

Monergism

A TREATISE OF  
**DELIGHTING  
IN GOD**

A STUDY OF PSALM 37:4

JOHN HOWE

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# **A Treatise of Delighting in God**

## **A Study of Psalm 37:4**

**by John Howe**

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## **Preface**

IT is likely that the title of the following treatise will put many of you, my dearly esteemed friends, in mind, that sundry sermons were preached twenty years ago among you upon this subject. I had it indeed in design to have given you some abstract of those sermons; but searching among my papers, could find none but so imperfect and broken memorials as would be of little use for that purpose. And yet being desirous to present you with somewhat that might both be a testimony of my affection, and an advantage to you; and knowing this subject was grateful to many, and affords what may be useful to all of you; I have for your sakes applied myself to a reconsideration of it. The first part is even altogether new, except the introductory suppositions in the beginning. Nor do I remember I then had more than one discourse to you on that subject, before the practical application of it. The other part contains many things formerly delivered to you, though perhaps not in the same order, much less in

the same words, whereto the short notes in my hands could no way enable me.

The matter here treated of is the very substance of religion; the first and the last; the root and the flower; both the basis and foundation, and the top and perfection of practical godliness; and which runs through the whole of it. Nor knew I therefore what to present you with, that could have in it a fitter mixture and temperament of what might be both useful and pleasant to you. As there is therefore no need, so nor do I desire you should receive the matter here discoursed of, merely for my sake; there being so great reason it should be chiefly acceptable on higher accounts. I do very well understand your affection to me; and could easily be copious in the expression of mine to you, if I would open that sluice: but I do herein resolvedly, and upon consideration, restrain myself; apprehending that in some cases (and I may suppose it possible that in our case) a gradual mortification ought to be endeavoured of such affection as is often between those so related as you and I have been: which is no harder supposition, than that such affection may be excessive and swell beyond due bounds. So it would, if it should be accompanied with impatient resentments towards any providence or instrument, whereby it finds itself crossed, or from whence it meets with what is ungrateful to it; if it prove turbulent and disquieting to them in whom it is, or any others; or if it occasion a looking back with distempered lingerings after such former things as could be but means to our great end, with the neglect of looking forward to that end itself still before us. Far be it from me to aim at the keeping anything alive that ought to die; that is, in that degree wherein it ought so to do. But our mutual affection will be both innocent and useful, if it be suitable to mortal objects, and to persons not expecting the converse we have had together any more in this world; if also in the meantime it preserve to us a mutual interest in each others' prayers; if it dispose us to such acts and apprehensions of kindness as our present circumstances can admit; and if, particularly, as it hath moved me to undertake, it may contribute anything to your acceptance of, this small labour, which is now

designed for you. The subject and substance whereof, as they are none of mine, so they ought to be welcome to you for their own sake, and His who is the prime author, though they were recommended to you by the hand of a stranger, or one whose face you never saw. They aim at the promoting of the same end which the course of my poor labours among you did (as He that knoweth all things knoweth) the serious practice of the great things of religion, which are known and least liable to question; without designing to engage you to or against any party of them that differ about circumstantial matters. They tend to let you see that formality in any way of religion, unaccompanied with life, will not serve your turn, (as it will no man's,) than which, there is nothing more empty, sapless, and void both of profit and delight.

I have reflected and considered with some satisfaction that this hath been my way and the temper of my mind among you. Great reason I have to repent, that I have not with greater earnestness pressed upon you the known and important things wherein serious Christians do generally agree: but I repent not I have been so little engaged in the hot contests of our age about the things wherein they differ. For, as I pretend to little light in these things (whence I could not have much confidence to fortify me unto such an undertaking); so I must profess to have little inclination to contend about matters of that kind.

Nor yet am I indifferent as to those smaller things, that I cannot discern to be in their own nature so. But though I cannot avoid to think that course right which I have deliberately chosen therein, I do yet esteem that but a small thing upon which to ground an opinion of my excelling them that think otherwise, as if I knew more than they. For I have often recounted thus seriously with myself, that of every differing party, in those circumstantial matters, I do particularly know some persons by whom I find myself much excelled in far greater things than is the matter of that difference. I cannot, it is true, thereupon say and think everything that they do; which is impossible, since they differ from one another as well as me: and I understand well, there are other measures of truth than this or that

excellent person's opinion. But I thereupon reckon I have little reason to be conceited of any advantage I have of such in point of knowledge, (even as little as he should have, that can sing, or play well on a lute, of him that knows how to command armies, or govern a kingdom,) and can with the less confidence differ from them, or contend with them; being thereby, though I cannot find that I err in these matters, constrained to have some suspicion lest I do, and to admit it possible enough, that some of them who differ from me, having much more light in greater matters, may have so in these also. Besides, that I most seriously think, humility, charity, and patience, would more contribute to the composing of these lesser differences, or to the good estate of the Christian interest under them, than the most fervent disputes and contestations. I have upon such considerations little concerned myself in contending for one way or another while I was among you; or in censuring such as have differed from me in such notions and practices as might consist with our common great end, or as imported not manifest hostility thereto: contenting myself to follow the course that to my preponderating judgment seemed best, without stepping out of my way to justle others.

But I cannot be so patient of their practical disagreement, (not only with all serious Christians, but even their own judgments and consciences also,) who have no delight in God, and who take no pleasure in the very substance of religion. I have been grieved to observe, that the case hath too apparently seemed so with some among you; some who have been openly profane and dissolute, and expressed more contempt of God (which you know was often insisted on the one part of the day,\* when I had this subject in hand the other) than delight in him. I know not how the case may be altered with such since I left you; or what blessing may have followed the endeavours of any other hand. Death I am sure will be making alterations, as I have heard it hath. If these lines may be beforehand with it, may they be effectually monitory to any such that yet survive, that however this or that external form of godliness may consist with your everlasting well-being, real ungodliness and the denial of the

power never can; which power stands in nothing more than in love to God, or delight in him. Therefore seriously bethink yourselves, Do you delight in God or no? If you do, methinks you should have some perception of it. Surely if you delight in a friend, or some other outward comfort, you can perceive it. But if you do not, what do you think alienation from the life of God will come to at last? It is time for you to pray, and cry, and strive earnestly for a renewed heart. And if any of you do in some degree find this, yet many degrees are still lacking. You cannot delight in God but upon that apprehension as will give you to see you do it not enough: therefore reach forth to what is still before. I bow my knees for you all, that a living, delightful religion may flourish in your hearts and families, in the stead of those dry, withered things, worldliness, formality and strife about trifles: which will make Torrington a Heph-zibah, a place to be delighted in; your country a pleasant region: and (if he may but hear of it) add not a little to the satisfaction and delight of

Your affectionate servant in Christ,

Who most seriously desires your true prosperity,

JOHN HOWE.

Antrim, Sept. 1, 1674.

# PART I

## SHOWING THE IMPORT OF THIS PRECEPT

"Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." PSALM 37:4

THIS psalm, by the contents of it, seems to suppose an afflicted state of good men, by the oppression of such as were, in that and other respects, very wicked; the prosperity of these wicked ones in their oppressive course; an aptness in the oppressed to impatience under the evils they suffered; a disposition to behold, with a lingering and an envious eye, the good things which their oppressors enjoyed, and themselves wanted. Hence the composure of it is such as might be most agreeable to these suppositions, and serviceable to the fortifying of the righteous against the sin and trouble which such a state of things might prove the occasion of unto them.

This verse hath a more direct aspect on the last of these cases, or on this last mentioned thing, considerable in the case of upright men suffering under the oppression of violent and prosperous wickedness, viz. that they might hereupon be apt both to covet and envy the worldly delights of their enemies; to be desirous of their dainties, and grudge they should be theirs, who, they knew, deserved worse things; and while themselves also felt the pressure of worse, which at their hands they deserved not. What is here offered to the consideration of the sufferers tends aptly to allay their discontent, to check and repress their inordinate desire towards inferior things, or to divert and turn it another way; as in case of bleeding to excess and danger, the way is to open the vein, and stop the course of that profusion by altering it. As if it had been said, "You have no such cause to look with displeasure or immoderate desire upon their



delicacies! you may have better; better belong to you, and invite you; the Lord himself is your portion; it becomes both your state and spirit to apply yourselves to a holy delight in him; to let your souls loose, and set them at liberty to satiate themselves, and feed unto fulness upon those undefiled and satisfying pleasures unto which you have a right; and in which you will find the loss and want of their meaner enjoyments abundantly made up unto you. You have your natural desires and cravings as well as other men; and those may be too apt to exceed their just bounds and measures; but if you take this course, they will soon become sober and moderate, such as will be satisfied with what is competent, with an indifferent allowance of the good things of this earth. And towards the Lord, let them be as vast and large as can be supposed, they can never be larger than the rule will allow, nor than the object will satisfy: the direction and obligation of the former being indeed proportioned to the immense and boundless fulness of the latter."

We need not operously inquire what sort of persons this direction is given unto. It is plain that it is the common duty of all to delight in God. But it cannot be the immediate duty of all. Men that know not God, and are enemies to him, have somewhat else to do first. They to whom the precept is directly meant are the regenerate, (the righteous and the upright, as the psalm itself doth plainly design them,) or his own people. The most profitable way of considering these words, will be chiefly to insist on the direction given in the former part of the verse: and then to show towards the close how the event promised in the latter part, will, not only by virtue of the promise, but even naturally, follow thereupon. The direction in the former part gives us a plain signification of God's pleasure, that he himself would be the great object of his people's delight: or, it is his will that they principally delight themselves in him. Our discourse upon this subject will fall naturally into two parts; the former whereof will concern the import, and the latter the practice of the enjoined delighting in God. Under which latter, what will be said of the latter part of the verse will fitly fall in.

That we may more distinctly open the import and meaning of delighting in God, it will be necessary that we treat—1. of the delectable object; and—2. of the delight to be taken therein.

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

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

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

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

2. As the most excellent Portion, in whom all things that may render him such do concur and meet together; all desirable and imaginable riches and fulness, together with large bounty, flowing goodness every way correspondent to the wants and cravings of indigent and thirsty souls. The former notion of him intimates to us our obligation of duty to him: the latter prompts to an expectation of benefit from him. But now because by the apostacy we have injured his right in us, as our Lord; forfeited our own right in him, as our Portion; and lost our immediate capacity, or disposition, both to serve and enjoy him; this great breach between him and us was not otherwise to be made up but by a Mediator. Unto which office and undertaking his own Son, incarnate, the Word made flesh (being only fit) was designed. By him, dealing between both the distanced parties, satisfying the justice of God, overcoming the enmity of man, the difference (so far as the efficacy of his mediation doth extend) is composed. And to the reconciled, God becomes again their acknowledged both Lord and Portion. His right is vindicated, theirs is restored; and both are established upon new grounds, added to those on which they stood before; and so as that now our actings towards God, and expectations from him, must be through the Mediator. Whereupon this object of our delight, considered relatively unto us, is entirely God in Christ!—being reconciled—"We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement," Rom. 5:10, 11.

