid his pot of gold, heeded it, watched it, visited it almost every hour, would not go from it in the day, could not sleep for it in the night, suspected every body that so much as looked towards it, and by all means kept it even as his life? For where is the like eager and ardent disposition to be found in a Christian towards God himself? Tell me, is it possible for a man that vehemently loves a virgin, to be content all his life long to court her at a distance, and not care whether ever he eventually marry her or not? Or must not such a one necessarily pursue a matrimonial and most intimate union with her? Let us now confess the truth, and every one judge himself.

2. This dull and earthly body, is not so indifferently affected towards meat and drink, and rest, and the things that serve its necessities, and gratify its temper. Hunger will break down stone walls, and thirst will give away a kingdom for a cup of water; sickness will not be eased by good words, nor will a drowsy brain be bribed by any entertainments of company or recreation: no, no, the necessities of the body must and will be relieved with food, and physic, and sleep; the restless and raging appetite will never cease calling and crying to the soul for supplies till it arise and give them. Behold, O my soul! consider the mighty and incessant appetites and tendencies of the body after sensual objects, after its suitable good and proper perfection, and be ashamed of thy more remiss and sluggish inclinations towards the highest good, a God-like perfection.

3. No creature in the whole world is so languid, slow, and indifferent in its motions towards its proper rest and centre. How easy were it to call heaven and earth to witness the free, pleasant, cheerful, eager progress of every creature according to its kind, towards its own centre and happiness? The sun in the firmament rejoices to run its race, and will not stand still one moment, except it be miraculously overpowered by the command of God himself; the rivers seem to be in pain, till by a continued flowing they have accomplished to themselves a kind of perfection, and be swallowed up in

the bosom of the ocean, except they be benumbed with frost, or otherwise over-mastered and retarded by foreign violence; I need not instance in sensitive and vegetating things; all which you know with a natural vigour and activity grow up daily towards a perfect state and stature. Were it not a strange and monstrous sight to see a stone settling in the air, and not working towards its centre? Such a spectacle is a pious soul settling upon earth, and not endeavouring a nearer and more intimate union with its God. Wherefore, Christians, either cease to pretend that you have chosen God for your portion, centre, happiness, or else arise and cease not to pursue and accomplish the closest union and the most familiar conjunction with him that your souls are capable of: otherwise I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: and the day is coming, when you will be put to shame by the whole creation. Doth every, even the meanest creature of God, pursue its end and perfection, and proper happiness, with ardent and vehement longings; and shall a soul, the noblest of all creatures, stand folding up itself in itself, or choking up its wide and divine capacity with dust and mire? Shall a pious soul, the noblest of all souls, hang the wing, suspend its motions towards the Supreme Good, or so much as once offer to faint and languish in its enterprises for eternal life? Tell it not at Athens, publish it not at Rome, lest the heathen philosophers deride and hiss us out of the world.

But you will ask me, When a Christian may be said to be sluggish and inactive? and who these lazy souls are? I will premise two things, and then give you a brief account of them. (1.) When I speak of a sluggish and spiritless religion, I do not speak as the hot-spirited Anabaptists or Chiliasts, who being themselves acted by a strange fervour of mind, miscalled zeal, are wont to declaim against all men as cold and benumbed in their spirits, who do not call for fire from heaven to consume all Dissenters, under the notion of Antichristian; who are not afraid to reproach the divine, holy, gentle, yet generous spirit of religion; calling it weak, womanish, cowardly, low, cold, and I know not what. These men, I believe, so far as I can guess at their spirit, if they had lived in the days of our Saviour, and had beheld that gentle, meek, humble, peaceable spirit, which did infinitely shine forth in him, would have gone nigh to have reproved him for not carrying on his own kingdom with sufficient vigour and activity; if not have judged Christ himself to be much Antichristian. I hope you see nothing in all my discoveries of the active spirit of religion that savours of such a fiery spirit as this. (2.) When I do so highly commend the active spirit of true religion, and the vigorous temper of truly religious souls, I would not be understood as if I thought all such souls were alike swift, or that any such soul did always move with like swiftness, and keep a like pace towards God. I know that there

are different sizes of active souls, yea, and different degrees of activity in the same soul, as may be seen, Cant. v. 3, compared with the sixth verse of the same chapter, and in many other places of scripture.

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

1. The active spirit of religion in the soul will not suffer men to take up their rest in a constant course of external performances; and they are but slothful souls that place their religion in anything without them. By external performances I mean not only open, and public, and solemn services, but even the most private, and secret performances that are in and by the body, and without the soul. It is not possible that a soul should be happy in anything that is extrinsical to itself, no, not in God himself, if we consider him only as something without the soul: the devil himself knows and sees much of God without him; but having no communications of a divine nature or life, being perfectly estranged from the life of God, he remains perfectly miserable. I doubt it is a common deceit in the world, men toil and labour in bodily acts of worship and religion in a slavish and mercenary manner, and think, with those labourers in the

parable, that at the end they must needs receive great wages, and many thanks, because they have borne the heat and burden of the day. Alas! that ever men should so grossly mistake the nature of religion, as to sink it into a few bodily acts and carcase-services, and to think it is nothing else but a running the round of duties and ordinances, and a keeping up a constant set and course of actions! Such an external legal righteousness the apostle Paul, after his conversion, could not take up with, but counted it all loss and dung in comparison of that God-like righteousness which was now brought into his soul, that inward and spiritual conformity to Christ, which was now wrought in him: "That I may be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection; and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." I know indeed that men will be loth to confess that they place their religion in anything without them; but, I pray, consider seriously wherein you excel other men, save only in praying or hearing now and then, or some other outward acts, and judge yourselves by your nature, and not by your actions.

2. The active spirit of religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer men to take up their rest in a mere pardon of sin; and they are but slothful

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

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

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

it completely happy, and so bends all its power thitherward. This is the description which you will every where find given in scripture of the true spirit of holiness, which hath always something positive and divine in it, as, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well;" and, "Put off the old man, put on that new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And accordingly a truly pious person, to use the Apostle's words, though he know nothing by himself, yet doth not thereby count himself happy.

4. The active spirit of true religion, where it is in the soul, will not suffer men to take up their rest in some measures of grace received; and so far as the soul doth so, it is sluggish and less active than it ought to be. This, indeed, oftentimes comes to pass when the soul is under some distemper of proud selfishness, earthly-mindedness, or the like, or is less apprehensive of its object and happiness; as it seems to have been the case of the spouse, "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" Some such fainting fits, languishings, surfeitings, insensibleness, must be allowed to be in the pious soul during its imprisoned and imperfect state: but we must not judge ourselves by any present distempers, or infirmities. The nature of religion, when it actuates the soul rightly and powerfully, is to carry it after a more lively resemblance of God, which is the most proper and excellent enjoyment

of him. A mind rightly and actually sound is most sick of love; and the nature of love is, not to know when it is near enough to its object, but still to long after the most perfect conjunction with it. This well of water, if it be not violently obstructed for a time, is ever springing up till it be swallowed up in the ocean of divine love and grace. The soul that is rightly acquainted with itself and its God, sees something still wanting in itself, and to be enjoyed in him, which makes it that it cannot be at rest, but is still springing up into him, till it come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of its Lord. In this holy, loving, longing, striving, active temper, we find the great Apostle: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And by how much the more of divine grace any soul hath drunk in, the more thirsty is it after much more.

5. The active spirit of true religion, where it is powerfully seated in the minds of men, will not suffer them to settle into a love of this animal life, nor indeed suffer them to be content to live for ever in such a kind of body as this; and that soul is in

a degree lazy and slothful, that doth not desire to depart and be with his Lord. The pious soul eyeing God as his perfect and full happiness, and finding that his being in the body doth separate him from God, keep him in a poor and imperfect state, and hinder his blissful communion with the highest good, groans within himself, with the Apostle, that mortality were swallowed up of life. I know not how much, but I think he hath not very much of God, neither sight of him nor love of him, that could be content to abide for ever in this imperfect, mixed, low state, and never be perfected in the full enjoyment of him. And it seems that they in whom the love of God is rightly predominant, potent, flourishing, do also look earnestly “for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,” as without doubt they ought to do. “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?”

Let this suffice by way of general reprehension.

But more particularly, the consideration of the active nature of true religion may well serve to correct a mistake about the noble grace of faith. How dishonourably do some speak of this excellent and powerful grace, when they make it to be a slothful, passive thing, an idle kind of waiting, or a melancholic sitting still; where, indeed and in truth, is life and power. Be not mistaken in so high and eminent a grace: true faith doth not only accept the imputed

righteousness of Christ for justification, but by a lively dependence upon God drinks in divine influences, and eagerly draws in grace, and virtue, and life, from the fountain of grace, for more perfect sanctification: and for this cause, I think, a purifying virtue is ascribed to it, Acts. xv. 9. Faith is not a lazy languid thing, content to wait for salvation till the world to come; but is even now panting after it, and accomplishing it too in a way of mortification, self-denial, and growing up in God: it is not content to be a candidate waiting for life and happiness, but is actually drawing down heaven into the soul, attracting God to itself, and gaining still further participations of divine grace for its aid: its motto is that of the famous painter, "No day without a line:" it longs to find some divine lineament, some line of God's image drawn upon the soul daily. Faith is a giving grace, as well as receiving; it gives up the whole soul to God, and is troubled that it can give him no more: it binds over the soul afresh to God every day, and is troubled that it can bind it no faster nor closer to him. The believing soul is wearied because of murderers, murdering loves, lusts, cares, earthly pleasures, and calls mightily upon Christ to come and take vengeance upon them: it is wearied because of those robbers that are daily stealing away precious time and affections from God, which are due unto him, and calls upon Christ to come and scourge these thieves, these buyers and sellers, out of his

own temple. In a word, the pious soul is active, and faith is the very life and action of the soul itself.

Lastly, Let me exhort all Christians from hence to be zealous, to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, and longing after him; “stir up the grace of God that is in you; quench not,” that is, blow up, enflame “the Spirit of God in you.” Awake, christian soul, out of thy lethargy, and rejoice, as the sun, to run the race that is set before thee, and, as a mighty man refreshed with wine, to fight thy spiritual battles against the armies of uncircumcised, profane, and earthly concupiscences, loves, and passions. Eye God as your centre, the enjoyment of him as the happiness, and full conformity to him as the perfection of your souls; and then say, Awake, arise, O my soul, and hide not thy hand in thy bosom, but throw thyself into the very heart and bosom of God; lay hold upon eternal life. Again, Observe how all things in the world pursue their several perfections with unwearied and impatient longings, and say, Come, my soul, and do thou likewise. Converse not with God so much under the notion of a lawgiver, but as with love itself; nor with his commands, as having authority in them, but as having goodness, and life, and sweetness in them. Again, Consider your poverty as creatures, and how utterly impossible it is for you to be happy in yourselves, and say, Arise, O my soul, from off this weak and tottering foundation,

and build thyself upon God ; cease pinching thyself within the straits of self-sufficiencies, and come stretch thyself upon infinite goodness and fulness. Again, Pore not upon your attainments ; do not sit brooding upon your present accomplishments, but forget the things that are behind, and say, Awake, O my soul, there is yet infinitely much more in God ; pursue after him for it, till thou hast gotten as much as a created being is capable to receive of the divine nature. In a word, take heed you live not by the lowest examples, (which thing keeps many in a dwindling state all their days) but by the highest : read over the spouse's temper, sick of love ; David's temper, waiting for God more than they that watch for the morning, breaking in heart for the longing that he had to the Lord, and say, Arise, O my soul, and live as high as the highest. It is no fault to desire to be as good, as holy, as happy as an angel of God ; and thus, O my soul, open thy mouth wide, and God hath promised to fill thee !