In these several ways that have been thus briefly mentioned, may God come under our consideration. Nor are they, any of them, unapplicable or impertinent to our purpose, when we would design

him the object of our delight. Yea, and surely God considered each of these ways ought to be looked on by us as a most delectable object. For it is pleasant to contemplate him, even most absolutely considered, as the most excellent Being, when we behold his glorious excellencies in themselves; that is (not with the denial, but) without the actual present consideration of any advantage that may redound to us from them; as we are apt to find ourselves pleased and gratified in viewing an excellent object (suppose a stately edifice, or beautiful flower), from which we expect no other benefit.

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

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

And thus we are more principally to consider him, viz. rather relatively than absolutely; and that relatedness (which the state of the case requires) as now anew settled in Christ. And so, though it be very delightful to look upon him as one that may, and is ready to, become related to us, (as he is to any that will consent and agree with him upon the Mediator's terms) yet it adds unspeakably to the

pleasantness of this object, when we can reflect upon such characters in ourselves, as from whence we may regularly conclude that he is actually thus related unto us; that is, that we have consented; that our relation to him immediately arises from the covenant of life and peace; that he hath entered into covenant with us, and so we are become his. It is pleasant thus to behold and serve him as our Lord. How great is the emphasis of these words, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord!" To consider not only how well he deserves the acknowledgments and subjection of all, but also to find ourselves under the chosen and gentle bonds of perpetual service and devotedness to him, is certainly matter of very high delight and pleasure.

But how infinitely delightful is it to view and enjoy him as our portion! And this seems very pertinent to the design of this scripture; which, aiming to recall and draw in the hearts of godly persons from too earnest, and from envious lingerings after the enjoyments of worldly men (their enemies and oppressors,) propounds what may be an over-balance to the (imagined) felicity of their state, and wherein they should more than equal them in point of enjoyment. And should we single out this as the object to be considered, God as a portion; that it might be more distinctly represented, we should have two things to take notice of that would render it most delectable, and such as wherein holy hearts may acquiesce, and rest with fullest satisfaction,—the sufficiency—and the communicableness of it.

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

(2.) The communicableness thereof; which proceeds from his bounty, more peculiarly, and his gracious inclination to do good, and make his boundless fulness overflow to the replenishing of thirsty,

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

Wherefore it will be fit to steer a larger course, than merely to consider him as a good commensurate to our partial appetites; which are apt to prescribe to, and limit our apprehensions to this or that particular sort of good, and tincture them with such a notion of delight, as which, if it be not false and grossly carnal, may yet be much too narrow and unproportionable to the universal, all-comprehending good. And though we shall not here go beyond the compass of delectable good; yet as there is no good, truly so called, which is not in or from the first goodness; so indeed, nor is there any capable of being gathered up into that sum which is not delectable.

Nor, therefore, can the usual distribution of goodness into profitable, honest, and pleasant, bear a strict test. Only the false relishes of vitiated appetite, in this corrupted state of man, have given ground for it. Otherwise to a mind and will that is not distempered, the account would be much otherwise. To a prudent mind, profitable

good would be pleasant, even as it is profitable. To a just and generous mind, honest, comely good would be pleasant, even as it is honest. Nor would there need another distinction, but into the goodness of the end, which is pleasant for itself, and the goodness of the means, which is pleasant as it is honestly and decently profitable (and otherwise it cannot be) thereunto.

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

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

Secondly, That however God himself is truly said to be enjoyed or delighted in by holy souls; yet this communication is also a sort of mediate object of this delight or enjoyment.

These things being forelaid, it is now needful to inquire somewhat more distinctly what that communication or communicable good is, which is the immediate matter of proper, spiritual enjoyment unto holy men in this world: because many have that phrase of speech, enjoying God, often in their mouths, that well understand not what they mean by it; yea, even divers of them that have real enjoyment of him; unto whom therefore, though they possibly taste the thing which they cannot express, or form distinct conceptions of, it might be somewhat to their advantage to have it more cleared up to their apprehension, what it is that they immediately enjoy when they are said to enjoy God; or by what he is to be enjoyed. It is not a mere fancy (as too many profanely think, and are too apt to speak) that is the thing to be enjoyed. There have been those, who, comparing their own experience with God's promises and precepts, (the rule by which he imparts, and according whereto men are to expect, his gracious influence) were capable of avowing it, rationally, to be some very substantial thing they have had the enjoyment of. The sobriety of their spirits, the regularity of their workings, their gracious composure, the meekness, humility, denial of self, the sensible refreshing, the mighty strength and vigour which hath accompanied such enjoyments, sufficiently proving to them that they did not hug an empty cloud, or embrace a shadow, under the name of enjoying God. Such expressions as we find in the book of Psalms (the 16 and many other) with sundry parts of scripture besides, leave us not without instance, that import nothing like flashy and flaunting bombast, no appearance of affectation, no pompous show of vain glory, no semblance of swelling words of vanity, but which discover a most equal, orderly, well-poised temper of mind, in conjunction with the highest delight and well pleasedness in God. That rich and unimitable fulness of living sense could not but be from the apprehension of a most excellent nature and kind, whatsoever be the notion that may be most fitly put upon it.

Nor yet is it the mere essence of God which men can be said to enjoy; for that is not communicated nor communicable. Enjoyment supposes possession; but it would be a strange language to say we



possess the essence of God otherwise than relatively; which is not enough unto actual enjoyment. His mere essential presence is not enough. That renders him not enjoyed by any; for that is equally with all and every where; but all cannot be said to enjoy him.

As therefore it is a real, so there must be some special communication, by which, being received, we are truly said to enjoy him. A special good it must be, not such as is common to all. For there is a communication from him that is of that extent, inasmuch as all live and move and have their beings in him, and the whole earth is full of his goodness. This is a good peculiar to them that are born of God; and suited to the apprehension and sense of that divine creature which is so born.

What this good is, how fully sufficient it is, and how or which way it is communicable, may be the better understood when we have considered what are the wants and cravings of this creature, or of them in whom it is formed and wrought. For when we have pitched upon the very thing itself which they most desire, (and which they can tell is it, when they hear it named, though their thoughts are not so well formed about it as to give it the right name before) we shall then understand it to be both what will be sufficient to satisfy, and what may be communicated to that purpose. But now, before that new birth take place in the spirit of man, it wants but knows not what; craves indeterminately, "who will show us any good?" not fixing upon any particular one that is sufficient and finite, and labouring at once, under an ignorance of the infinite, together with a disaffection thereunto. Its wants and cravings are beyond the measure of all finite good; for suppose it to have never so large a share, nay, could it grasp and engross the whole of it, an unsatisfiedness and desire of more would still remain. But that more is somewhat indeterminate and merely imaginary: an infinite nothing: an idol of fancy: a God of its own making. God it must have; but what a one he is it misapprehends, and wherein it rightly apprehends him, likes and loves him not; will by no means choose, desire, or take complacency in him. So that an unregenerate soul is,

while, it is such, necessarily doomed to be miserable. It cannot be happy in any inferior good; and in the supreme, it will not. What the real wants and just cravings of a man's spirit therefore are, is not to be understood by considering it in that state. And if the work of the new creature were perfected in it, it would want and crave no more; but were satisfied fully, and at perfect rest. Nor is that state so known to us as yet. Therefore they are best to be discerned in the state wherein that work is begun and hitherto unfinished; in which it therefore desires rightly, and still continues to desire; a state of intermingled motion and rest; wherein delight is imperfect, and allayed by the continual mixture of yet unsatisfied desire. And yet it may be collected what it is that would be sufficient to satisfy; because their desire is still determined to one thing, (Ps. 27:4,) is not vagrant, wanders not after things of another kind, but is intent only upon more of the same. Now let it be inquired of such a one what that is. We are generally told there, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord," &c. And it may be many would more shortly tell you it is God they desire, whence it would only be concluded it is God they aim to enjoy or delight in. But because this brings us but where we were; let it be further inquired, what then is your business with God, or what would you have of him? It is not, sure, to be God that you expect or seek, or to enjoy God in that sense wherein he possesses and enjoys himself. No, not by any means. It is then some communication from God, diverse from what all men have (for that they do not find apt to satisfy) which they desire and crave. And what is that? It is somewhat, as possible to be apprehended, and as distinguishable both from his incommunicable Being, and his so generally communicated bounty towards all. As if the inquiry were, what it is that I desire really to enjoy when I desire to enjoy a friend? (viz. as the notion of a friend or friendship doth most properly import.) That is, neither to desire the impossible thing, of possessing his being as my own; nor the unsatisfying thing, the mere partaking some part of his external goods and wealth; whereof it may be he daily imparts somewhat to every beggar at his door; but it is to have his intimate acquaintance, his counsel and

advice, the advantage of improving myself by his converse, and of conforming myself to his example in his imitable perfections, the assurances of his faithful, constant love and friendship, in reference to all future emergencies. A friend is really to be enjoyed in such things as these.

And in such-like is God to be enjoyed also. But with this difference, that God's communications are more immediate, more constant, more powerful and efficacious, infinitely more delightful and satisfying, in respect both of the good communicated, and the way of communication.

In short, then, the wants and desires of a renewed soul, the supply and satisfaction whereof it seeks from God, would be summed up in these things:—That it may know him more fully, or have clearer apprehensions of him;—That it may become like to him, and framed more perfectly after his own holy image;—That it may be ascertained of his love and good will, that he hath those favourable inclinations towards it which shall certainly infer his doing all that for it which its real necessities (to be estimated by his infinite wisdom) can call for. These are the things in kind which would satisfy it. And answerably to these we may conceive the communicable good which is the immediate object of their enjoyment; so that, as God himself is the object which is enjoyed; this is the object by which, or in respect whereof, he is enjoyable.

Therefore the divine communication, or that which is communicated from God to regenerate souls wherein they are to delight themselves, contains in it,

I. An inwardly enlightening revelation of himself to them, that they may know him more distinctly. This is a part of the one thing, would be so highly satisfying and delightful. "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," John 14:8. When their desires are towards God only, it is with this aim, in the first place, that they may know him, which is supposed when that is given as an encouragement to the pursuit of

this knowledge, we "shall know if we follow on to know the Lord," (Hos. 6:3;) as if it had been said, this is a thing not doubted of, but taken for granted, that we would fain know the Lord; we shall, "if we follow on," &c. This is a dictate of pure and primitive nature to covet the knowledge of our own original, him from whom we and all things sprang. Men are herein become most unnaturally wicked when they "like not to retain God in their knowledge," Rom. 1:28. The new and divine nature once imparted, that is, primitive nature renewed and restored to itself, revives the desire of this knowledge, and in compliance with the present exigency of the case hath this inclination ingrafted into it, to know him (as he is now only to be comfortably known) viz. in the Mediator. "I determined to know nothing among you (saith St. Paul) but Jesus Christ," &c. (1 Cor. 2:2,) i. e. to glory in, to make show of, to discover myself taken with no other knowledge than this, or with none so much as this. To which purpose, he elsewhere professes to "count all things loss for the excellency of this knowledge," (Phil. 3:8,) so vehemently did desire work this way. And proportionally as it is apprehended desirable, must it be esteemed delightful also. Nor are we here to think that this desired knowledge was intended finally to terminate in the Mediator, for that the very notion of mediator resists. The name Christ is the proper name of that office, and the desire of knowing him under that name imports a desire to know him in his office, viz. as one that is to lead us to God, and restore our acquaintance with him, which was not to be recovered upon other terms. So that it is ultimately the knowledge of God that is the so much desired thing, and of Christ as the way, and our conductor to God: that is, the knowledge of God not absolutely considered alone, (though he is, even so, a very delectable object, as hath been said;) but as he is related to us, and from whom we have great expectations, our all being comprehended in him. It cannot but be very delightful (answerably to a certain sort of delectation of which we shall have occasion to speak in its proper place) to have him before our eyes represented and revealed to us as the all-comprehending good, and that (in the way and method whereinto things are now cast) may, at least, become our portion. He is some way to be enjoyed even in this view. It is a thing apt to infer

complacency and delight thus to look upon him. They who place felicity in contemplation, especially in the contemplation of God, are not besides the mark if they do not circumscribe and confine it there, so as to make it stand in mere contemplation, or in an idle and vainly curious view of so glorious an object, without any further concern about it. They will then be found to speak very agreeably to the language of holy scripture which so frequently expresses the blessedness of the other state by seeing God. And if the act of vision be delicious, the representation of the object must have proportionable matter of delight in it. It cannot but have so, if we consider the nature of this representation; which, answerably to the sensible want and desire of such as shall be delighted there-with, must have somewhat more in it than the common appearances of God which offer themselves equally to the view of all men; though it is their own as common fault, that they are destitute of the more grateful and necessary additions. That it hath more in it, is evident from God's own way of speaking of it. For we find that his revealing himself in this delectable way,

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

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

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

(1.) It is much more distinct and clear. They are confused and dark glimmerings which other men have of the blessed God, so that "the light which is in them is darkness," Matt. 6:23. It is true that an unregenerate person may possibly have clearer acquired notions of God, and of the things of God, than those may be which are of the same kind only in some who are regenerate. So that he may,—by the advantages he may have above some of the other in respect of better natural abilities, more liberal education, such circumstances of his condition as may more engage him to study and contemplation, and befriend him therein,—be capable of finding out more, of making fuller discoveries and more evident deductions, and be able to discourse thence more rationally and satisfyingly to others, even

concerning God, his nature, attributes, and works, than some very pious persons destitute of those advantages may be able to do. But these, though their candle give a dimmer light than the other's, have the beams of a sun raying in upon them that much outshines the other's candle. And though they know not so many things, nor discern the connections of things so thoroughly; yet as they do know what is most necessary to be known, so what they do know, they know better, and with a more excellent sort of knowledge, proportionally as whatsoever is originally and immediately divine cannot but much excel that which is merely human. Those do but blunder in the dark, these in God's own light do see light. Ps. 36:9. And his light puts a brighter hue and aspect upon the same things than any other representation can put upon them. Things are by it represented to the life, which to others carry with them but a faint and languid appearance, and are all covered over with nothing else but dark and dusky shadows, so as that may be "hid from the wise and prudent which is revealed to babes," Matt. 11:25. How bright and glorious things are divine wisdom, love, holiness, to an enlightened mind! which is therefore supposed to have a clearer discovery of them.

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

mentioned, his wisdom, holiness, &c.) besides the truth of the conceptions that may be formed about them; which is more clearly apprehensible to a divinely enlightened understanding than to one that is not so. As,

First. The beauty of those truths, which it is most delightful to behold; their lively sparkling lustre, by which they appear so amiable and lovely to a well-tempered spirit, as to transport it with pleasure, and ravish it from itself into union with them. There was somewhat else apprehensible no doubt, and apprehended by them the inward sentiments of whose souls those words so defectively served to express, "Who is like unto thee O Lord, among the gods, who is like thee, glorious in holiness?" &c. besides the mere truth of any propositions that those words can be resolved into. And so in those, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" &c. And those, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that," &c. or those: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, whereof I am chief:" or the strains of that rapturous prayer,— "That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." There is a certain acceptableness in some truths, necessary to their being received in the love thereof, which is peculiarly so represented to some, as that their apprehension is clear and vivid beyond that of other men; who, however they have the representation of the same things, yet have not the same representation; though, if they be things of necessary and common concernment, it is (as was said) their own fault that they have it not. And to have yet clearer apprehensions of this sort, is what the renewed soul doth most earnestly crave, and would be proportionably delighted with.



Secondly. The tendency of such truths is much more clearly conceivable to a holy soul than another; what their scope and aim, or aspect is, which way they look, and what they drive at or lead to. I mean not what other truth they are connected with and would aptly tend to infer; but what design God hath upon us in revealing them, and what impression they ought to make upon us. To the ignorance or disregard of which tendency and design of God's revelation, it is to be attributed that many have long the same notions of things hovering in their minds, without ever reflecting with any displeasure upon the so vastly unsuitable temper of their spirits thereto. They know, it may be, such things concerning God, the tendency whereof is to draw their hearts into union with him, to transform them into his likeness, to inflame them with his love. But they still remain notwithstanding at the greatest distance, most unsuitable, averse, coldly affected towards him, yea, utterly opposite and disaffected; and fall not out with themselves upon this account, have no quarrel nor dislike, take not any distaste at themselves for it. They take no notice of an incongruity and unfitness in the ill temper of their own spirits; but seem as if they thought all were very well with them, nothing amiss; and apprehend not a repugnancy in their habitual dispositions towards God to their notions of him. For a vicious prejudice blinds their eyes; their corrupt inclinations and rotten hearts send up a malignant, dark, and clammy fog and vapour, and cast so black a cloud upon these bright things, that their tendency and design is not perceived: that prejudice not being conceived so much against the abstract notions of the things themselves, (whence they are entertained with less reluctancy) but only against the design and scope of them. Against which poisonous cloud God's own glorious revelation directs its beams, dissolves its gross consistency, scatters its darkness, as to them to whom he by special grace affords it. Whereupon, observing any remainders of the same distemper in their spirits, though it be in a considerable degree abated and lessened, they are ashamed of themselves for it, filled with confusion, yea and indignation; do loathe and abhor, and could even be ready, if it were possible, to run away from themselves. And what is the reason of this so great difference? Surely somewhat appears

discernible to these in God's revelation of himself, which to the other doth not. They have then before their eyes a more clear prospect of the aim and scope of it; which, so far as they have it, pleases them, for they like the design well, only they are displeas'd at themselves that they comport no more with it. And as the end therefore aimed at is desirable to them, and would be delightful (as will be shown in its proper place), so is it to have that representation immediately offer'd to the view of their souls, which hath so apt and comely an aspect thereon, not merely for its own sake, but for the sake of the end itself.

Wherefore there is somewhat to be apprehended by God's representation of himself to the minds of this regenerate people, at least more clearly than by other men. Whence the work of regenerating or converting them itself, is expressed by "opening their eyes," Act. 26:18. For the divine communication makes its own way, and enters at the eye, the soul's seeing faculty, which it doth find (as opening the eyes imports) and not now create: but finding it vitiated, and as to any right seeing of God shut and closed up, it heals, opens, and restores it as it enters. It is expressed, by "turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan (the prince of that darkness, the god of this world, who had blinded their eyes) unto God." Which (because they cannot turn and move towards God blind-fold, and that this opening their eyes is in order to their turning to God) implies, that their eyes were so distemper'd, blinded, and sealed up, chiefly towards him; so that, though they could see other things, him they could not see; but he was invisible to their intellectual, as well as their bodily, eyes. Hence also is that understanding said to be given (i. e. as rectified and renewed) by which we know God; which implies it to be (wherein it is now given) somewhat superadded to the whole natural being and powers of the human soul, as in its present corrupted state,—He hath given us an understanding to "know him that is true," 1 John 5:20. And that given rectitude of understanding is by such a communication from God, as hath that aptitude and power in it to infer so happy a change. The same renewing work is also said to be a calling of men "out of

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

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

It is very possible those things may be distinctly understood, which the more we understand, the more we disbelieve them, through their apprehended inconsistency with themselves or some certain truth. The delectable things of God, his own discovery procures at once, by one and the same radiation of light, both to be clearly understood, and effectually believed. Others have the word of faith, without the spirit of faith. The faith therefore which they have is a carcase; not a

weak only, (which imports but diminished power) but a dead thing; and which hath no power at all to determine the soul and compose it to that delightful rest which such things, duly believed, would certainly infer. The most delectable truths of God, and such as most directly tend (in this apostate, lapsed state of man) to give us the sweet and refreshing relishes of a just and rational joy and pleasure, are such as are contained in the gospel of Christ; the things that concern our reconciliation, friendship, and communion with God in him, and which are therefore wholly of immediately divine and supernatural revelation, and to be received by faith. Therefore one apostle prays for some that they might be "filled with joy and peace in believing," Rom. 15:3. And another says of others that "believing they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. 1:8. The external revelation in the gospel is an apt means to beget that faith which it is said "comes by hearing." But the very notion of means, importing what intervenes to the effect, between that and the principal agent, necessarily supposes such an agent; and that what is only means, cannot work the effect alone. That Agent, viz. (in this case) God himself, or the Spirit, besides the means which he uses and makes effectual, must have his own influence whereby he makes them so. If a pen be a fit means or instrument to write with, it doth not therefore follow that it can write alone without a hand to move and guide it, in order whereto a motive and directive influence is imparted. In the present case, the influence is the inward, enlightening, overpowering communication, whereof we speak; the efficacy whereof is such as to give the soul that peaceful rest in believing, which is also most pleasant and delightful, according as the things are found to be so which are believed. Nor doth it in order hereto work by way of enthusiastical impulsion, without any reference to the external revelation that is rationally and aptly suitable to the working of the effect: for then, that should no way have the place so much as of means. But there being sufficient inducement to persuade that this external revelation is divine (so as to procure a rational assent to the things revealed, with any man that, having that revelation with the account of its first confirmations, shall but use his understanding in reference thereto,

and is not besotted to a party of sworn enemies to the Christian name;) this inward revelation then falling in, captivates his heart to an entire unitive closure with the great things contained in the outward one, and principally with the Son of God himself; unto which union that whole revelation is most directly subservient. Therefore it was, that when divers others (of whom it is said, and particularly of Judas, that they believed not) forsook Christ, Peter and the other apostles stuck so resolutely to him, because, "we believe (say they) and are sure that thou art Christ the Son of the living God," John 6:64, 69; which assurance we may then conclude was much of another sort than that of Judas; though we cannot suppose him to have wanted a rational certainty of the same truth, sufficient to have overcome objections in his judgment, but not sufficient to overcome the contrary corrupt inclinations of his wicked heart. Therefore as the inward revelation uses not to do its work without the outward, (for I suppose we have not heard of many Christians where the gospel hath not been,) so nor is the outward revelation able, alone, to beget that which, in the more eminent sense, goes in Scripture under the name of faith. It may beget that merely intellectual certainty, which may prevail against all doubts and objections in a man's mind to the contrary, but not the contrary inclinations of his corrupt will. Most men's faith is but opinionative, and many men's never reaches so high as to a rational opinion: that proceeds upon having balanced considerations on both sides, and inclines to that part on which there seems to be the most weighty; whereas the faith (as they call it) of too many is no other thing than a merely blind and sequacious humour, grounded upon nothing but a willingness to be in the fashion; or the apprehension of disgrace, with other inconveniences, if where that is the common profession one should profess to be anything but a Christian; or a lazy indifferency easily determinable to that part which is next at hand to be chosen; or it may be, they never having heard of another profession—which precludes any choice at all.