CHAP. VI.

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

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

“True religion is a lasting and persevering principle in the souls of good men.” It is said of the hypocritical Jews, that their goodness was as the “early dew, that soon passes away.” But that principle of goodness which God planteth in the souls of his people, is compared to a well of water,

evermore sending forth fresh streams, and incessantly springing up towards God himself. Our Saviour compares hypocritical professors to "seed sown upon stony ground," that springs up indeed, but soon withers away, but this well of water, which is in the sincerely pious soul, springs up into everlasting life; it springs and is never dried up; "it is a spring of water, whose waters fail not," or lie not, as it is expressed by the Prophet, Isa. lviii. 11, or if you look upon it under the metaphor of oil, as it is sometimes expressed in scripture, then it is truly that oil that faileth not, whereof the widow of Sarepta's cruise of oil was but a scant resemblance. Amongst other texts which the learned Dr. Arrowsmith brings to prove the infallibility of the perseverance of saints, this saying of our Saviour's which is the subject of my whole discourse, is one; who also quoteth Theophylact for the same opinion, namely, the perseverance of this principle, yea, and somewhat more, even the growth and multiplication of it. To the same purpose the same excellent author quoteth John x. 27, 28, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." In which our Saviour strongly asserteth the certain glorification of his people, by using a verb of the present tense, "I give unto them eternal life;" he will as certainly give it them, as if they had it already; except the words

do imply that they have it already, namely, the beginnings of it, even in this life: and if so, then the words yet more strongly assert the doctrine of perseverance; for how can that life be called eternal, which may be ended? In the same words he seemeth purposely to prevent fears, and beforehand to answer objections, by securing them both from internal and external enemies; they shall never perish, namely, of their own accord, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand; for the word in the original is such as doth secure them from the power of devils as well as men; and what is said of the church in general, is also certain concerning every true member of it in particular; “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Christ hath not only chosen and ordained his people that they should be holy, but also that they should persevere in holiness; not only that they should bring forth good fruits, but that their “fruits should remain.” Hence they are said to be born again of incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. And he that is born of God, is said to have the seed of God in him, and remaining in him, and so remaining in him as that he shall never again commit sin, that is, shall not become any more ungodly, 1 John iii. 9. To all which may be added that strong and strengthening text, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be

able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord:" which one text doth excellently assert both those high and comfortable doctrines of assurance and perseverance; and these doctrines are worthy to be honoured in the church, by a vindication of the passage from the corrupt glosses and cavils of the Papists, who have endeavoured to rob Christians of the sweetness which may be drawn out of that pregnant honey-comb: in a word, let the holy Psalmist's experience of the supporting virtue of this doctrine shut up the proof of it at present, who found himself wonderfully comforted by it after all his fears and falls, where he sings of the loving-kindness of the Lord in time past: "Thou hast holden me by thy right hand;" and, at present, "I am continually with thee;" that is, thou art continually with me; and, with the like courage and confidence, he speaks of all time to come, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." Now, although the doctrine of the perseverance of saints be thus fully and clearly laid down in scripture, yet it is easy to err in giving an account of it, and of the grounds of it. And therefore I shall proceed to the grounds of it, which I will briefly lay down negatively and affirmatively. First, negatively:—

1. The certain perseverance of the saints in a state of grace doth not arise from the absolute impossibility of losing of grace in the creature: it is one thing to affirm, that grace shall not be lost, and ano-

ther thing to affirm, that it is absolutely unloseable. God hath told us, that the world shall no more be drowned, but who will say for all that that it is not in itself capable of drowning? whilst we think to honour God by asserting the permanency of grace, we must take heed lest we make a god of grace, and so dishonour him. Grace, as it is in God, in the fountain, which divines sometimes call active grace, is eternal and unchangeable, not subject to any defection or alteration. There is no time, or place, or case, wherein the love and goodness of God faileth towards believers. It is one and the same in God towards his people, even when they are under the greatest desertions, and have no sense at all of it; we must not say the sun is grown dark, as often as a dark cloud interposeth between it and our sight. Yea, however it be most certain that the pure and holy God hateth sin even in his people, yet it is also certain that the good and gracious God loveth the persons of his saints, even at what time they sin: "For the love of God towards the regenerate," saith Davenant, "is not founded upon their perfect purity and holiness, but upon Christ Jesus the Mediator, who hath transferred their sins upon himself, and so hath redeemed them from the wrath of God." The love and kindness of God towards his people is absolutely unchangeable and everlasting. But grace in the creature, itself being a creature, is not simply and absolutely unchangeable or unloseable: there is a possibility of losing inherent

grace, if it be considered in itself; yea, and it would actually be lost and perish, but that God upholdeth his people with one hand, whilst he exerciseth them with the other. Though with all my might I desire to maintain the perseverance of the saints, yet I dare not, as the manner of some is, ground it upon the firmness and rootedness of faith in man, but upon the goodness and faithfulness of God, which is such towards believers, that he will keep them by his mighty power “through faith unto salvation,” as the Apostle expresseth it.

2. It doth not arise from the strength of man's free will, as if he were of himself able to keep himself for ever in a state of grace, when God had once put him into it. The saints indeed shall for ever will their own perseverance, as we shall see afterwards, but it is God that worketh in them even this will. Man's own free will, or self-sufficiency, is so far from being the ground of his perseverance in grace and holiness, that I do believe nothing in the world is more directly contrary to grace than habitual and predominant self-confidence; and, even in the saints themselves, there is nothing that tends more towards their apostacy, than this self-conceit and confidence of their own strength, as something distinct from God, though the same be not habitual and predominant; for they themselves are many times sadly weakened and set back by that means, and suffer many lamentable spiritual decays. This seems to have sometimes been the case of Hezekiah,

and of David too, and had like to have been the case of Paul, when he had so much abounded in revelations. Sure it is, that nothing doth more estrange the hearts of God's people from him, nor bind up the influences of divine grace and favour from them, than this security, confidence in the strength of their own wills, and vain opinion of self-sufficiency, which thing the sad experience of holy Christians doth attest: not only the Apostles James and Peter, but indeed all the true disciples of Christ in the world agree to that proverb, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." In a word, though "to do justly," and "to love mercy," have indeed much of religion in them, yet unto perseverance it is also required that a man deny himself and the sufficiency of his own free-will; and, in the Prophet's expression, "Walk humbly with his God." You know whose boast it was, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended;" and again, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;" and what was the lamentable consequence of this self-confidence, you know likewise: wherefore "let him that standeth" by his own strength, "take heed lest he fall."

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

1. The grace of election cannot fail. When I think of that uncertain, conditional, mutable decree of saving men, which some ascribe to God, who is infinite and eternal wisdom and oneness, methinks I may, with great reason, apply the Apostle's words spoken concerning himself, and say, when God is thus graciously minded to choose his people to eternal life, "Doth he use lightness, or the things that he purposeth, doth he purpose according to the flesh," after the manner of men, who are unsteady and wavering in their determinations? Is there with him yea, yea, and nay, nay? What doth the Apostle mean by those words, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his?'" The Apostle, in the foregoing verse, having related the apostacy of Hymeneus and Philetus, and the overthrow of some men's faith by their means, immediately subjoins this comfortable doctrine of the stedfastness and firmness of God's decrees of election, to prevent the offence which the saints might take against the falls of others, and to relieve them against the fears that they might possibly conceive concerning their own perseverance; as if he had said, let no one be offended, as if the salvation of believers were uncertain; it appears that these men were none of God's people, because they are seduced, and the faith that they had is overthrown; and as for your part who are chosen, fear not lest ye also should apostatize, it is not possible to deceive the elect in the

necessary and fundamental truths of the gospel, Matt. xxiv. 24; fear not lest ye also should be drawn away by the error of the wicked into perdition, "for the foundation of God standeth sure," &c. In which sentence, says Dr. Arrowsmith, almost every word breathes firmness and performance: nothing more firm in a building than the foundation; that you may not doubt of that, it is also called sure, or steady; this sure foundation is said to stand, that is, say the Dutch annotators, abideth stedfast and certain; for it is the foundation not of man's laying but of God's, with whom there is "no variableness nor shadow of change;" yea, farther, this foundation is said to be sealed; now, what is accounted more firm and sure than those things which are sealed with a seal? especially such a seal as this, "The Lord knoweth who are his;" though the wisest of men are often deceived in their opinions, yet the knowledge of God is infinitely infallible, according to that of Augustine, "If any of the elect perish, God is deceived; but God is not deceived, therefore none of the elect can perish, for the Lord knoweth who are his." When Samuel indeed went to separate one of the sons of Jesse from the rest of his brethren to be king over Israel, he first pitched upon Eliab, and afterwards rejected him, 1 Sam. xvi; but God is guilty of no inconstancy in that eternal election which he makes of men to be kings and priests unto himself. Those several acts of divine grace mentioned Rom. viii. 29, 30, though

they be many links, yet run one into another, and all from first to last make up but one chain; concerning which divine and mysterious concatenation one may boldly use that peremptory prohibition which our Lord useth concerning a less indissoluble conjunction, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

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

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

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

3. The covenant of grace is everlasting. It hath pleased God to enter into a covenant of grace and peace with every believing soul ; which, I suppose.

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

Under this head let me glance at three things.

(1.) The Mediator of this covenant lives for ever, and lives to make intercession for believers;

and from this the Apostle argues, that they shall be saved to the uttermost, or evermore, as the margin reads it. From this also the Apostle argues the unchangeable state of believers, as we observed before on Rom. viii. 34. Christ Jesus is always heard and accepted of the Father in all the requests that he maketh to him, according to that in John xi. 41, 42, "Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always." If these things be so, then the perseverance of the saints is built upon a most certain foundation, is secured against the very gates of hell; for Christ hath prayed for them that they may be where he is; and, in the mean time, that they may be kept "from the evil," and that their faith, "fail not."