But admit it did arrive to a rational certainty, as it easily might with them that have, with the external requisite advantages, competent

understanding, patience, diligence, and impartiality to consider; that is, suppose it to proceed upon that abundant evidence which the case will admit, that the Christian doctrine hath been testified by God, and that God's testimony cannot deceive; there needs more to win and overcome men's hearts; which must be done ere the things revealed in the gospel can be apprehended delectable. What can any man have greater certainty of, in a mere human way, than all men have that they must die? And yet how few are there whose spirits are formed hereby to any seriousness agreeable to that persuasion? Whatever way a man comes to be certain of any thing that hath a contrary tendency to the bent of his habitually wicked heart, he needs more than the evidence of the thing, to make it efficaciously determine his will against his former vicious course. If the matter be such as properly falls under faith, that faith grounds upon the authority of God, apprehended as avouching the truth of that revelation to which we subscribe our assent. But then it is lively or languid, according as the apprehension is, we have of that avouchment. But the apprehension which is only the product of the external revelation, even recommended by the most advantageous and convincing circumstances, is too faint to command the soul. Who, amongst all the people of the Jews at Mount Horeb, could have any doubt, but the authority that avouched the law there given them was divine? And yet how boldly do they rush into idolatry, against the express letter of that law; while the sound of that dreadful voice of words which delivered it, could hardly, one would think, be well out of their ears! And though they could not doubt of God's authority, yet, for all that, their frequent rebellions are plainly resolved into their infidelity. "How long will this people provoke me?" Num. 14:11. And, "how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them?" "Yea, they despised the pleasant land: they believed not his word," Psalm 106:24. Or what place could be left for rational doubt, with the multitudes that beheld the miracles of our Lord Jesus, but that they were God's own seal affixed purposely to the doctrine taught by him? Yet how few (though we must suppose many convinced) did heartily believe in him! More, abundantly, did upon a less advantageous external revelation after

his ascension. And the reason is plainly told us; "the Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified," John 7:39. And how expressly have we it from his own mouth, (after he had interpreted coming to him by believing on him, John 6:35,) "No man can come unto me, except the Father that hath sent me draw him," v. 44. And afterwards having said, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth," (v. 63, 64,) he adds, "But there are some of you that believe not," (so that no man's professed assent, though as forward a professor as Judas was, there referred to, will in strict account entitle him a believer, if it be not produced by the quickening influence of the Spirit;) and then repeats, "Therefore I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father," v. 65. And what provocation the Father had to withhold that quickening Spirit, so generally, from that people, any one may see that reads their story. Upon which, by the recess of that Spirit, they are hardened to as great a miracle as formerly their Egyptian oppressors were many ages before; there being indeed no greater miracle as was said of old, than that men should not believe upon the sight of so many miracles. And this dreadful dereliction, and consequent obduration, we see is referred to primitive justice as a vindictive dispensation; "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (John 12:37, 38; Isa. 53:1,) where it is obvious to observe, that the believing of the gospel report owes itself to the revelation of God's arm, or requires the exerting of his power, agreeable to that of the apostle, "That ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead," &c. Eph. 1:19. And how the arm of the Lord came not to be revealed, or that power not to be put forth, is intimated in what follows: "Therefore they could not believe, because (for which Esaias is again quoted,) he had blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts," &c. (Isa. 6:9, 10,) which shows, that as that blinding and hardening of eyes and hearts, in some superadded degrees thereof, is the effect of a penal dereliction or retraction of

God's arm, for former obstinate opposition to the external revelation of the gospel, so that there is a precedent blindness and hardness, not otherwise vincible than by the arm of the Lord; and which, it being penally withheld, will naturally grow worse and worse. And certainly that, upon the withholding whereof such things certainly ensue as are inconsistent with believing, must needs itself be necessary to it. All which things considered do so plainly speak the insufficiency of a mere external revelation, and the necessity of an internal besides, unto that faith which is the immediate spring of delight in God, that it is not needful to insist upon many plain texts of scripture besides, that fully say the same thing. As that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. 12:3. And again, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God," 1 John 4:15. And "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God," Ch. 5:1. Upon which words, with many more of like import in the sacred volume, no sense can be put which is tolerable, and not the same with what we have above asserted.

In short, faith is a part of homage paid to the authority of the great God, which is to be estimated sincere according as it answers the end for which the things to be believed were revealed. That end is not to beget only the notion of those things, as truths that are to be lodged in the mind and go no further; as if they were to be understood true only that they might be so understood; but that the person might accordingly have his spirit formed, and might shape the course of his whole conversation; therefore is it called "the obedience of faith;" and the same word which is wont to be rendered unbelief, signifies disobedience, obstinacy, unpersuadableness; being from a theme which (as is known) signifies to persuade. So that this homage is then truly given to the eternal God, when his revelation is complied with and submitted to, according to the true intent and purpose of it; which that it may be, requires that his Spirit urge the soul with his authority, and overpower it into an awful subjection thereto: the soul being so disjointed by the apostacy that its own faculties keep not (in reference to the things of God) their natural order to one another,



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

their powers. A revelation of God, that is of such a nature, cannot but be highly delectable;

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

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

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

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

But besides that, though most naturally following thereupon, it also includes,

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

Concerning this likeness, and the satisfyingness of it, in its perfect state, though much hath been discoursed elsewhere, it will be requisite to say somewhat here also, that may bear a more direct reference to the present imperfect state of the regenerate in this world. That communication of God which must be supposed afforded them, in order to their delighting in him, could signify little to that purpose, if with deformed and diseased souls they were only to look upon a very lovely object; still themselves remaining what they were. Nor doth it delight them only as it is apprehended apt and aiming to work a happy change in them; but as it doth it, or hath in part done it; as like an active, quick flame, it passes through their souls,

searches, melts them, burns up their dross, makes them a new lump or mass, forms them for God's own use and converse.

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

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

favourable inclination towards us, are an apt means (but not more than a means) to render us well-natured (not cross, thwarting, contrary) unto him. Faith admits the gospel-discovery into the soul, and of an external word without, makes it become an ingrafted word; the word of Christ dwelling richly in us: and so gives it the advantage of becoming thus mightily operative; for unto them only who believe is it the "power of God to salvation." And being received, "not as the word of man, but as the word of God," it works effectually in them that believe. To them who believe it not, it signifies nothing; it is to them an empty sound, or only as a tale that is told. And inasmuch as the gospel-revelation is the instrument of this impression, by it the impression must be measured, with it must it agree. Which revelation being expressive of the nature of God, and of his mind and will in reference to us, the impression cannot but be agreeable to that revelation; but it must also carry in it the resemblance and likeness of God himself; for the gospel-revelation is God's seal; the stamp upon it is a model of his image. Whence, therefore, the soul sealed therewith, bears on it at once the signature both of the Author and the instrument. But because our best and surest way of forming true and right apprehensions of God, is to attend and guide ourselves by the representation that is there made of him, (for it were useless and in vain, if letting our thoughts work at random without reference to it, we might conceive as fitly of God and his mind concerning us, as by the direction and guidance of it,) therefore are we to aim at conformity to God as he is there represented. For that is the proper likeness to him we are to inquire after (and which only could be impressed by his gospel) that is expressed and represented there: "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory," 2 Cor. 3:18. It is by the glory of the Lord, shining through that glass, that we are changed. And the image whereinto we are changed is the same image that is to be seen in that glass. For there God hath provided such a representation of himself and of his mind should appear, as is most suitable to our case and state, and which it most concerned us to have the view and the image of. That represents him in his imitable excellencies, and shows what he is towards us, what his counsels,

determinations, and constitutions are concerning us, and hereupon shows what we should be, or what temper of spirit becomes us in reference to such a revelation. And such, when we receive this his impressive communication, he really makes us thereby become. And then is it that it will be found most highly delectable. A heart formed according to the revelation of God in Christ, and cast into the mould of the gospel (as is the import of the apostle's words, Rom. 6:17,— "Ye have obeyed from the heart the doctrine, into the type or frame whereof ye were delivered,") hath a spring of pleasure in itself; not of perfect, unmixed pleasure; for there is much yet remaining, that cannot but be very displeasing and offensive to such as have learned no longer to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, and have senses exercised to discern betwixt good and evil. And indeed by the same vital principle the soul is made capable, both of the sweetest delights, and the quickest sense of pain; while it was dead, it was sensible of neither.

Nor is it an original spring. Whatever it hath that is good and pleasant comes from a higher head, and is communicated. But the communication remains not in this heart as in a dead receptacle, but creates the soul where it is, a living spring itself. "The Lord shall satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and as a spring of water whose waters fail not," Isa. 58:11. After which it follows, "then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord," &c. v. 14. So though the waters that are so pleasantly refreshing to holy souls are given by Christ; yet, he himself tells us, they shall be in him to whom they are given "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," John 4:14. Whence also the good man is said to be "satisfied from himself," Prov. 14:14; and the mouth of the righteous to be "a well of life;" Prov. 10:11, i. e. to others, much more must his heart be so to himself. Nor indeed can there be a vainer or more absurd design and expectation, than to aim immediately at delights and joys, without ever looking after that transforming, purifying, quickening communication from God, in which he is to be enjoyed; which is, apparently, the most prejudicial and dangerous mistake, the practical error (and so much the worse

therefore) of many persons of much pretence to religion, that dream and boast of nothing less than raptures and transports, having never yet known or felt what the work of regeneration or the new creature means: and having only got some notions of God and Christ, that tickle their fancies without ever changing their hearts, these go for divine enjoyments. Others somewhat awakened and convinced but not renewed, though they do not pretend already to have, yet do (from the same mistaken apprehension) as vainly seek and catch at joys and sweetnesses; while their unsanctified hearts do yet lie steeped in the gall of bitterness. And they wonder and complain that they feel not in themselves the delights whereof they find Scripture sometimes make mention, while in the mean time they expect and snatch at them in that preposterous, impossible way, as to abstract them from the things themselves, wherein the pleasure and delight lies. They would have delight without the delectable good that must immediately afford and yield it, or without foregoing noisome evils that resist and hinder it; which therefore makes it necessary to treat the more largely of the delightful communication by which only intervening souls are capable of delighting in God.

And as to this branch of it, the vital, sanctifying, transforming influence, whereby the soul is wrought to a conformity to the gospel; if we take a somewhat more distinct view of it, we shall find it cannot but have in it abundant matter of delight. In the general, the thing here to be communicated is a universal rectitude of temper and dispositions, including—the removal of such as are sinful and corrupt; and—the settlement of such as are holy and gracious;—both to be measured and estimated, as to their good or evil, by the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now surely that must be a blessed and delightful state (and it is that towards which this divine communication gradually tends) wherein a wretched soul, that was lost in the impurities of sin, shall be stripped and unclothed of all the pravity, perverse inclinations, corrupt affections, which the gospel of Christ condemns; and invested with all the parts of that purity, that gracious and holy frame, which that gospel recommends. For as the former carry in them matter of certain vexation and anguish, which it

is hereby freed from; so the latter manifestly carry in themselves matter of unspeakable delight and pleasure, which it hereby partakes. And by the same degrees by which this divine communication infers the latter of these, it expels the former. By the same degrees by which any are made partakers of the divine nature, they escape the corruptions which are in the world through lust. And that we may be here a little more particular, without descending into the innumerable particularities which might be severally spoken of upon this occasion; we shall only consider this heart-rectifying communication, in reference to some of the more principal things towards which the spirit of man may be either perversely, or duly and aright inclined; that we may see what matter of delight it infers and brings with it. In order whereto it must be considered, that wherein it is transforming it is also enlivening, and therefore furnishes the soul with the power of spiritual sensation; whereby it comes to apprehend its former temper as very grievous and detestable; not only being entire and undiminished, but even the relics of it which do yet remain; and proportionably, the holy frame to be introduced as highly covetable and to be infinitely desired.