2. The promises of this covenant are immutable, "they are in Christ Jesus yea and amen;" as if one should say in Latin, *Certo certiora*, perfectly sure and certain. God, who is truth itself, will not, cannot be unto his people as a liar, or "as waters that fail," as the Prophet's phrase is. The infinite fountain of grace and truth cannot possibly become like one of the brooks which Job speaks of, which seem to be full of water, and are so at a certain winter season, but when the poor scorched Arabian comes to look for water in summer he goes away ashamed, because they are now vanished, they are consumed out of their place. Now the promise is concerning not only grace, but the final persever-

ance of it: if he promise pardoning grace, it is in these full and satisfying expressions, "I will remember their sin," any one of their sins, "no more." If he promise purging and purifying grace, it is in the like amplitude of phrase, "that they may fear me for ever;" and again, "they shall not depart from me;" with many other places of like importance.

3. God is said, to dwell in the souls of his people, in opposition to a way-faring man, "who turneth in to tarry for a night." God indeed hath promised, that it shall be said to them that were not his people, "Ye are the sons of the living God," Hos. i. 10; but never on the contrary, hath he any where threatened them that are the sons of the living God that it shall at any time be said to them, "Ye are not my people." True indeed, as to external profession, church-membership, mere covenant holiness, and outward communion, God doth many times disinherit and reject them that were so his people; but, as to true godliness, participation of the divine image, internal and spiritual communion, we may confidently say with the Apostle to the Corinthians, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;" or, with the same Apostle to the Thessalonians, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Do what? why, that which he was speaking of and praying for, namely, "Preserve spirit, and soul, and body, blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I conclude then, that grace in the creature is a participation of him who is essential and perfect grace and goodness, a communication made by him of his holy nature, which becomes a living principle in the souls of men, a fountain sending forth a continued stream of holy dispositions and affections without intercision or cessation; though these streams run sometimes higher, sometimes lower, sometimes swifter, sometimes slower, yet they are never wholly dried up as the brooks of Tema were. For, where God hath once opened a fountain in the soul, he feeds it with fresh supplies from himself; as a fountain itself would dry up, if it were not nourished by the supplies of subterraneous waters. The perseverance of grace depends purely upon the supports and supplies of uncreated essential life and goodness. But how do we know that God will certainly afford these supplies? We build upon his goodness and love in Christ towards his people, which is infinite and unspeakable; and upon his faithfulness in accomplishing his promise, namely, that he will never leave nor forsake them, that he will keep them by his power unto salvation. They that are of the number of God's holy and chosen ones, shall, no doubt, continue of that number according to that in 1 John ii. 19. They that are truly in Christ shall abide in him. The seed of God remaineth in the godly, and they cannot sin, because they are born of God; "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one

toucheth him not." What can be more express and ample than that consolatory promise of our Lord made to his poor frail sheep, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

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

Ans. Yes, God will forsake them that forsake him; but they never shall forsake him: they being rightly renewed after the image of God, and perfectly overpowered by his grace, shall never will any such departure: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever." "It is certain," saith Dr. Arrowsmith, "that God will condemn all impenitent sinners; but it is as certain that all justified and regenerate sinners shall repent;—this always occurs through the influence of the Spirit." It seems unreasonable to demand, what if man himself will apostatize? seeing he is, by the grace of God, so renewed in his will, and put into such a condition, that he cannot will any such thing. "God doth not give unto his saints," saith Augustine, "only such help without which they could not persevere if they would (which was that which he gave Adam;) but he also worketh in them the will: that because they shall not persevere except they both can and will, his bounti-

ful grace bestoweth upon them both the *can* and the *will*: for their will is so inflamed by the Spirit of God, that they therefore can, because they so will; they therefore so will, because God worketh in them to will." Neither is it any disparagement or injury to the freedom of man's will, that it should be overpowered by divine grace, and determined only to that which is good. The indifference and fluctuation of the will of man is indeed the imperfection of it; and the more God reveals himself to the soul, as the chief good, the more this indifference of the will is destroyed, and the faculty is determined; not by being constrained, but indeed perfected. O happy liberty, for a soul to be indifferently affected towards its own happiness, and to be free to choose its own misery! The noblest freedom in the world is, when a soul being delivered from its hesitations, and healed of its indifferences, is carried like a ship with spread sails and powerful winds in a most speedy, cheerful, and steady course into its own harbour, into the arms and embraces of its own object. The grace of God doth never so overpower the will of man, as to reduce it to a condition of slavery, so as that man should not have a proper dominion over his own acts; but I think we do generally conclude that, in the world to come, in the future state, the wills of all glorified saints shall be so advanced and perfected in their freedom, as not in the least to verge towards anything that is evil, but shall in the most gladsome and steady

manner be eternally carried towards their full and glorious object, which the glorified understanding shall then represent in a most true, clear, and ample manner; and this we take to be the soul's truest liberty in the highest elevation of it. Now, although it be not altogether thus with us in this present world, for, by reason of the weakness and muddiness of our understandings which do here represent God unto us so faintly and disadvantageously, it comes to pass that the will cannot so freely and fervently, with so ardent and generous motions pursue its excellent object, as it shall do hereafter, yet I believe that the more God reveals himself to any soul, the more the fluctuations and volatileness of it are healed, and a true liberty of will, increased; and that he doth so far reveal himself to every truly pious soul, as to establish this noble freedom in him, in such a degree as will keep it from willing a final departure from him, and carry him certainly (how remissly and faintly so ever) towards the supreme and sovereign Good, till he come to be perfectly swallowed up in it. A will thus truly and divinely free, though it be not the proper efficient cause, yet certainly is an inseparable concomitant of final perseverance. So then the more God communicateth himself to any soul, the more powerfully it willet a nearer conjunction with him; and no soul, I conceive, to whom God communicateth himself savingly, can at any time will an utter separation from him.

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

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

Joash, the latter of Demas. Whenever you observe therefore the backslidings of any seeming Christians, take heed of concluding rashly against the perseverance of saints, but rather infer with the holy Apostle, "They went out from us, but they were not of us : for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us:" which words, if they be meant only of a communion in doctrine and profession, so as to conclude against a separation of such as are indeed in such a communion ; then we may argue the more strongly, from the less to the greater, against the final apostacy of any that are in a higher and more excellent communion.

As for those texts of scripture that seem to suppose a man's falling away from grace, and turning from righteousness, I conceive a fair answer may be given to them, by the distinguishing of righteousness ; and so it may be granted, that many men have turned away from, and utterly made shipwreck of, their legal righteousness, consisting in an external conformity to the letter of the precepts of the law, void of the supernatural and divine principle : it is indeed the common lot of these men that spring up thus fairly, and yet have no root, to "wither away." And yet, on the other hand, it abides an everlasting maxim of truth, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." If there be any texts that seem to speak of apostatizing from an evangelical righ-

teousness, a righteousness of faith, and so cannot well be solved by this distinction, as that in Heb. x. 38, and some others, it must be considered that suppositions are made of things impossible as well as possible, yea, and that even in the scriptures themselves, as some have observed from Gal. i. 8, 1 Cor. xv. 14, which texts do not at all imply what they suppose. I know indeed that eternal salvation is ordinarily entailed upon perseverance, and so is promised to us in scripture, as it were conditionally, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."—"You hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight, if ye continue in the faith, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel," &c. To the same purpose are those words, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved;" and "He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give," &c. All which do strongly imply that there is no salvation but in a way of perseverance; and the words being laid down thus conditionally, especially the words first quoted, are indeed cautionary and quickening to the dull and sluggish minds of men, but do not necessarily imply any uncertainty or doubtfulness in the thing itself, no more than those words of the Apostle Peter, 2 Pet. i. 10, compared with the latter end of the twelfth verse, where he doth affirm them to be "established in the truth," and yet at

the same time doth speak to them by way of caution and encouragement. There are many texts that seem to suppose the apostacy of men in a state of regeneration, but not one that doth assert it, that ever I could yet find; but they are almost without number, that, to my apprehension, do more than seem to assert the contrary, namely, their final perseverance: of which perseverance we have also, through the goodness of God, thousands of instances; but no man could ever yet produce one instance of the contrary, but by mere conjecture; which conjectures, let them that make them see that they neither be over charitable towards men, or uncharitable towards God. Wherefore I do conclude that what is said concerning heaven and hell in the parable, as to one branch of it, is true of grace and wickedness; a gulf is fixed, and they that would pass from God to sin and the devil cannot: not that there shall ever be in any a real and predominant desire so to pass, as I suppose I have already proved; but it denotes the impossibility of the thing. It is equally impossible that a pious soul should fall from God, and become a hater of him, fall from his love and image, and take upon him the image of the devil, as it was for Lazarus to quit Abraham's bosom for the flames of hell: the case seems to be the same, the former being the most real heaven, and the latter the truest hell. True religion is that holy fire which, being once kindled in the soul from heaven, never goes out;

whereof the fire of the altar was but a faint and imperfect resemblance: it is as true in this respect of good men, as it is of wicked men in another, "their fire never goes out."

And here, now, we are presented with another great difference between true and counterfeit religion. All counterfeit religion will fade in time, though ever so specious and flourishing; all dew will pass away, though some lies much longer than other; all land-floods will fail; yea, the flood of Noah at length dried up, though it were of many months' duration. But this well of water which our Saviour speaks of here, will never utterly fail; cold adversity cannot freeze it up; scorching prosperity cannot dry it up; the upper springs of uncreated grace and goodness will evermore feed those nether springs of grace and holiness in the creature. Though heaven and earth pass away, yet shall the seed of God remain, "He that hath begun a good work will certainly perform it." Where the grace of God hath begotten a divine principle and spirit of true religion in a soul; there is the central force even of heaven itself, still attracting, and carrying the soul in its motions thitherward, until it have lodged it in the very bosom and heart of God. If any principle lower than true religion do actuate a man, it will certainly waste and be exhausted; though it may carry him swiftly in a rapid motion, yet not in a steady; though it may carry him high, yet not quite through. A meteor that is exhaled from the earth by a foreign

force, though it may mount high in appearance, and brave it in a blaze, enough to be envied by the poor twinkling stars, and to be admired by ordinary spectators, yet its fate is to fall down, and shamefully confess its base original. That religion which men put on only for a cloak, will wear out and drop into rags, if it be not presently thrown by as a garment of fashion. You have read of the seeming righteousness of Jehu, founded in ambition and cruelty—the piety and devotion of Joash, grounded upon a good and virtuous education—the zeal of Saul for the worship of God, and his fat sacrifices, growing upon a root of superstition, as Samuel that man of God interprets it, 1 Sam. xv. 22; and you have seen the shameful issue of all these dissemblers, and the offensive snuff in which all this candle-light religion ended, very much unlike to that sun-like lustre of true and genuine goodness, “which shineth more and more unto the perfect day,” according to that elegant description which the Spirit of God makes of it in the writings of Solomon, whose pen hath as much adorned this great truth as his life hath blotted it: “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” To this purpose I might fairly allege the frequent testimonies which the Holy Ghost in scripture gives concerning such hypocritical and unprincipled professors; that, having no root, they wither away in a scorching season, that they are again entangled in the pollutions of the world,

and overcome, that, like dogs, they turn to their own vomit again, and, like sows, wallow in the mire from which they had been washed, together with many others of the same nature: as also the prophecies that are made concerning them, that that which they seemed to have shall be taken away from them, that they shall proceed no further; “for their folly shall be manifest unto all men,” that “evil men and seducers,” and of those—self-seducers are the worst, “shall wax worse and worse,” with other places of the like nature. It were easy to record many histories of many men, especially of great men, who have speedily, I had almost said disdainfully, thrown off that semblance of humility, meekness, self-denial, justice, and faithfulness, which they had put on for a vizard during their probationaryship for preferment, the better to accomplish their selfish designs, and to be possessed of some base ends of their own. Still I will not deny but that a hypocrite may maintain a fair conformity to, and correspondence with the letter of the law of God; he may continue fair and specious to the very end of his life; yea, perhaps may go to his grave undiscovered either to himself or any in the world besides. I believe many men have lived and died Pharisees, have never apostatized from that righteousness which they professed, but have persevered in their formality and hypocrisy to the last. But although that counterfeit righteousness and reli-

gion may possibly not fade away, yet nevertheless, being of an earthly and selfish constitution, it is transitory and fading; and if it were soundly assaulted and battered with persecutions and temptations, no doubt, would actually vanish and disappear; on the other hand, the promise of God is pregnant and precious. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall walk and not faint."

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

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

CHAP. VII.

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

HITHERTO we have taken a view of true religion, as it stands described in this pregnant text, by its origin, nature, and properties: we are now to consider it in the certain and genuine consequence of it; and that is, in one word, affirmatively, *satisfaction*; or, if you will, negatively, *not thirsting*: for so it

is, in our Saviour's phrase, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst."

Whilst I address myself to the explication of this phrase, I suppose I need not be so exact and curious as to tell you in order, with a certain kind of scholastical gravity, first, what is not; and then, what is meant by it: for I presume nobody will dream of a corporeal or gross kind of thirsting to be meant here. Grace doth no more quench the thirst of the body, than elementary water can relieve the panting of the soul. Nay, he himself was subject to this gross kind of thirst, who gave to others the water whereof, if they drank, they should never thirst more. If it be understood of a spiritual thirst, yet I suppose I need not to tell you either, that then it must not be understood absolutely: for it cannot possibly be, that the thirst of a soul should be perfectly allayed till all its faculties be filled up to the brim of their respective capacities, which will never be until it be swallowed up in the infinite and unbounded ocean of the Supreme Good.

But I conceive we may fairly come to the meaning of this phrase, *never thirst*, either by adding or distinguishing.

1. Then let us supply the sentence thus, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst after any other water." There is no worldly liquour can be so accommodated or attuned to the palate as to produce a universal satis-

faction, as that a man should be perfectly mortified to all variety : but this heavenly water which our Saviour treats of here, is so fitted to the palate of spirits, and brings such satisfaction along with it, that the soul that is made to drink of it suspends its chase of all other delights, counts all other waters but a filthy and offensive puddle, thirsts no more after any other thing, either through necessity or for variety. The more indeed the soul drinks of this water, the more it thirsteth after fuller measures and larger portions of the same ; and does not only draw in divine virtue and influences, but even longs to be itself swallowed up in the divinity, as we shall see further in the procedure of this discourse : but its thirst after all created good, after all the waters of the cistern, is hereby extinguished, or at least mastered and mortified. Or,

2. By distinguishing upon thirst, the sense of the phrase will be clearly this, “ Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him ” shall never be at a loss more, never be to seek any more, never be uncertain or unsatisfied as to his main happiness or supreme object ; he shall not rove and range up and down the world in an unfixedness and suspense any more ; shall not run up and down to seek satisfaction and rest any more. From an internal unsatisfiedness of the body, spring violent and restless motions and runnings up and down, by which thirst is contracted ; so that, by a metonymy, thirst comes to be used for unsatisfiedness which is the remote

cause of it; and, by a metaphor, the same phrase comes to be applied to the soul. I suppose I am warranted, by the sacred style, thus to interpret; especially by the use and explication of the phrase in Jer. ii. 25, where the Prophet intimates, that by thirst is to be meant a restless and discontented running up and down to seek satisfaction, “Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst;” which two phrases are of the same import, and signify no more than cease from gadding after your idols; and that this is the meaning of that thirsting appears by the answer that the wilful and desperate people make in the sequel of the verse: for instead of saying, No, but we will thirst; they cry, “No, but after them will I go.” To thirst then is, in an unsatisfiedness and spiritual disquiet, to range up and down seeking something wherein ultimately to acquiesce. And, in this sense, it is most true what our Lord here pronounceth, that “whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst.” Of which thirst that famous proclamation of our Saviour’s is to be understood—“If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink;” in which place also we must necessarily understand what is here expressed, that then he shall never thirst more.

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

true Christian religion, gives a real and solid satisfaction to the soul that is principled with it."

This will appear plain though we apply but out of each Testament of the holy scriptures one text thereunto. I think it cannot reasonably be doubted, but that the prophecy and promise made in Isa. xlix. 10, is to be performed to believers in this present life; for so must the foregoing verses necessarily be understood: and there we have the doctrine expressly asserted, "They shall not hunger nor thirst, &c. for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them." To which those words of our Saviour are parallel, "He that believeth on me shall never thirst:" which doctrine of his is yet amplified and enlarged in John vii. 38, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." What greater security from thirst can be desired, than that one should be led by springs of water? Yes, one may be led by the springs of water, and yet not be suffered to drink of them: well therefore to put all out of fear, the pious soul shall contain within himself a spring of water; he shall have rivers of living waters in himself; and for his fuller security, these rivers shall be ever flowing too. It shall suffice at present, thus briefly to have established this conclusion. And now, having wrapt up the meaning of the words in this short position, I shall endeavour to unfold it in these six following propositions:—

1. "There is a raging thirst in every soul of man after some ultimate and satisfactory good." The God of nature hath implanted in every created nature a secret but powerful tendency towards a centre, the dictates of which, arising out of the very constitution of it, it cannot disobey until it cease to be such, and utterly apostatize from the state of its creation. And the nobler any being is, the more excellent is the object assigned to it, and the more strong and potent, and uncontrollable are its raptures and motions thereunto. Wherefore the soul of man must needs also have its own proper centre, which must be something superior to, and more excellent than itself, able to fill up all its indigencies, to match all its capacities, to master all its cravings, and give a plenary and perfect satisfaction: which therefore can be no other than the uncreated goodness, even God himself. It was not possible that God should make man of such faculties, and of that capaciousness as we see them, and appoint anything below himself to be his ultimate happiness. Now, although it be sadly true, that the faculties of the soul are miserably maimed, depraved, benighted, and distorted; yet I do not see that the soul is utterly changed in its nature by sin, so as that any other thing should be obtruded upon it for its centre and happiness, than the same infinite good that was such from the beginning, or so as that its main and cardinal motions should be ultimately directed to any other than its natural and primitive object.

The natural understanding hath not indeed any clear or distinct sight of this blessed object ; but yet it retains a darker and more general apprehension of him, and may be said, even in all its pursuits of other things to be still groping in the dark after him : neither is it without some secret and latent sense of God, that the will of man chooseth or embraceth anything for good. The Apostle hesitates not to affirm, that the idolatrous Athenians themselves did worship God, though at that time indeed they knew not what they worshipped ; their worship was secretly and implicitly directed to God, and did ultimately resolve itself into him, though they were not aware of it—"whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." Now that he declared God to them, appears abundantly by the following verses. What he says in point of worship, the same methinks I may say in point of love, trust, delight, dependence, and apply it to all sorts of idolaters, as well as image-worshippers, and affirm that the covetous idolater, even when he most fondly hugs his bags, and most firmly confideth in his riches doth ignorantly love and trust in God ; the proud idolater, in the highest acts of self-seeking and self-pleasing, doth ignorantly admire and adore God ; the ambitious idolater, even in the hottest chase of secular glory, and popular applause, doth ignorantly pursue, and advance God. For that rest, contentment, peace, happiness, satisfaction, which these mistaken souls do aim at, what is it other than God,

though they attribute it to something else which cannot afford it, and so commit a real blasphemy? for they that do in their hearts and course of their lives, ascribe a filling and satisfying virtue to riches, pleasures, or honours, do as truly, though not so loudly, blaspheme, as they who cried out concerning the calf of gold, *Exod. xxxii. 4*, “These be thy gods, O Israel!” &c. And in this sense that I have been speaking, one may safely affirm, that the most professed atheist in the world doth secretly pursue the God whom he openly denies, whilst his will is catching at that which his judgment renounceth, and he allows that Deity in his lusts which he will not own in heaven. The hypocrite professes to know God, but in works denies him; on the other hand, the atheist, though in words he deny God, yet in his works he professeth him: so natural and necessary it is for all men to acknowledge a Deity, though some are so brutish and besotted as to confine him to their own bellies; of whom the Apostle speaks, “Whose god is their belly.” I say natural; for it is not only some few men of better education, and more contemplative complexions, that hunt after this invisible and satisfying good; but indeed the most vulgar souls, retaining still the nature of souls, are perpetually catching at an ultimate happiness and satisfaction, and are secretly stung and tormented with the want of it. Certainly the motions of a soul are more strong and weighty than we are ordinarily aware of; and, I

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

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

2. "Every natural man thirsteth principally after happiness and satisfaction in the creature." The fall of the soul consisteth in its sinking itself into the animal life, and the business of every unrenewed