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

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

1. As to himself its end. It finds upon reflection it was dead towards God, without motion towards him, without inclination, all its powers bent and set quite another way; so that to persuade it to begin a course of holy motion towards God, was a like thing as to persuade a stone to fly upwards. It could not trust the original Truth, nor love the sovereign Good, nor obey the supreme Authority. Its course was nothing else but continual recession from him, towards whom it should have been continually pressing forward with all its might. It was wont to say to him in whom was its life and all its hope, "Depart



from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" was utterly alienated from the life of God, and did choose to live as without him in the world. And although it still remain thus in too great a degree, yet as it abhors this as a hateful way of living, and desires it may be otherwise; so is it sensibly delightful that it doth in some degree perceive a change; that now it can find itself returning into its right and natural state of subordination to God: which, while it was out of it, laid that claim to it, that its dislocation was uneasy, and it could have no rest; though it was not aware what the matter was with it, and could never thoroughly apprehend that it ought (much less could desire or aim) to return. And if in returning, and its continual course afterwards (which ought to be but a continuing return and moving back towards God,) there be much cause for the exercise of repentance, the disposition whereto is a part of that new nature now communicated, yet even such relentings as are due and suitable upon this account are not unpleasant. There is pleasure mingled with such tears, and with those mournings which are not without hope, and which flow naturally and without force from a living principle within, as waters from their still-freshly springing fountain. When the soul finds itself unbound and set at liberty; when it can freely pour out itself to God, dissolve kindly and melt before him; it doth it with regret only at what it hath done and been, not at what it is now doing, except that it can do it no more; affecting even to be infinite herein, while it yet sees it must be confined within some bounds. It loves to lie in the dust and abase itself; and is pleased with the humiliation, contrition, and brokenness of heart which repentance towards God includes in it. So that as God is delighted with this sacrifice, so it is with the offering of it up to him. Many men apprehend a certain sweetness in revenge; such a one finds it only in this just revenge upon himself. How unexpressible pleasure accompanies its devoting itself to God, when bemoaning itself, and returning with weeping and supplication, it says, "Now, lo! I come to thee, thou art the Lord my God. I have brought thee back thine own, what I had sacrilegiously alienated and stolen away, the heart which was gone astray, that hath been so long a vagabond and fugitive from thy blessed presence, service, and communion. Take now the soul

which thou hast made; possess thy own right; enter upon it; stamp it with the entire impression of thine own seal, and mark it for thine. Other lords shall no more have dominion. What have I to do any more with the idols wherewith I was wont to provoke thee to jealousy? I will now make mention of thy name, and of thine only. I bind myself to thee in everlasting bonds, in a covenant never to be forgotten."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

friendship; therefore it was also necessary that so the soul might duly move towards God, it should be rightly framed and disposed also towards him.

2. We are therefore to consider, too, how delectable this communication must be, as it aright disposes the heart towards Christ, our way to God. For towards him we must understand it to have been most obstinately and inflexibly averse; and that, therefore, a mighty communication of power was necessary to set it right here. Unto that part of religion which is natural there was so much of an advantage before-hand, as that there was an old foundation to build upon. There are some notions of God left, not only concerning his existence, but his nature and attributes, many of them; and from the apprehension what he was, it was in some measure discernible what we should have been, and ought yet to be towards him; and from thence many checks and rebukes of conscience wherein it was found to be otherwise: so that here was somewhat in nature to be wrought upon, as to this part of religion. But as to that part which respects the Mediator, this was a frame wholly to be raised up from the ground. There were no principles immediately and directly inclining to take part with the gospel, but all to be implanted anew; the way that God would take to bring back souls to him being so infinitely above all human thought. And, therefore, though to a considering Pagan it would not sound strangely that God ought to be trusted, feared, loved, &c. yet even to such the gospel of Christ was foolishness. Besides, that this way of dealing with men was not only unknown and unimaginable to them, not so much as once thought of, or to be guessed at; but the tendency and aspect of it (when it should come to be made known) was such as that it could not but find the temper of men's spirits most strongly opposite; not merely ignorant, but prejudiced and highly disaffected. For this course most directly tended to take men quite off from their old bottom; to stoop and humble, and even bring them to nothing; to stain the pride of their glory, and lay them down in the dust as abject wretches, in themselves fit for nothing but to be trampled on and crushed by the foot of divine revenge. Suppose a man to have admitted a conviction

from the light of his own mind or conscience that he was a sinner, and had offended his Maker, incurred his just displeasure, and made himself liable to his punishing justice; it would yet have been a hard matter to make him believe it altogether impossible to him to do anything to remedy the matter, and restore himself to divine favour and acceptance. He would naturally be inclined to think; why, admit the case be so, he should easily find out a way to make God amends. He would recount with himself all his own natural excellencies, and think himself very capable of doing some great thing, that should more than expiate his offence, and make recompence abundantly for any wrong that he had done. But when the gospel shall come and tell him he hath deserved eternal wrath, that his sin is inexpiable, but by everlasting sufferings, or what is of equal value; that here is one (the eternal Son of God) who became a man like himself, and thereupon a voluntary sacrifice, to make atonement for the transgression of men; that God will never accept another sacrifice for the sins of men than his, nor ever any service at their hands, but for his sake; that him now revealed to them they must receive, rely upon, and trust to wholly, or perish without mercy; yea, and that he hath put the government over them into his hands, laid it on his shoulders, and to him they must subject themselves as their Ruler and Judge, the great Arbiter of life and death to them and all men; that they are to be entirely devoted to him as long as they live, as their Redeemer and Lord; in him as they are to have righteousness and strength, so to him they must pay all possible homage and subjection, to him their knees must bow, and their tongues confess; they must receive the law from his mouth, be prescribed to by him, comply with his will, though never so much to the crossing of their own, and though notwithstanding they must know they can deserve nothing by it; that so vile and worthless miscreants they are become, that God will never have to do with them upon other terms:—when this shall appear the state of the case, and it comes to be apprehended, "Then must I yield myself a greater transgressor than ever I thought, and an undone, impotent, helpless wretch? I shall thus make nothing of myself; and what, must all my natural or acquired excellencies go just for nothing? and a person of such worth and accomplishments

as I, be thus brought down into the dust? yea, and besides, to be brought under such bonds, and profess to owe myself so entirely to a Redeemer, that I must for ever live after his will and pleasure, and no more at my own; and can never hope, if I take a liberty to indulge myself besides the allowance of his rules, that I can ever make any amends for such transgression by anything that I can do; so that by taking his gift (of my pardon and life) upon such terms, I shall sell my liberty, and render myself a perfect slave to his will and pleasure for ever." Here now cannot but be a strong stream to be striven against, and most vehement counter-strivings of the haughty and licentious spirit of man. So that it is not strange it should be said by our Saviour, "No man can come to me except my Father draw him;" and that the exceeding greatness of power, according to the workings of the mightiest power in any case, should be put forth upon them that believe. Therefore are men in Christ by creative power only; "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature," 2 Cor. 5:17. He is new made, if he be in him. And this aversion, being so deeply natural, will still in a degree remain (while anything of corrupt nature remains) in the hearts of even the regenerate themselves. Therefore a continual exertion of the same power will be ever requisite to hold souls to Christ, and retain them in their station in him. "He that establisheth us with you in Christ, is God," (2 Cor. 1:21,) q. d. it is only a God that can do this. Therefore how is God admired and adored upon this single account. "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began," (this was indeed a great secret to the lapsed world,) —"To God, only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen." Rom. 16:25, 27. But as the heart-rectifying communication from God, in this matter, is such as carries mighty power with it, so it doth proportionable pleasure, when it hath overcome, and (to the pitch of sincerity) set the soul right in this thing. How delectable is it to receive the Son of God, when the heart is made willing in the day of his power, when his cords take hold of the soul, and draw it to him! What pleasure is there in the consenting, self-resigning act and disposition!



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

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

And to receive him as our Lord, which is joined with that other capacity wherein we receive him, viz. of a Jesus or Saviour; "as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord," (Col. 2:6,) this also, and the heart-subduing influence that disposes to it, is most highly delectable. When the soul that was so stoutly averse, and that once said within itself, "I will not have him to reign over me," is brought freely to yield; and with sincere, loyal resolutions and affections devotes itself to him, consents to his government, submits its neck and shoulder to his yoke and burden, says to him with an ungainsaying heart, as its full sense, "Now, thou Lord of my life and hope, who hast so long striven with me, so oft and earnestly pressed me thereto, so variously dealt with me to make me understand thy merciful design, and who seekest to rule with no other aim or intent, but that thou mightest save; and who hast founded thy dominion in thy blood, and didst die, and revive, and rise again that thou mightest be Lord of the living and dead, and therefore my Lord, accept now a self-resigning soul. I make a free surrender of myself, I bow and submit to thy sovereign power, I fall at the footstool of thy throne, thou Prince of the kings of the earth, who hast loved sinners, and washed them from their sins in thy blood;—glory in thy conquest; thou hast overcome; I will from henceforth be no longer mine own, but thine; I am ready to receive thy commands, to do thy will, to serve thy interests, to sacrifice my all to thy name and

honour; my whole life and being are for ever thine:"—I say (as before) there is pleasure in the very doing this itself, as often as it is sincerely done. And it adds hereto, if it be more distinctly considered, it is no mean or any way undeserving person to whom this homage is paid, and obligation taken on unto future obedience. "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, the heir of all things, and who sustains all things by the word of his power;" it is he whose "name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace;" it is he to whom "all power is given both in heaven and earth," and (more especially) "power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given him;" it is he who "spoiled principalities and powers, and made an open show of them;"—he whom, because when he was "in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, he humbled himself, made himself of no reputation, took on him the form of a servant, became obedient to death, the Father hath therefore highly exalted, and given him a name above every name, that in his name every knee should bow;" and of whom, when he brought him (his first-born) into the world, he said, "Let all the angels of God worship him."

And such a one he is, whose temper is all goodness and sweetness. "Tell Sion, thy King cometh, meek and lowly." He came into this world, drawn down only by his own pity and love, beholding the desolations and ruins that were wrought in it everywhere; sin universally reigning, and death by sin, and spreading its dark shadow, and a dreadful cloud over all the earth. In which darkness the prince whereof was ruling, and leading men captive at his will, having drawn them off from the blessed God, their life, and sunk them into a deep oblivion of their own original, and disaffection to their true happiness that could only be found there. This great Lord and Prince of life and peace came down on purpose to be the Restorer of souls, to repair the desolations and ruins of many generations. He came full of grace and truth, and hath scattered blessings over the world wheresoever he came; hath infinitely obliged all that ever knew him: and is he "in whom all the nations of

the earth must be blessed." And who would not with joy swear fealty to him, and take pleasure to do him homage? Who would not recount with delight the unexpressible felicity of living under the governing power of such a one?