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

gratification of their animal powers. The Psalmist, as we have seen, determines the main end of all men to be good, Psal. iv. 6, but, lest any man should be deceived in them, he presently tells us where this good was placed, ver. 7, namely, in "corn and wine;" by which we must understand the animal life, and whatsoever administers to the delight thereof. And certainly this will go far; for not only meats and drinks, sensual pleasures, gorgeous apparel, sumptuous buildings, splendid descent, honourable preferments, popular applause, inordinate recreations, and an unwieldy bulk of earthly riches; but also orthodox opinions, philosophical, political, yea, and scholastical learning, fair professions, much pompous worship, yea, and worship industriously void of pomp, specious performances; to which we may add the most seemly exercises of undaunted valour, unshaken constancy, unbribed justice, uninterrupted temperance, unspotted chastity, and unlimited charity, if much giving may deserve so sacred a name; even all these, and as many more, may serve only as fuel for the rapacious fire of lust and self-love, to maintain and keep alive the mere animal, or at most logical, life; and are ordinarily designed as sacrifices to that which we significantly call *self*, in contradistinction from God. I need not here declaim against covetous, luxurious, ambitious souls, the Apostle having so expressly prevented me by his plain and punctual arraignment of such men, Col. iii. 5, Phil. iii. 19, where he

charges them with placing a deity in their bags and bellies: otherwise I durst appeal to all the world that are not parties, yea, to the parties themselves, whether it be God or themselves that these persons do intend to serve, and please, and gratify; whether it be a real assimilation to God, and the true honour of his name, or some lust or humour of self-pleasing, self-advancing, and self-enjoying, that they sacrifice their cares and pains, and the main thirstings of their souls to. I am confident it will be easily acknowledged, that the covetous, voluptuous, and ambitious, do sacrifice all they are and do to the latter; but, alas! it is not yet agreed among men who are such; the hypothesis is granted, but the thesis is disputed: and indeed this is no wonder either; for it is as natural for the animal self-life to shift off guilt as it is to contract it; and the pride of the natural man is no less conspicuous in his wrongful endeavours to seem innocent of what he is indeed guilty, than his covetousness and voluptuousness is apparent in the matter wherein his guilt consisteth. It is not only these, and some few of the grossest and profanest sort of souls, that are guilty in this kind which I have been describing, though they indeed are grossly and most visibly guilty; but verily the whole generation of mere animal men, who have no principle of divine life implanted in them, do spend all their days, bestow all their pains, and enjoy all their comforts, in a real strain of blasphemy, from first to last. What

a blasphemous kind of philosophy was that which professedly placed the supreme good and chief happiness of man in the fruition of pleasures? And indeed all those kinds of philosophy which placed it elsewhere, in things below God himself, and the enjoyment of him, were no less profane, though they may seem somewhat less beastly: for whether the Epicureans idolized their own senses, or the more exalted Stoics deified their own faculty, placing their main contentment in their self-sufficiency, and the perpetual serenity and tranquillity of their own minds, it is too apparent that both the one and the other still moved within the narrow and low sphere of natural self, and grasped after a deity in the poor dark shadows, and glimmering representatives of him. But I am speaking to Christians: and, amongst these, let no man tell me how orthodox his opinions, how pure and spiritual his forms, how numerous and specious his performances are, how rightly he pays his homage, and prays to one living God by one living Mediator; I will willingly allow, and do with delight observe these things wherever they are; but yet all this doth not denominate a Christian: for still that of the Apostle must hold good, "His servants ye are to whom ye obey;" and I may add by somewhat a like phraseology, "His children ye are whom ye resemble;" his creatures ye are, as far as you can make yourselves so, whose sufficiency and sovereignty is most magnified in your hearts; his worshippers ye are whom ye

mostly love, trust in, delight in, depend upon ; in a word, that is your god which your soul doth mainly rest, and centre, and wrap up itself in. And, alas ! how visibly dear and precious is the self-central life, which is so universally pampered, cherished, and sacrificed unto, besides the invisible and more spiritual oblations that are made for this purpose. This is as true an Antichrist in the mystery as there is any literal Antichrist in the world : and of this one may as truly say, as St. John doth of the other, “ All the world wondereth after the beast.” In a word then, whosoever saith in his heart concerning anything that is not God, what that rich man in the gospel said concerning his goods, “ Soul, take thine ease in them and be merry,” the same is an idolater and blasphemer : and this I affirm to be the language of every apostate spirit, and unregenerate soul of man.

3. “ No man can find that happiness, and soul-filling satisfaction in any creature-enjoyment, which every natural man principally seeketh therein.” Here are two things to be spoken to, namely, the enjoyments of men, or what they possess, and the satisfaction which the natural man seeketh in such possessions. For the first of these, I do not believe that ever any natural man had his fill of such possessions, I mean as to the quantity of them ; he never had so much of them as to be able freely to say, “ It is enough.” The rational soul hath a strong and insatiable appetite, and wherever it

imagineth its beloved prey to be found, and filling enjoyment to be had, it is exceedingly greedy and rapacious; whether the same will ever be able to afford it or not, it matters not. The animal life is that voracious idol, not like Bel in the story, which seems only to eat up, but which doth really devour all the fat morsels, and sensual pleasures that are sacrificed unto it, and yet it is not filled therewith. The whole employment of the natural man, is nothing else but as the Apostle elegantly describes it, Rom. xiii. 14, "To make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;" wherein however, to speak the truth, he loses his labour; for he sacrifices all to an insatiable idol, and pours it into a gulf that hath neither bottom nor bounds, but swalloweth up all into its barren womb, and is rather made to thirst, than to cease from thirsting by all that is or can be administered to it. I take that of Solomon, Eccl. i. 8, to be a clear proof in general of what I affirm, "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing;" the eye of man, as little as it is, is bigger than the whole visible world, which, although it may be wearied with looking upon various objects, as the English annotators observe upon these words, yet still desires new ones, and can drink them in without surfeiting: so that, although the acts of the eye be scant and finite, yet the lusts of the eye seem to have a kind of infinity in them. And indeed by the insatiableness of the eye and ear, is meant the greediness and voracity of

the flesh or animal life, as Mr. Cartwright hath well observed upon Prov. xxvii. 20, "Hell and destruction are never full, so the eyes of man are never satisfied;" where, by not being satisfied, is meant not having enough in quantity, as appears by the similitude in the former part of the verse. To the same sense he speaks, Eccles. iv. 8; v. 10. It would be endless to relate the monstrous and inexplicable gapings of covetous, ambitious, voluptuous, proud, vain-glorious minds after their respective idols. And indeed I need not descend to particular instances; for I suppose never any natural man could heartily say he had enough of riches, promotions, applause, sensual delights, eloquence, policy, prowess, or victory, or of any other thing which is accommodated to the gratification of the flesh, no more than any pious soul sojourning upon earth could ever yet be able to say he had enough of God and eternal life. So that, in a word, I know not how to apply any description to this insatiable and devouring principle more properly than that which the Prophet makes of hell, "She enlargeth herself, and openeth her mouth without measure, and all glory, multitude, and pomp, descend into it." I know there are of those men that pretend to have enough in quantity of these fleshly provisions; but I fear falsely and unjustly: for, as for the rich and honourable of the earth, it is too evident that they are still climbing higher, and grasping after more, as the great Alexander is said to have whined after

more worlds, when he conceited himself to be master of all this: as for the poorer and meaner sort of people, who are as ready sometimes to lay claim to this virtue of thinking themselves to have enough, as any other people whatsoever, it is too manifest to a wise observer, that it is not a real apprehension that they have enough, but either a lowness and weakness of spirit, arising from the meanness of their education, or a downright despair of ever getting more.

But be it imagined that the enjoyments of some natural men are enough in respect of quantity, yet still there is certainly wanting a true and sincere satisfaction of soul in such possessions; no man of all these finds that real happiness in those things which he so vehemently hunteth after. Solomon reduces all the pleasure and contentment that is to be found in multiplied riches to a very pitiful sum total, “What good is there to the owners thereof, save the beholding of them with their eyes?” And, alas! what is the sight of the eye to the satisfaction of the soul! The whole visible world is utterly too scant for, and incommensurate to the wide and deep capacity of an immortal spirit; so that the same can no more satisfy than a less can fill a greater, which is surely impossible. Whatever is in the world out of God, is described by the Prophet, Isa. lv. 2, to be *not bread*, there is the unsuitableness; and *not to satisfy*, there is the insufficiency of it as to the soul of man: on the other hand, the soul of

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

Neither the quantity, variety, nor duration of any created objects, can possibly fill up that large and noble capacity wherewith God hath endued the rational soul; but having departed from its centre, and not knowing how to return to its ori-

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

4. "Grace takes not away this thirst of the soul after happiness and plenary satisfaction." Love

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

lies the very root of the degenerate soul's distemper; and if this were thoroughly restored and healed, so as to present the will with pure and proper ideas and representations of God, it might be hoped that this ductile faculty would not be long before it clave unto him entirely: nay, it may be doubted whether it could possibly resist the dictates of it. Now in the regenerate soul this faculty is repaired; yea, I may say, that the spirit of regeneration first of all spreads itself into the understanding, and awakens in it a sense of self-indigency, and of the perfect, all-sufficient, suitable, and satisfactory fulness of God, in whom it sees all beauty, sweetness, and loveliness, in an infinitely ineffable manner, wrapped up and contained; which will be so far from allaying the essential thirst of the soul, and stifling its eager pantings, that it must needs give a mighty edge and ardour to its inclinations, and put it upon a more bold and earnest contention towards this glorious object, and charm the whole soul into the very arms of God. Therefore not thirsting in the text, must not be understood absolutely, as if grace did utterly extinguish the natural activities of the soul, and its propensions: but the regenerate and gracious soul doth not thirst in such a sense, as thirst implies a want of a suitable good, or dissatisfaction, or includes torment properly so called. In this notion of thirst grace doth indeed quench it, as I intimated in the beginning of this discourse, and as it will further appear in the procedure of it. But as to this most

essential thirst, this natural desire, or vergency of the soul after central rest and happiness, the same is so far from being extinguished or moderated by divine grace, that it is greatly improved, and mightily inflamed thereby. I suppose I need not enlarge upon so acknowledged a subject; therefore I will but present you with the instances of holy David in the Old Testament, and gracious Paul in the New. I need not, I suppose, magnify the holy and divine frame of David's spirit by any rhetoric of mine; God himself hath given the amplest testimony, and fairest character of him that I remember to have been, at any time, given of any man, when he owns him for "a man after his own heart:" and what a longing, thirsting soul this was, I need do no more to demonstrate than to turn you to some passages and professions of his own in his devout Psalms, such as Psal. xlii. 1. lxiii. 1. cxliii. 6, where he borrows the strongest inclinations that are to be found in the whole creation, to represent the devout ardours of his own soul; "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God"—"O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is"—"I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land:" yea, he seems like one that would swoon away for very longing: "Hear me, speedily, O Lord, my spirit faileth; hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit; I lift up my

soul unto thee; I flee unto thee," &c. The very same temper you will find in holy Paul, that chosen vessel of God, if you peruse his Epistles, in all which you will meet with devout and strong breathings of the same kind; particularly Phil. iii. 11—14, where he seems to be so thirsty after a state of heavenly perfection, that he longs after, if I mistake not the meaning of the eleventh verse, something that yet he knows he cannot arrive at whilst he is in this world, even the resurrection of the dead, or such a perfect state of purity and holiness, as belongs to the children of the resurrection.

5. "The pious soul thirsteth no more after happiness in any creature, nor rests in any worldly thing, but in God alone." This particular consists also of two branches: the former and negative part whereof seems to me to contain in it the scope and meaning of our Saviour, in these words which I am now interpreting. We have already seen that every unsanctified soul is restless, and craving, wavering, unsatisfied, inconstant to itself, and its choice: by reason of its natural activity, it is always spending itself in restless and giddy motions; but by reason of its ignorance, and unacquaintedness with the one supreme and all-sufficient Good, and the multiplicity of lower ends and objects, it is miserably distracted, and doth necessarily grapple with inevitable disturbances, in a continual unsteadiness, putting forth itself now towards one thing, anon to another, courting every thing, but matching with no-

thing ; like a fickle lover, that is always enamoured with the last feature he saw ; or a greedy merchant, that being equally in love with the pleasure of being at home, and the profit of being abroad, can stay long no where with any content, but has always most mind of the place where he is not.

The description that our Lord gives of the unclean spirit that is "gone out of a man," seems very aptly to agree with that unclean spirit that is in man, that being departed from God its proper rest and habitation, walketh through dry and desert places, I mean, empty and unsatisfying creature-enjoyments, seeking rest but finding none. It was an accidental affliction of believers, but is the natural and necessary affliction of every unbelieving and wicked soul, to wander up and down the world destitute, afflicted, tormented. Sinful self is so multi-form, and that one root, the animal life, has such a world of branches, that it is impossible to administer due nourishment to them all ; and yet they are all importunate and greedy suckers too : so that he must needs have a difficult task, and a painful province, that is constrained to attend upon so many, so different, and yet all of them so impatient and imperious masters. But I shall lose ground by thus going backward to what I considered under the second head, except I can make this advantage of it, to enforce that which I was going to speak of, with the greater strength and clearer evidence. The case standing thus with the unregenerate soul, as we

have seen in this short review, I now say, that divine grace allays the multifarious thirst of the soul after other waters, of which it could never yet drink deep, or if it drunk ever so deep, could not be quenched; it determines the soul to one object, which before was rent in pieces amongst many. It does not destroy any of the natural powers, nor dry up the innate vigour of the soul, as I made evident under the last head, but it takes it off from the chase of all inferior ends, and inadequate objects, setting it upon a vehement pursuit of, and causing it to spend all its powers not less vigorously, but far more rationally and satisfactorily upon, that object worthy of our love, the infinitely amiable and self-sufficient God. When the soul hath once met with this glorious object, is once mastered with this Supreme Good, is, by divine grace, enlarged, it cannot, with any ease, stretch itself upon the creature any more; that is too scant and insufficient for it. Certainly the soul that understands its own origin, nature, and capacity, and once comes to view itself in God, will see itself too large to be bounded by the narrow confines of self, or any creature, and too free to be bound down and chained to any earthly object whatever. The world indeed may, yea, and will labour to take off the soul; "What is thy beloved more than another beloved," that thou art so fond of him? "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" Be content, here is hay and provender:

stay with me this night; let us dally and make merry together a little longer. But these Syren songs are sung to a deaf ear; they cannot enchant the wise and devout soul that hath her senses rightly awakened, and exercised to discern between good and evil: O no, "I am sick of love," and sick of every thing that keeps me from my Beloved; and therefore, however you may go about to defile me through fraud or force, through surprise or violence, yet I will not prostitute myself to you. The gracious soul hath now discovered the most beautiful, perfect, and lovely object, even Him whose name is love itself; which glorious vision hath so blasted and withered the choicest flowers in nature's garden, that they have now no more form or comeliness, beauty or fragrancy, so as to deserve to be desired; she hath tasted the pure and perfect sweetness of the fountain, which has so imbittered all cistern-waters, that she finds no more thirstings in herself after them; which is that which our Saviour promiseth here, "shall never thirst." A pious soul cannot possibly be put off with anything short of God; give him his God, or he dies; give him ever so much fair usage in the world, ever so much of earthly accommodations, they are not accommodated to his wants and thirst, if they have not that God in them out of whom all worldly pleasures are even irksome and unpleasant, and all fleshly ease is tedious and painful: creature-employments are but a wearisome drudgery to a soul that is acquainted

with the work of angels ; and creature-enjoyments, in themselves considered, are very insignificant, if not burdensome to a mind that is feelingly possessed of the chief good.

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

1. “ All pious souls are not equally mortified to worldly loves, nor equally zealous and importunate lovers of God.” This is so evident, that I need not insist upon it. Abraham seems to have been as much higher and nobler in spirit than his brother Lot, as Lot was more excellent than one of the ordinary sons of Adam, I had almost said, than one of the Sodomites amongst whom he dwelt. The one leaves all the pleasant and plentiful accommodations of his native country, at the very first call out, not knowing whither he went, only relying upon the gracious guidance of him whom he followed ; he seems to reckon all soils alike for his sojourning, and the whole habitable world as his own city and home, as appears by his readiness to break up house, and quit his present habitation, rather than interfere with the conveniences of his nephew, Gen. xiii. 9. The other preferred a fruitful soil before a faithful society, and so in some

sense his body before his soul ; and yet, as if it had not been enough to make so unadvised a choice, he rests in it too ; yea, though he was so severely re-proved by the captivity that befel him there, whereby he was not so much called, as indeed carried away thence, yet this will not loosen him from his earthly conveniences, but he returns to Sodom, and from thence he will not part till he be fired out, nay, and then also it is with much lingering and lothness, Gen. xix. 16. It is evident I say, both from this and many other instances which I purposely omit, that it is so, that all pious souls are not equally careless of these earthly things, nor carried out with equal ardour and intemperance, as I may call it, towards the supreme and most glorious object ; of which I can assign no better reason than this, because they are not all equally pious. For,

2. “ So far as grace prevails, and religion in the power of it actuateth the soul in which it is planted, so far earthly loves decay and wither.” For these two cannot stand together, the love of the world is inconsistent with the love of God ; “ If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” So far as any soul is sanctified, so far is it mortified also to all creature-enjoyments, to all things that are only fuel for the animal life, honour, ease victory, plenty, liberty, relations, recreations, all the entertainments and delights in this lower life, yea, and this very life itself. Earthly and heavenly loves are to each other as the two scales of a pair of

balances, save that they are never found equally poizing, as the one rises the other falls; just so much advantage as this gets, that loses. The more the sensual and self-central life thrives and prospers, and the creature is exalted, the more religion and the divine life faint and flag in the soul: and as certainly, on the other hand, the more divine grace prevails, and the divine life flourisheth in the soul, the more all earthly objects wither away and lose their beauty, and the soul cooleth and languisheth as to its love and desire of them. So far as a regenerate soul is unregenerate, so far will she be bustling after other lovers: which regeneration will not, I conceive, be thoroughly perfected, and therefore these passions, not utterly extinguished, till this mortal put on immortality; or, as the Apostle speaks elsewhere, till "mortality be swallowed up of life."

3. For the preventing of rash and uncharitable judging, I do affirm, that "divine and holy souls are often mistaken by them that behold their ordinary converse and actions in the body." They are thought sometimes to take pleasure in the creature, and to gratify the flesh, when indeed it is no such matter; but they take pleasure in the image of God, or the evidence of his fatherly love, which they contemplate therein, and do perhaps, most of all, serve a spiritual end, and an eternal design in those very actions which others may think are calculated for the gratification of the animal life, and the service of the flesh. Let not the purblind world, nor the

self-befriending hypocrite, be judge, and it will appear that the truly pious soul counts nothing savoury to itself, but what represents, teaches, exhibits something of God, nothing pleasant but what hath a tendency to him: such a man doth not feel himself in his highest raptures, doth not value himself on his noblest accomplishments, doth not seek himself in his most excellent performances; be not mistaken, he doth not so much thirst after long life, riches, friends, liberties, as indeed after God in them all; these all signify nothing to him, if they bring him not nearer to his God, and conduce to his real and spiritual happiness. Yea, possibly, in his most suspected actions, and those that seem most alien from religion, and most designed to please the flesh, he may be highly spiritual and pure: so was our blessed Saviour we know, even in his conversing with scandalous sinners, eating and drinking with Publicans and notorious offenders, however he was traduced by a proud and hypocritical generation; and so I doubt not is many a good Christian, according to his measure, pure as Christ was pure. When a painted hypocrite, who can guess at the temper of others no other way but by what he finds in himself, and by what he should be and do, if he were under the same circumstances, comes to be judge of the actions or disposition of one who is transformed into the image of the divine freedom and benignity, you may easily imagine what a perverse sentence he will pass. It needs not seem very

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

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

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

But, which is the latter branch of this particular,

this inspired soul which we have been describing, thirsteth after his happiness in God alone, that is, in the enjoyment of him. We have already seen that grace does not destroy the natural and essential longings of the soul after a satisfactory good, but rather enhances them, and that the pious soul is most thirsty of all, but not with a creature-thirst, as is before proved ; it remains then, that his thirsting after rest and happiness is terminated upon God alone. And so indeed it appears in the instances of holy men recorded in holy writ, which I have under the last head spoken something to. But to those passages and professions which I quoted out of Psalm xlii. 1, 2, &c. you may add such as Psalm iv. 6, which is the voice of every pious soul ; “ Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us : ” Psalm xxxix. 6, 7, “ Surely every man walketh in a vain show ; surely they are disquieted in vain ; he heapeth up riches, &c. And now, Lord, what wait I for ? my hope is in thee ; ” where you have the different seekings and centrings of the ungodly, and of the godly soul, elegantly described. Lastly, You may, in Psalm lxxiii. 25, again view the term or end of the pious man’s ambition ; “ Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee ! ” Which translation of the words doth in a lively manner set out the good man’s end, and aim, and object, and happiness, and indeed his all : or, if we translate, perhaps more fitly, with Mollerus, yet they afford us the

same doctrine, "Who will give me to be in heaven and with thee? on earth I desire nothing."