And if the tenor and scope of all his laws and constitutions be viewed over, what will they be found, but obligations upon men to be happy! How easy his yoke, how light his burden! What is the frame of his kingdom, or whereof doth it consist, but "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" And who would not now say, "This Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof," Ps. 97:1. Why should it not be triumphingly said among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth, that the world also shall be established, that it cannot be moved? "let the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the fields rejoice and all that is therein, and all the trees of the wood rejoice!" It is plain, that be the matter of joy here what it will, be there never so much cause of exultation and glorying in him, the righteousness and peace which his kingdom promises never actually take place, nor the joy that is in connexion therewith, till the Holy Ghost dispose and form men's spirits thereto, Rom. 14:17. For all this is but mere dream and idle talk to those who hear only of these things, and feel not that vital influence insinuating itself, that may give the living sense and savour of them. And we may rather expect seas and fields, beasts and trees, to sing his triumphant song, and chant his praises, than those men whose hearts are not attempered to his government, and who are yet under the dominion of another Lord, not being yet, "by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, made free from the law of sin and death." But where this is effectually done, how large matter of most rational pleasure do they find here; while there is nothing in that whole system of laws by which he governs, that is either vain, unequal, or unpleasant, or upon any account grievous? Only this is not the estimate of distempered spirits, or of any other than them in whose hearts his law is written, and who, "because they love him, keep his commandments," John 15:10. Unto love, his commands are most connatural; for "this is the

love of God, that we keep his commandments;" they are not grievous, (1 John 5:3,) i. e. (by the meiosis which some do reasonably enough apprehend in those words,) they are joyous, delightful, pleasant; but to them only who, being born of God, have overcome the world. This holy influence and communication of God is therefore grateful, and contributes not a little to delight, in this respect, that thereby men's spirits are rectified and set right towards God, viz. both towards the Creator and Redeemer.

Secondly. As hereby they are rectified towards men, having the universal law of love wrought deep into their hearts, being "filled with all goodness, righteousness, meekness, mercifulness;" apt to do no wrong, to bear any, to pity and help the distressed, love enemies, and, as there is opportunity, "to do good to all, especially to them that are of the household of faith;" we must understand in this, as well as in the other parts of that stamp which the Spirit of God puts on the souls of men, that the impression corresponds and answers to the seal, (as hath been said) the inward communication to the outward revelation of God's will; and so we find the matter is: for as divine precepts require this should be the temper of men's spirits, so the very things that compose and make up that blessed temper are said to be the fruits of his own Spirit; "the fruit of the Spirit is peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness," &c. Gal. 5:22, 23. And again, "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness and truth," Eph. 5:9. Now hath not that soul a spring of pleasure within itself, that is in these respects as God would have it be? that is conscious to itself of nothing but righteousness, goodness, benignity, candour towards any man, and is in all things acted by a spirit of "love, that suffereth long and is kind, that envieth not, that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and never faileth," (1 Cor. 13:4–8;) that so equally poises and acts a man's spirit, that he carries seemly and suitably towards all men; takes pleasure in the best, in the saints and excellent ones of the earth hath

all his delight; and is no worse affected, than to wish them better, even towards the very worst; neither envies the greatest, nor despises the meanest; neither is revengeful towards them that injure him, nor unthankful to them that oblige him; that is apt to learn of good men, and to teach the bad, by observing and giving the most imitable example; that is not undutiful to superiors, nor morose and unconvertible towards equals; that lives not to himself; is a common good to all within the sphere through which his activity can extend itself; that doth good with inclination, from the steady propension of his own will, and an implanted principle of goodness. It is evident, God hath formed such a man's spirit unto delight of the purest kind, and the best sort of pleasure; unto which they who are strangers, banish it from their own breasts, by the resistance and grief they give his blessed Spirit, thereby making it a stranger there; and by harbouring in their own bosoms their own tormentors, the pride, the wrath, the envy, the malice, the revengefulness, the bitterness of spirit, which as they render them uneasy and intolerable to all that are about them, so most of all to themselves; and which while they prey wherever they range abroad, yet still bite most keenly and tormentingly that heart itself wherein they are bred; as poisonous vipers gnawing the bowels which inclose them.

Thirdly. Towards themselves; which also may be considered distinctly; for though all the good qualifications we can mention or think of, do redound to a man's self, and turn to his own advantage, repose, and delight, (which it is the design of all this discourse to show,) yet there are some that more directly terminate on a man's self, wherein the rectitude we now speak of doth in great part consist. When we are obliged to love others as ourselves, it supposes not only an allowable, but a laudable, self-love. "Men shall praise thee when thou dost well to thyself." Before this right spirit be renewed in a man, he doth not only wound himself by blows that are reflected on him, and hurt at the rebound, but by many a direct stroke; or lets the wounds fester and corrupt, to the cure whereof he should with all diligence directly apply himself. How unpropitious and cruel to themselves are unholy persons! What wastes and desolations do they

commit and make in their own souls, by breaking the order God and nature did at first set and establish there; dethroning their own reason and judgment, which ought to bear sway and govern within them! This banishes delight, and drives it far away from them. They see what is fittest for them to do and seek, and run a quite counter course. What storms do they hereby raise in their own bosoms! What a torture is it, when a man's own light and knowledge bear a standing testimony against him, and hold him under a continual doom! How ill-disposed are men towards themselves, when they wholly neglect themselves in one kind, when they too much mind and seek themselves in another; when they too little understand themselves, so as not to put a true value on themselves, but do either disesteem themselves as to their more noble part, in respect of that common excellency which belongs to them with all other men; or do overmagnify themselves and are conceited, and too well opinioned of themselves in respect of any peculiar excellency wherein they imagine they outstrip others! How ill do they treat themselves in their self-indulgence, their gratifying their own sensual inclination, with the greatest danger and damage to their souls: when they care not at what expense they make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof! What unkind usage do they find at their own hands, when they cherish and countenance desires which they cannot gratify, and raise to themselves expectations of things not within their own power, which being disappointed turn into so many furies, and in that shape take a sharp revenge upon their own hearts! When they exercise no authority and dominion over themselves, preserve not the liberty due to what should both be itself free, and should command the rest in them; enslave themselves to vile and ignominious lusts and passions, put out their own eyes, and grind blindfold to the basest and most tyrannical lords, their own sordid humours, and base, mean appetites;—when though they serve more rigorous task-masters than the Israelites in Egypt did, and are more sorely beaten by them when their tale is not fulfilled for want of materials, yet groan not because of their hard bondage, nor affect liberty!

This gracious communication from God sets all things in a good degree right within: so that where there was nothing before but horrid and hellish darkness, disorder, and confusion, there now shines a mild, pleasant, cheerful light, that infers regularity, purity, and peace.

How great is the pleasure that arises from self-denial, (wherein we do, duly and as we ought, deny ourselves) not only as it is an act of duty towards God (of which before) but as it is an act of justice and mercy towards our own souls! That is, wherein we make a just and true estimate of ourselves; do esteem basely of ourselves wherein we are really become base and vile; and wherein there is anything of real value and excellency in our own beings, we value it only upon that account, and in that subordination, wherein it is truly valuable! How pleasant, when we have learned to forsake and abandon ourselves, when we are not apt to magnify and applaud, to trust or love, to seek and serve ourselves unduly, and are only inclined to own, to cleave and stick to ourselves, wherein and so far as we ought! When that idol self is no longer maintained within us, at the dear expense of our peace, comfort, safety, and eternal hope; an idol that engrossed the whole substance of our souls, that exhausted and devoured the strength and vigour of our spirits, which it doth not maintain, and cannot repair; which consumes our time, which keeps all our powers and faculties in a continual exercise and hurry, to make a costly, a vain, an unlawful provision for it! How great is the ease and pleasure which we feel in being delivered from that soul-wasting monster, that was fed and sustained at a dearer rate, and with more costly sacrifices and repasts, than can be paralleled by either sacred or other history; that hath made more desolation in the souls of men, than ever was made in their towns and cities where idols were served by only human sacrifices, or monstrous creatures satiated with only such refectations; or where the lives and safety of the most were to be bought out by the constant successive tribute of the blood of not a few; that hath devoured more, and preyed more cruelly upon human lives, than Moloch, or the Minotaur! When this monstrous idol is destroyed and trodden down, what a jubilee doth it make, what



songs of triumph and praise doth it furnish and supply to the poor soul, now delivered and redeemed from death and bondage! How much more easy and reasonable a service is it (when once the grace of God and their own experience give men to understand it) to study to please him than themselves! when they feel themselves dead to their former lord and service, and only "alive to God, through Jesus Christ! when sin no longer reigns in their mortal bodies, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof;—when they no more yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but have yielded themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead;—when being made free from sin, they are become servants unto righteousness!" Rom. 6:11, 12, 18. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus having made me free from the law of sin!" Rom. 8:2. What an ease is it to the spirit of a man, when he hath not himself to seek, and serve, and care for, in any unlawful, disallowed sense; when he finds not himself necessitated or urged by his own imperious fleshly inclinations so to do;—when he perceives himself by a prevailing better principle counterpoised, and the weight and bias of his own spirit incline him quite another way;—when he finds he hath nothing left him to do but to serve God, to know his will and do it; and is disburdened of all unnecessary care for himself; that which is necessary being part of his duty, and is therefore done on purpose only for God; and that which is unnecessary and forbidden (which part only was burdensome) being supplied by (what hath the greatest ease and pleasure in it imaginable) trust and self-resignation to His pleasure and will whose we wholly are! What life is pleasant, if this be not? Surely wherein it is attained to, it is most pleasant; and hither this gracious heart-rectifying communication is gradually tending.