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

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

Now, for the better understanding of the first of these it should be noticed, that the reasonable soul and the faculties of it are of a vast, large, and noble capacity. It is universally granted by all that are not Sadducees, that the capacity of angels is very great and noble; and that the condition of the human soul is not much inferior to it, may, I think, be gathered from the Psalmist's words, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels:" which words, although the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews applies them to Christ, Heb. ii. 9, and indeed they have a marvellous aptness to him, according to the Dutch translation, which runs thus, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, who was be-

come a little less than the angels, by reason of the sufferings of death; that he should, by the grace of God," &c. Yet I see nothing hindering but that they may be well applied to the excellent condition of man by creation; especially considering that many other passages of the Old Testament have a double aspect, one more ordinary and obvious, which was most clearly understood by the Prophet that wrote them; the other more abstruse and mysterious, principally intended by the Spirit that inspired him, and only to be understood by the revelation of the same Spirit: such are those passages, I conceive, which are found in Isa. vii. 14. Hosea xi. 1, interpreted by the Evangelist, Matt. i. 23, and ii. 15; as also Jer. xxxi. 15, with many more. But however it goes with that text, and whether or not the souls of men be so near of kindred to the angels, as to their own comprehensions; yet, that they are capable of a most noble and excellent happiness, and much allied to God himself, doth appear from such texts of scripture as doth require them to be "holy as God is holy;" to be "perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect." Neither need it seem to any incredible, that the rational soul should be so capacious; for we are no more to judge of the angelical temper, and noble actings of the separated soul, by what we see it to be and do in this body of flesh, than one can judge of the prowess and puissance of a renowned warrior at the head of an army, by what we discern in him when he lies

bound in chains, or of the power and splendour of the sun, by what we discern of it when it is eclipsed, or miserably beclouded; or, if you will, no more than we can judge of a man by the imperfections of his childhood: for so the Apostle Paul seems to state the case, 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 11, plainly implying, that the present and future condition of the soul is comparable to the minority and adult state of a man; as if he had said, “the soul, in its future and separate state, will act as much nobler a part than what it doth now, as the soul of the wisest man in the world acteth more nobly than what it did when he was a child:” yea, and what is still more to our present purpose, he seems clearly to intimate in the twelfth verse, that this improvement shall happen not so much by the more evident propounding of the object, as by the more ample illumination and corroboration of the faculties. In the next place it will be easily inferred, that all created good is too scant and insufficient for this capacious spirit of man; too short a bed to stretch itself upon: nay, it cannot contract itself so as to be accommodated to any worldly good, without pain and anguish. From both which it will be naturally and necessarily concluded, that God alone is that adequate object which can match the soul of man, and satisfy it, as being infinitely superior and transcendent to it. The enjoyment of God is that ultimate end, and perfect good that is only able to fix the spirit of man; which otherwise, not meeting

with its chief good, would be tossed to and fro, and labour under perpetual disquietness, and restless fluctuations. God is that almighty goodness and sweetness, who alone is able to draw out all the appetites of the soul into himself, satisfy all its cravings, charm all its restless motions, and cause all its faculties, in the purest and most complacential manner, to conspire together to give up themselves wholly and entirely to himself.

Secondly, From this conjunction with omnipotent goodness, ariseth pure peace, yea, joy and triumph, to the religious soul. For the clearer understanding of this I should premise, what some have wisely observed, that there is a natural congruity between God and the soul, she being a spiritual substance, and he being a spiritual good, only suitable to her. This seems to be evident by experience; for we see how difficult, I had almost said, impossible it is, utterly to eradicate and extinguish all sense of virtue and goodness out of the soul of man; to which purpose I think our divines generally speak, when they allow of some holy relics, something of the image of God remaining in the most degenerate souls, however all men have reduced the same to a very poor and inconsiderable spark, and many have raked that very spark under ashes too, and imprisoned that remainder of truth in unrighteousness, living according to those unnatural and foreign principles and conceptions that they have unhappily drunk in. Hence it is, I suppose, that sin and

wickedness are so often styled the defilement of the soul. Now, we know, that whatsoever defileth, is adventitious and improper; and hence it is, that sin many times stings and wounds the consciences of those that take most pleasure in it, because being so perfectly contrary to this noble and inbred sense of the soul. Allowing, then, this natural sympathy that the soul of man hath with its Creator, it will be easy to give a philosophical account of that peace, joy, and triumph, of which the soul must needs be possessed, or rather indeed transported with, that finds and feels itself in conjunction with its centre, and in the dearest embraces of its Creator. It needs not seem strange, that the soul should mightily congratulate itself in its arrival at its own haven; nay, it were strange if it should not dissolve into secret joy and pleasure in the hearty entertainments of so blessed and proper a guest as God is to it; nay, indeed it were unreasonable to imagine, that the conjunction of such noble and discerning faculties with so perfect and proper an object, should not beget the truest and sincerest delight and pleasure imaginable. The delights of an earthly and sensual mind are filthy and dreggy, in comparison of those pleasures of the refined and purified soul, which must needs live most gracefully, triumphantly, and deliciously, when it converseth with God most intimately. Certainly if there be any innocent and well-natured self-feeling, or self-pleasing, in the world, this is it; though

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

And yet, besides this, I conceive there is a more theological account to be given of these joys and pleasures which the renewed soul doth so plentifully reap upon her return to God, from whom she had

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

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

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

long shall he lie by in his word as an antiquated pattern only cut out for the apostolical ages of the world, and only suited to some few morose and melancholy men? Is it not a monstrous spectacle, and to be hissed out of the world with the greatest indignation, a covetous, voluptuous, ambitious, sensual saint? With what face can we pretend to true religion, or a feeling acquaintance with God, and the things of his personal service and kingdom, whilst the continual bleatings and lowings of our souls after created good do bewray us so manifestly, and proclaim before all the world that the beast, the brutish life, is still powerful in us? "If ye seek me," saith Christ to his followers, as well as he did once to his persecutors, "then let these go;" let go the hold of these earthly objects, let vanish these worldly joys and toys; "withhold your throat from thirst, and your feet from being unshod," and come follow me only, and ye shall have treasure in heaven; for he that will not deny all for me, is not worthy of me. Ah sad and dreadful fall, that hath so miserably cramped this royal offspring, and made the king's son to be a lame Mephibosheth! Ah doleful apostacy! How are the sons of the morning become children of darkness, and the heirs of heaven vassals and drudges to earth! How is the King's daughter unequally yoked with a churlish Nabal, that continually checketh her more divine and generous motions! "How unhappily art thou matched, O my soul!" And yet, alas! I see it is

too properly a marriage; for thou hast clean forgotten "thine own people, and thy Father's house." Take up, oh take up a lamentation, thou virgin daughter of the God of Zion: formerly indeed a virgin, but now, alas! no longer a virgin, but miserably married to an unworthy mate, that can never be able to match thy faculties, nor maintain thee according to the grandeur of thy birth, or the necessary pomp of thy expenses, and way of living; nay, thou art become not only a miserable wife, but, in so being, thou art also a wicked adulteress, prostituting thyself to the very vilest of thy lawful husband's servants; if thou be not incestuous, it is no thank to thee, there being nothing in this world so near of kin to thee, as to make way for incest. "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return; put away thine adulteries from between thy breasts, and so shall the King yet again greatly desire thy beauty;" for so he hath promised, Jer. iii. 21, that when there shall be a voice heard upon the high places, weeping, and supplications of the children of Israel, because they have perverted their way, and forgotten the Lord their God, and the backsliding children shall return, and then he "will heal their backslidings."

CHAP. VIII.

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

I AM now come to the last thing whereby this most noble principle is described, namely, the term or end of it; and that is said here, in the text, to be “everlasting life.” This is the highest pitch of perfection, unto which the new creature is continually growing up; which the Apostle Paul hath expressed with as much grand eloquence, as words are able to magnify it, calling it, “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:” this is that unbounded ocean, which this living fountain, by so many incessant issues, and unwearied streamings, perpetually endeavours to empty itself into, or rather to embosom itself in. Now, what this is, we must confess with the Apostle John, and indeed we have more reason to make such a confession than he had, that

it doth not yet appear, namely, neither fully nor distinctly: but yet, since I am thus cast upon the contemplation of it, it will be a suitable and agreeable matter to enquire into it; and though it surpass the power and skill of all created comprehensions to take the just dimensions, and faithfully give in the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of it; yet we may attempt to walk about this heavenly Jerusalem, as the Psalmist speaks of the earthly, “and tell the towers thereof, mark her walls, consider her palaces,” that we may tell it to the generation following.

1. Then, we will consider “eternal life” in the most proper notion of it, as it implies the essential happiness of the soul; and so it is no other than the soul’s pure, perfect, and established state. By a state, I do designedly undervalue that grosser notion of a place, as that which scarcely deserves to enter into the description of such a glory, or, at best, will obtain but a very low room there: by purity, I do purposely explode that carnal ease, rest, immunity, affluence of sensual delights, accommodated only to the animal life—which last Mahometans, and the former too many professed Christians, and the Jews almost, generally dream of, and judge heaven to be. By perfection, I distinguish it from the best state which the best men upon earth can possibly be in. So then I take eternal life in the primary and most proper notion of it to be the full, perfect, and everlasting enjoyment of

God, communion with him, and a most blissful conformity of all the powers and faculties of the soul to that eternal goodness, truth, and love, as far as it is or may become capable of the communications of the Divinity. This life was, at the highest rate imaginable, purchased by our ever blessed Lord and Saviour in the days of his flesh, and here in the text promised to every believing soul. Now, inasmuch as we are ignorant both of the present capacity of our own faculties, how large they are, and much more ignorant, how much more large and ample they may be made, on purpose to receive the more rich and plentiful communications of the divine life and image, therefore can we not comprehend either the transcendent life, happiness, and glory, or that degree of sanctity and blessedness which the believing soul may be advanced to in another world. The Popish schoolmen do nicely dispute about the sight of God, and the love of God, to wit, in whether of these the formal blessedness of the soul consisteth, ill separating those which God hath so firmly joined together, as if it were possible that either a blind love, or a jejune and unaffectionate speculation, could render a soul entirely happy: but it is much safer to say, that the happiness and eternal life of the soul standeth in the possession or fruition of God; and this doth necessarily import the proper perfection of every faculty. Nothing can be the formal happiness of a spirit that is either inferior or extrinsical to it; it must be

something divine, and that wrought into the very nature and temper of it. I hesitate not to affirm, that if the soul of man could possibly be advanced; so as to receive adoration or divine power, yet if it were in the mean time void of divine dispositions, and a God-like nature; it would be far from being glorified, and made happy as to its capacity. What health is to the body, that is holiness to the soul; which haply the Apostle alludes to when he speaks of the "spirit of a sound mind," 2 Tim. i. 7.