How great is the pleasure that arises from self-government! when that governs in us which should govern, and that is subject and obeys which should obey;—when a man's mind is competently furnished with directive practical principles, and his heart is so framed that it is capable of being prescribed to, is patient of restraints and direction, easily obeys the rein, and follows the ducture of an enlightened, well-

instructed mind;—when the order is maintained between the superior faculties and the inferior, and there are no contentious murmurs of ungovernable appetitions and passions against the law of the mind. It is true, that where this holy rectitude doth but in a degree take place, there will be many conflicts, but those conflicts are in order to victory: and how joyful and glorious is the triumph upon that victory! when the soul enters upon its ἐπινίκιον, its thanksgiving song, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" How happy a state is that (wherein at some times it is here attained) when there are now no tumults within! "The wicked" (which is the very import of their name) "are as a troubled sea, that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Here is no governing principle in any power; no sceptre, no trident to check and allay the rage of those waters. But when His power goes forth in the soul, whose very word winds and seas obey, how peaceful and pleasant a calm doth ensue! Now is a man restored to himself, and is again in his right mind. He is truly now said to enjoy himself, and upon the best terms; that is, he enjoys himself in and under God. He is (in a due subordination) master of himself. He possesses his own soul; that one piece of holy rectitude, patience, enables him to do so. "In your patience possess ye your souls," Luke 21:19. Patience is a part of fortitude, an ability to suffer. He that is in this respect impotent of himself, not able to suffer, is a perfect slave; not a slave only to the vicious wills and humours of other men, in whose power he apprehends it is to befriend or hurt him, but first and chiefly to his own; he is not master of his own judgment, reason, and conscience; but he prostitutes all in the first place to his own inordinate self-love, his avarice, his fear, and consequently to the pleasure of other men, (which, upon no other terms and inducements, is base and vile towards any man, were the matter in itself never so right, and the obedience as due to them as can be supposed;) whereas if he could suffer, he retained his mastery over himself, and were, under God, within his own power. Upon this, with other grounds, is joyfulness (Col. 1:11) a companion of patience; how much more is it so (if to this one part) to the whole frame of that holy rectitude whereby a man's spirit is composed to a due order within itself; when there is a universal sobriety, (or soundness of

mind, as the word that uses to express sobriety signifies) a continency and dominion of one's self, and the soul is no longer hurried to and fro, and even outed of itself, by undue desires, fears, angers, sorrows, &c. nor vexed by the absence of and its perverse ineptitude and indisposition to, those which it well knows are due;—when it finds itself at liberty from the exactions of an unsubdued flesh, and for the kindly and genuine operations and exercises of the divine life;—when it is in good measure freed from the rackings and tortures that naturally accompany the habitual contrariety of an ungovernable heart to a convinced judgment and conscience, and is no longer held in pain by such continual self-upbraidings,—"Thou art, and affectest to be, what thou knowest thou shouldest not; and neither art, nor doest, nor canst desire or endure to be, or do, what thou very well knowest thou shouldest." In that case the soul is throughout disjointed, and continually grating upon itself. And the ease and pleasure which it finds by this happy change much resembles that which a man's body, being in such a case, feels, when every dislocated bone is brought back, and well settled in its own proper place and order again. How resentingly doth the Psalmist acknowledge divine goodness in this! "He restoreth my soul; and leadeth me in paths of righteousness, for his name's sake," Ps. 23:3; q. d. "Now I can walk and act as a sound man, and the paths of righteousness are become pleasant and delectable to me, which before I declined, or wherein my halt and maimed soul was unable to move a step." Now is heard the voice of joy and gladness, when the bones which were disordered and broken rejoice, Ps. 51:8.

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

How great pleasure arises from a constant, diligent self-inspection! when a man's spirit dwells within itself, resides at home, seeks not itself abroad, remains within its own bounds, is intent upon itself, watches over its own motions as its proper charge, is formed to a compliance with that precept, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," Prov. 4:23; and upon that consideration, as seriously weighing that thence are the issues of life, all vital acts and operations whatsoever will savour of the root and principle from whence they proceed, and be as the heart is; good and pure, if that be so; if otherwise, corrupt and naught:—to have a spirit habituated to the business of its own province and territory; its eyes, not with the fool's in the ends of the earth, but turned inward upon itself. Hence his own vineyard is best kept; when the sluggard's (that neglects himself) is wholly overrun with thorns and briars, that cover the face thereof. How forlorn and comfortless a spectacle hath such a man of his own soul! the horror whereof is only avoided by the more hopeless course of turning off his eye; as conscious how ill entertainment is there to be met with. Therefore are such, strangers at home; and are afraid to converse with themselves; are better acquainted with the affairs of France and Spain, or at least of this and that and the other neighbour, than those of their own souls. And the more things at home are neglected the worse they grow. Poverty and desolation come upon them as an armed man, that (in this case) wastes and makes havoc without resistance.

And herein lies much of the heart-rectifying work and power of grace, in disposing and setting the heart so far right towards itself, as that it may first have the patience to look inward, and then the pleasure which will afterwards arise, most naturally, thence. The great aversion hereto of misgiving hearts is not otherwise overcome. But when it is, how do all things flourish under such a one's careful, self-reflecting eye! That soul is as a watered garden. Thither it can invite his presence, who is altogether made up of delights, to come and eat his pleasant fruits. And now, retirement and solitude become delectable, and a man delightfully associates with himself; singles out himself to be his own companion, as finding another always

stepping in; so that he is never less alone than when alone. How unspeakable a happiness is this, when the great Mediator, that undertook to reconcile God to the soul, shall thus have also reconciled it to itself! When it shall be considered how dreadful the case is, when a man's wickedness hath transformed him into a Magor-Missabib, compassed him with affrightments, made him a terror to himself; it may then be understood how grateful a change it is when he is reformed into a son of peace, and made a delight to himself; when he can recreate himself, and refresh his tired eye, overcharged with beholding the sad things that every where come in view from a world lost in wickedness, by looking into God's own plantation within himself; and considering it under that notion only, he doth not look upon himself with an eye of pride, as he doth not upon others with that of disdain. He beholds with a sort of self-complacency what God hath wrought and done there, not with self-arrogance; as knowing there is a self too, upon which he hath still reason to look with abhorrence and self-loathing. And though there be now incorporated with him a better self, yet that was not of himself. He well understands who made him differ, not only from others but from himself; and put him into that capacity of saying that I am not I,—I am not who or what I was before. And the more he is used to such self-reflection, the more pleasant it becomes to him; that is, if he confine not his eye too much to the dark side of his own soul; and do look to the more lightsome side, with that remembrance (as before) that whatsoever he is, that is good and grateful to behold, he is by grace. He thus grows familiar with himself, and the sight mends as it is oftener beheld; and while it is not observed always to do so. Yea, though things look many times sadly, and sometimes dubiously; that however, doth but occasion the accomplishment of a more diligent search, which engages to more earnest labour and strugglings with God and with himself, which labour is recompensed with a following fruit and pleasure: yea, and God is invocated not only for redress, but for further search. When such persons fear lest they have been too indulgent and partial towards themselves, and lest they have not made so strict a scrutiny as the case may possibly require; then the request is, "Search and try me, O Lord, see if there

be any way of wickedness in me." And here the sincerity which appears in that self-suspicion, and jealousy over their own souls, is not without its grateful relishes, and a secret delight insinuates and mingles with the appeal which such a soul makes to Him whose eye is a flame of fire, searches hearts and tries reins. And it is some pleasure, however, to find that disposition in their own souls, that they are thoroughly willing to know themselves, and desire not to shun and decline the search of that fiery flaming eye. Thus then upon all accounts this divine communication is delectable, as it tends to rectify men's dispositions towards themselves, and to set them right in their inclinations and posture in reference to their own souls. We may add,

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

They love this world, and the things of this world; "mind earthly things;" and are not startled when they are so plainly told, that men of this character have not the love of the Father in them, and are enemies to the cross of Christ, and that their end will be destruction. It is a death to them to think of dying; not from the fear of what may ensue, (they have atheism enough to stifle such fear,) but from the love of their earthly stations, and that vile earthly body in which they dwell.

But how delightful a thing is the change which this rectifying communication makes! How pleasant to live in this world as a pilgrim and stranger, seeking still the better, the heavenly country! To behold the various enticements which are here offered to view, at sometimes, without inclination towards them; the frightful aspect and appearance of things, at other times, without commotion; is not this delectable? to dwell apart from this world in the midst of it; in the "secret of the Almighty," (Ps. 91:1,) "under his pavilion," (Ps. 27:6,) as one of his hidden ones, withdrawn from the communion of this world to his own communion; so severed and cut off from this world, as not to partake in the spirit of it, or be acted thereby, but by another, a greater and more mighty, as well as a purer and more holy Spirit; "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world," (1 John 4:4;) and again, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God," (1 Cor. 2:12,) which things the divine Spirit disposes the soul to, and unites it with, when it disinclines and disjoins it from this world and the things thereof; and thereby discovers this soul to be quite of another community from that of this world, viz. of a heavenly community, unto which those better and more excellent things do lie in common, as their portion and inheritance. What matter of joy and glorying is it, when one is "crucified to this world, and this world to him;" Gal. 6:14; when the world appears to him a crucified thing, i. e. an accursed, hateful, detestable thing, (which is one notion of crucified) such a thing as he can despise and hate; which he is as little apt to be fond of, as one would be of a loathsome carcass hanging upon an ignominious cross:

and when he can feel himself crucified towards it, i. e. dead, (another notion of it) disinclined, without sense, breath, pulse, motion, or appetite; not so dead as to be without any kind of life, but without that base, low, sordid kind of life by which he lived to it, and in its converse and embraces! So much of delectation doth this infer, as even to endear the very cross itself (that hateful, horrid thing) by which it is effected. But that carries a farther signification with it, to be fetched more expressly from other scriptures; the cross is itself rendered amiable, and a thing to be gloried in, to be looked on with delight and pleasure, upon the account of the design and end of that tragedy which was acted thereon; within which design (being executed and accomplished) this happy effect is included. We elsewhere find the apostle expressing his vehement desire to "know Christ, and the power of his resurrection," and in order thereto, the "fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death," Phil. 3:10. But what did he lastly aim at in this? The next words more fully speak out, (what he first mentioned) "the power of his resurrection" to be the thing chiefly in his eye, and that he desired (what he adds) "the fellowship of his sufferings," &c. as a means unto that end, though it seemed a sharp and painful means; "if by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead," v. 11; q. d. I care not what I undergo, not the sufferings even of a painful crucifixion itself, or that my worldly earthly self do suffer conformably to the sufferings of my crucified Lord; I matter not by what so severe method the thing be brought about, if by any means it may be brought about, that I may know the power of his resurrection so feelingly, as to attain also the resurrection of the dead. And what was that? No doubt to attain a state (which he confesses he had not yet perfectly attained, but was in pursuit of) suitable to his relation and union with a risen Jesus: union with him supposes a being risen with him,—"if ye then be risen with Christ," (Col. 3:1)—it is taken as a granted thing, that they that are his are risen with him. And what state and temper of spirit would be suitable to that supposition, the next words show, "Seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection (or mind) on the things above, not on the things on earth." Then follows the method in



which they were brought to the capacity of doing so; "for ye are dead." Their professed relation to Christ did suppose them risen, and did therefore first suppose them dead. Now if they would do suitably to what their profession imported, this was it they had to do; to abstract their minds and hearts from the things of this earth, and place them upon the things of a higher region; and (as it is afterwards expressed in this same context which we were considering before) "to have our conversation (or citizenship) in heaven, whence we look for the Saviour," Phil. 3:20. That is, as our chief interests and privileges are above, to have our thoughts and the powers of our souls chiefly exercised upon that blessed and glorious state, which state is "the prize (mentioned above) of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," v. 14; it being the scope and import of his call unto us, and the very design of his sufferings on the cross, to draw up a people from earth to heaven; whence therefore they that, under this call, do still mind earthly things, are said to be "enemies to the cross of Christ," (v. 18, 19;) the great incongruity whereof the apostle even resents with tears, as he there testifies. And it was in this, that he was for his part so willing to comply with the design of the cross, that he made no difficulty to endure all the hardship and dolor of it, that he might attain this glorious fruit and gain, which he reckoned should accrue to him from it, even more of a raised heavenly mind; which signified it to be strongly bent that way already, when no mortifications were reckoned too severe to be undergone in order thereto. And here therefore this soul-rectifying influence must be understood to have been proportionably strong.