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

(1.) Then, I suppose, that “eternal life,” in the first sense of it, is intended here, to wit, the essential happiness of the soul, or its perfect and everlasting enjoyment of God. For the description is here made of religion itself in the abstract, or that principle of divine life, which Christ Jesus implanted in the soul; and being so considered, it is hard to conceive how that should spring up into any of these appendant circumstances, or into anything but the completion and perfection of itself; though the religious soul, taken in connection with them, possibly may. And, indeed, though we should allow, which we shall take into consideration under the next head, that many of those high scriptural phrases, which are brought to describe the future condition of believing souls, do principally respect the appendixes of its essential happiness, (as a kingdom, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, an inheritance reserved, a place prepared, and the like,) yet it seems very unnatural to interpret this phrase, “life,” and “eternal life,” any otherwise than of that which I call the essential happiness of the soul: but if we interpret it of this, the sense is very fair and easy. Thus, this principle of divine life is continually endeavouring to grow up to its just altitude, to advance itself to a triumphant state, even as all other principles of life do naturally tend towards a final accomplishment, and ultimate perfection. Carnal self, or the animal life, may be indeed said to be a well of water

too, poisonous water; but that springs up into a sensual life, popular applause, self-accommodations, or, if you will, in the Apostle's phrase, into the fulfilment of the lusts of the flesh. This I speak only by way of illustrative opposition; for, to speak more properly, this corrupt principle hath in it the central force of death and hell, and is always tumbling downward; whereas this divine principle is always climbing upward: but they do both agree in this, that they both seek their own gratifications, and study to acquire their respective perfections. The everlasting and most glorious enjoyment of God is certainly most perfective of the soul; and therefore is most properly and most deservingly said to be its "eternal life," according to that of our Saviour, John xvii. 3. Now, this "eternal life" is not a thing specifically different from religion, or the image of God, or the divine life, but indeed the greatest height, and the greatest possible perfection of itself: even as the sun at noon-day is not a light really distinct from what it was in the first dawns of the morning, but a different degree, and far more glorious state; which seems to be the very similitude whereby the Spirit of God illustrateth the matter in hand, Prov. iv. 18, or, as a man of perfect age is not a distinct species from a child, but much more complete and excellent in that species; to which the Apostle refers, treating of this subject, 1 Cor. xiii. 11. Man hath not two distinct kinds of happiness in the two distinct worlds, that

he is made to live in ; but one and the same thing is his blessedness in both, which, as I said before, must needs be the enjoyment of God. The translation made of the text is very suitable to this notion : for this divine principle is said to spring up, not unto, but into, everlasting life, as if he should say, it springs up till it be swallowed up into the perfect knowledge, love, and enjoyment of God. Even as youth is swallowed up in manhood, so this grace is swallowed up in glory, and not so much abolished, as indeed perfected.

By this phrase, the genius of true religion, and the excellent temper of the truly religious soul, is most lively described. This is the soul, that, being in some measure delivered from its unnatural bondage, and freed from its unhappy confinement, now spreads itself in God, lifts up itself to him, stretches itself upon him, is not content with a heaven merely to come, but brings down a heaven into itself, by carrying up itself unto, and after, the God of heaven. God is become great, only great in the eye of such a Christian ; he is indeed become all things to him. Whilst this principle is rightly and actually predominant in him, he knows no interest but to thrive and grow great in God ; no will, but to serve the will, and comply with the mind of God ; no end, but to be united to God ; no business, but to display and reflect the glory and perfections of God upon the earth. The main business of his life, I say, is to serve him ; the main ambition of

his soul, to be like to him ; and his main happiness in this world, to be united to him ; and in the world to come, to be swallowed up in him : in this world, to know, and love, and rest, and delight in, and enjoy God more than all things, and in the world to come, to enjoy him more so. The gladsome growings up of the tender flowers to the friendly sun, being once powerfully attracted with his precious and benign influences, and the cheerful haste with which the sympathetic needle so amorously pursues the enchanting loadstone, being once rightly touched and affected with it, do a little, though but a little, resemble and represent the motions of a spirit impregnated with this divine principle, and strongly impressed with the image and stamp of God : he puts in his hand by the hole of the door, and the bowels of the espoused soul are presently moved, yea, melted for him, Cant. v. 4. He casts the skirt of his garment, the mantle of his love, and presently the converted soul leaves all to follow him. Faith, hope, and love, are knitting and springing graces, and this eternal life is the end and perfection of them all ; not that any one of them, I conceive, shall be utterly abolished, as some conclude concerning the two former, though without good ground, I think, from the Apostle's words, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. But faith will be ripened into the most firm and undisturbed confidence, affiance, and acquiescence in God ; hope will be advanced into a more cheerful, powerful, and confident expectation,

having for its object the perpetuation of the soul's felicity ; and love will become much more loving, and more clearly distinguishable from the imperfect longings and languishings of this present state, when it shall flower up into pure delights and complacencies, resting and glorying in the arms of its adequate, satisfactory, and eternal object. The faith of the hypocrite, and indeed his hope too, is still springing up into self-preservation, deliverance, liberty, a splendid and pompous state of the church, (that is, of his own party) or some such thing as will gratify the animal life, and there it terminates; but the faith of the sincere and religious soul springs up into eternal life ; it knows no term but "the salvation of the soul," 1 Pet. i. 9, as his hope knows no accomplishment but a state of God-like purity and perfection, 1 John iii. 3. The mere natural man lives within himself, within a circle of his own, and cannot get out ; whether he eat, or drink, or pray, or be zealous for the popular pulling down of the political Antichrist, he is still in his own circle, he is still sacrificing in all this to that great *helluo*, the animal life, as I have already made evident: but the pious soul is disinterested of self, and so is still contriving the advancement of a nobler life within itself, and moving towards God, as his supreme and all-sufficient good. Give him all that the whole world can afford, he cannot fix, nor settle, nor centre here: God hath put into him a holy restless appetite after a higher good, which he would rather be,

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

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

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

insinuate how much more ample and glorious the state shall be than this in which we now are ; as a prize is looked upon as somewhat more excellent than what is done or expended to acquire it, (it must needs be so esteemed by runners or wrestlers) ; a kingdom is a more glorious state than that of subjection, and an inheritance is incomparably more ample than the pension that is allowed the heir in his minority.

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

1. As for the example of Christ, it seems to make not much for them in this matter. For though the text is very plain, that “for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross,” and this joy seems plainly to be his session “at the right hand of God ;” yet, if by this joy we understand a more full and glorious possession of God, and a more excellent exaltation of his human nature, to a more

free fruition of the divine, then it cannot be applied to anything but the springing up of the gracious soul into its essential happiness; which I have already contended for, as being the proper genius of such a soul: or if by this joy and throne we understand the power that Christ foresaw he should be vested with, of leading captivity captive, trampling under feet the powers of hell and darkness, and procuring gifts for men, which seems to me to be most likely, then it belongs not at all to men, neither can this example be exhibited for imitation.

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

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

And this leads me to the general answer that I was preparing to give, which is this:—some of these

circumstances which I have named, especially that of the glorified body, may be reduced to the essential happiness of the soul, or included in it, so that the soul could not otherwise be perfectly happy. It is the opinion of all divines, I think, that a Christian is not completely happy, till he consist of a soul and body both glorified. And, indeed, considering the dear affection, and essential aptitude, that God hath planted in the human soul for a body, we cannot well conceive how she should be perfectly happy without one: and this earthly body is, alas! an unequal yoke-fellow, in which she is half stifled, and rather buried, than conveniently lodged; so that it seems necessary, even to her essential happiness, that she should have some more heavenly and glorious body, wherein she may commodiously and pleasantly exert her innate powers, and whereby she may express herself in a spiritual and nobler manner, suitable to her own natural dignity and vigour, and to her infinitely amiable, and most beloved object.

Concerning the rest of the circumstances which cannot be thus reduced, I conceive that such of them as are necessary to the essential happiness of the soul, by way of subserviency, may be eyed, and desired, and thirsted after, secondarily, under this notion only, as being subservient to that essential blessedness. I confess, I do not understand under what other notion a religious soul can lift up itself to them; I mean, not so far forth as it is holy and

religious, and acts suitably to that divine principle which the Father of spirits, or rather the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath implanted in it. And if there be any other circumstance which cannot be reduced to one of these kinds, I suppose it may be reckoned amongst the objects and gratifications of the animal life, and not to make up any part of the godly man's heaven, or that eternal life which religion springs up into: for I easily imagine, that a fleshly fancy may verily be mightily elated with the desire of such a heaven as is suitable to it; and that a mere animal man may be as heartily desirous to be in such a kingdom of God, as he hath shaped out to himself, as he is utterly unwilling that the true kingdom of God, such as the Apostle describes, Rom. xiv. 17, consisting in "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," should be in him. If our continual cry be after safety, self-preservation, liberty, redemption, and deliverance from those things only that oppress and grieve our fleshly interest, and our thirstings principally terminated in knowledge, though it be of God himself, freedom from condemnation, power over devils, yea, or any visible pomp, glory, or splendour, though it be of ever so ethereal and heavenly a nature, what do we more than others? what is all this more than may naturally spring up from the animal life, and may be ultimately resolved into what is carnal?

Wherefore, as a result from the whole discourse, especially from this last part of it, let me earnestly entreat of all the professors of this holy religion,

which the blessed Messiah, Christ Jesus, hath so dearly bought for the world, and so clearly revealed in it, not to value themselves by anything which the power of natural self-love may exert or desire, perform or expect, nor by anything below the image of God, and the internal and transforming manifestations of Christ Jesus in them ; the perfection of which is eternal life, in the most proper and true notion of it. I know that I have often suggested the same lesson in this short treatise, but I know also, that I can never inculcate it often enough ; nay, the eloquence of angels is not sufficient to imprint it upon the hearts of men. Possibly it may startle some hypocritical professors, and carnal gossellers, (God grant it may effectually !) and make the ears of many that hear it to tingle, but yet I will proclaim it, “ It is possible for a man to desire not only the things of this world, which St. James speaks of, (James iv. 3,) but even heaven itself, to consume it upon his lusts ; and he may as truly be making provision for the flesh to fulfil it in the lust thereof, in longing after a kind of self-salvation, as in “ eating, and drinking, and rising up to play.” Certainly a true christian spirit, rightly invigorated and actuated by this divine and potent principle, christian religion, cannot look upon heaven as merely future, or as something perfectly distinct from him ; but he eyes it as life, eternal life, the perfection of the purest and divinest life communicable to a soul, and is daily thirsting after it, or ra-

ther, as it is in the text, "springing up into it." I know that heaven sometimes is called a rest, in opposition to the dissatisfaction of the uncentred and unbelieving soul; but, in opposition to a sluggish, inert, and dormant rest, it is here said to be life, eternal life. Let us show ourselves to be living Christians, by springing up into the utmost consummation of life: let it appear that Christ Jesus, the Prince of life, who was manifested on purpose "to take away our sins," hath not only covered our shame, and, as it were, embalmed our dead souls, to keep them from putrefaction, and strewed them with the flowers of his merits, to take away their noisome smell from the nostrils of his Father, but hath truly advanced, reinstated, and made the souls flourish that sin had so miserably degraded and deflowered. Deliver yourselves, O immortal souls! from all those unsuitable and unseemly cares, studies, and joys; from all those low and particular ends and lusts, which do not only pinch and straiten, but even debase and degrade you. Let it not be said, that the king of Sodom made Abraham rich; that your main delight, happiness, and contentment, is derived from any prosperous, plentiful, peaceable, pompous state, anything that may be called a self-accommodation, either in the world that now is, or that which is to come; but from the righteousness of faith, and your vital union with the Father and the Son; to whom, in the unity of the Spirit, be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.