Hence also it was that we find him groaning, as one under a pressure or heavy weight, to be "clothed upon with the heavenly house, and to have mortality swallowed up of life," 2 Cor. 5:4, 5. Because God had wrought him to this selfsame thing, so bent and determined his spirit was towards the blessedness of the future state (which seems the most natural contexture of discourse here, though some others have understood it otherwise) as that, though he could bear patiently the delay, he could not but desire most earnestly to be there. And we see how the temper of the primitive Christians was, as to this, and the

other world, in those days when the Spirit was plentifully poured out. "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves they had in heaven a far better and an enduring substance." Heaven signified much with them, and this world very little. They "looked not to the things that were seen and temporal, but to the things unseen and eternal," (2 Cor. 4:18,) as those former worthies did, whose minds and hearts, being set right by "faith, which is the substance of the things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," Heb. 11. They lived as pilgrims and strangers on earth, despised the pleasures, riches, and honours of it; endured all manner of hardships and tortures in it, not accepting deliverance, because they were taken up in the pursuit of the better country, had respect to the recompence of reward, and expected a part in the better resurrection. And is it not a delightful thing to the spirit of a man when he is sensibly disentangled, and at liberty from the cares, desires, griefs, and fears that were wont to enwrap his heart?—when he finds his weights and clogs fallen off, that depressed him, the bonds and snares loosed which bound him down to this earth; and feels himself ascending and moving upwards, out of that darkness, stupidity, and death that possessed his soul, into that upper region of light, purity, and peace, unto which his spirit is still gradually more and more connaturalized day by day?—when heaven, in respect of the pure holiness, the calm serenity, the rest and blessedness of it, is now grown familiar to him, and his very element?

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

It is upon the whole, (that we may sum up the account of this divine communication in the following characters of it,)

1. Generative, and begets the soul to a new, a divine life; makes it of a sluggish, stupid, dead thing (as it was towards all heavenly and

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

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

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

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

God is therefore to be enjoyed and delighted in by this delectable communication intervening, by which he now frames the soul according to his own image, and gives a heart after his own heart; that is, such as is suitable to him, and as he would have it be. And this way only is any one in a possibility to delight in God, by having a good frame of spirit communicated to him, and inwrought in him;—I mean never without this, and in a great measure by it. Then is he in a happy state, when God hath by his own Spirit made him what by his word he requires him to be. Now is he composed to delights and

blessedness, being by the same workmanship created in Christ Jesus, both to good works and to the best of enjoyments. How happy is that soul in whom the true matter of delight is become an implanted thing! that is what it should be, and should be nothing (such is the constitution of gospel rules and precepts) but what most truly makes for its own content, delight and rest! whose own temper is now in some sort become to it both a law and a reward! Surely this is one great part of what an enlightened, apprehensive soul would most earnestly desire and crave, or would be the genuine breathings of a sincerely gracious heart; "O that I were more like God! more perfectly framed according to his holy will!" and must therefore be, in great part, a thing apt to afford it delight and rest; as hath been already inculcated before.

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

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

Secondly, That others have thought they have not enjoyed God when they have; supposing there was no enjoyment of him, but what consisted in the rapturous, transporting apprehension and persuasion of his particular love to them; and slightly overlooking all that work he hath wrought in their souls, as if it were nothing to be

accounted of; not allowing themselves to reflect on any thing in themselves, but what was still amiss; and vainly seeking with much anxiety and complaint what they have, while they will not take notice that they have it, nor apply themselves to improve the already implanted principles that are, in themselves, apt to yield fruits of so pleasant a relish. It was upon this account requisite to discover, and labour somewhat to magnify, the intrinsical delightfulness of religion itself; and to put the more of note and remark upon a well tempered spirit, even in point of delectableness and the matter of pleasure it hath in it, by how much it is with too many, on one account or another, a neglected thing.

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

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

1. That such holy dispositions, as they are not God, so nor are they, in strictness of speech, ourselves. And how absurd were it to call every thing ourselves that is in us! And how self-contradicting then were the very objection! for that would make delighting in God and in ourselves directly all one; and so the fault which it causelessly pretends to find it would really commit. It is true that, improperly, holy dispositions are said to make up another self in us, a new man, according as corrupt and sinful principles and dispositions do make also a self, the old man. But then it is also to be remembered, that with no greater impropriety they are capable of bearing the name of God; as the image of any thing frequently doth the name of the thing which it represents, or the work of its author: and they are expressly called, Christ formed in us; and is not he God? They are called the

Spirit; for when we are cautioned not to quench the Spirit, how can that be understood of the eternal uncreated Spirit himself? And the very thing produced (not merely the productive influence) in the work of regeneration, is expressly called by that name, (as it is no such strange thing for the effect to carry the name of its cause); "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," John 3:6. There is Spirit begetting, and spirit begotten. And the spirit begotten, as it must be distinguished from its cause, the Spirit of God; so it must from the subject wherein the effect is wrought, our own spirits; for they sure are not produced by the regenerating work. Yea, and when God is said to "dwell in them that dwell in love," and that are humble and contrite; somewhat else is thereby signified to be indwelling there, than the mere being of God; for otherwise the privilege of such were no greater than of all other men and things; and what else is it, but somewhat communicated and imparted immediately from God to such? (else how, by dwelling in love, do they dwell in God?) which, because dwelling imports permanency, cannot be a transient influence only, but some settled abiding effect, a consistent frame and temper of spirit, maintained by his continually renewed influence; and therefore it would be very unreasonably said, that the representing this as delectable is a calling us off from God to delight in ourselves. For if this communication be not itself, in strict propriety, God, it were as great impropriety to say it were ourselves. Again,

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

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

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

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

Thirdly. But some may say, "It were indeed to be acknowledged that such a temper of spirit once communicated, were indeed very delightful; but where is it to be found? And to state the matter of delight so much in what is to be sought in ourselves, is to reduce the whole business of delighting in God to an impossibility, or to nothing; so little appearing of this temper, and so much of the contrary, as gives much cause of doubt, whether there be anything to be rejoiced in or no. And what then? Are we to suspend the exercise of this duty till we have gotten the difficult case resolved, (which may be all our time,) Is there a real, thorough work of God upon my soul or no? For how can I rejoice in that whereof I have yet a doubt whether it be what it seems or no?" I answer,

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



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

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

But though that be not the only thing, yet it is a very great thing; and being superadded, makes a great addition to the matter of delight:—therefore we further say,

III. This divine communication is delectable, as it includes in it, the manifestation of God's love to the soul in particular.

Nor do we hereby intend an enthusiastical assurance; or such a testification of the love of God to the soul, as excludes any reference to his external revelation, and exercise of our own enlightened reason and judgment thereupon; or wherein these are of no use, nor have subservience thereto. But as in the other parts of the divine communication his external revelation hath the place of an instrument, whereby he effects the work inwardly done upon the mind and heart, and of a rule or measure whereby we are to judge of it; so we are to account it is, as to this part of it also; that is, he inwardly testifies and manifests the same thing which is virtually contained in his gospel-revelation, considered in that reference and aspect which it hath on the present state of the soul. For that outward revelation must needs be understood to signify diversely to particular persons, as their state may be diverse; as when it says, The things that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, God hath prepared for them that love him," (1 Cor. 2:9;) to a person that doth indeed truly love God it virtually says, "All these things are prepared for thee." To one that doth not love God it can only be understood to say, "All these things may be thine, i. e. if thou shalt love him; if thou do not, thou hast no part in them." But inasmuch as a conditional promise, when the condition is performed, is equivalent to an absolute, these words do as truly import this sense to one that loves God, "These things are thine," as if they were directed to it in particular:—as truly, I say, supposing the person do truly love God, but not so clearly, or with that evidence. For this truth (supposing it a truth), "I do sincerely love God," is not so evident as this, that such preparation is made for them that do; for this is expressly contained in the word of God; the other is not so, but to be collected only by self-inspection, and observation of the bent and tenor of my spirit and way God-ward. Yet, however the evidence of truth admits of degrees, truth itself doth not. All things that are true, are equally true. And therefore, when it is said, so great things are prepared for them that love God, it is as truly said, they are prepared for this man who loves God; as this or that particular lover of God is contained in the general notion of a lover of him. And then, as that public declaration says not to any, "These things are prepared

for you whether you love God or no," or otherwise than as they come under that common notion of lovers of God; this inward manifestation is also so accommodate to that, as that it says not another thing, but the same; that is, nothing that contradicts (and indeed no more than is virtually contained in) the other; or it applies what is generally said of the lovers of God to this particular lover of him as such; that is, enabling him to discern himself a lover of him, impresses this truth powerfully upon the heart, These great preparations belong to thee as thou art such a one.

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

Nor do I think that the experience of Christians can signify much to the deciding of the matter. For besides that this, or that, or a third

person's experience cannot conclude any thing against a fourth's; and the way of arguing were very infirm, what one or two, or a thousand, or even the greater part of serious Christians (even such as have attained to some satisfying evidence of their own good estate) have not found, that nowhere is to be found: besides that, I say, it is likely that few can distinctly tell how it hath been with them in this matter; that is, what way or method hath been taken with them in begetting a present persuasion at this or that time of God's peculiar love to them. His dealings with persons (even the same persons at divers times) may be so various; his illapses and coming in upon them at some times may have been so sudden and surprising; the motions of thought are so quick; the observation or animadversion persons usually have of what is transacted in their own spirits is so indistinct; and they may be so much taken up with the thing itself, as less to mind the way and order of doing it; that we may suppose little is to be gathered thence towards the settling of a stated rule in this case. Nor is the matter of such moment, that we need either be curious in inquiring, or positive in determining about it; that principle being once supposed and firmly stuck to;—that he never says any thing in this matter by his Spirit to the hearts of men, repugnant to what the same Spirit hath said in his word; or, that he doth not say a new or a diverse thing from what he hath said there for their assurance: that is, that he never testifies to any person by his Spirit that he is accepted and beloved of him, who may at the same time be concluded by his publicly extant constitutions in his word to be in a state of non-acceptance and disfavour; or concerning whom the same thing (viz. his acceptance) might not be concluded by his word, if it were duly applied to his case. Hereby the most momentous danger in this matter is avoided; for, if that principle be fore-laid, enough is done to preclude the vain boasts of such as may be apt to pretend highly to great manifestations of divine love, while they carry with them manifest proofs of an unsanctified heart, and are under the power of unmortified, reigning sin. That principle admitted, will convince that their boasted manifestations do only manifest their own ignorance, pride, and vanity; or proceed only from their heated imagination, or (the worse cause) Satanical

illusion, designed to lull them asleep in sin, and the more easily to lead them blindfold to perdition. And this is the main concernment about which we need to be solicitous in this matter: which being provided for, as it is difficult, so it is not necessary to determine, whether the Spirit do always not only testify according to the external revelation, but by it also, and so only as to concur in the usual way of reasoning from it.

No doubt but the same truth may be assented to upon divers grounds; sometimes upon rational evidence; sometimes upon testimony: and some truths may be seen by immediate mental intuition, (as being self-evident) which also may be capable of demonstration. And though this truth of God's particular love to such a man, be none of those that have self-evidence: yet God's Spirit, as it may, by assisting the discursive faculty, help us to discern the connexions of some things, which otherwise we should not perceive; so it may, by assisting the intuitive, make things evident to us that of themselves are not. Nor yet, also, that it actually doth so, can any I believe certainly tell; for admit that at some times some have very transporting apprehensions of the love of God towards themselves, suggested to their hearts by the Holy Spirit; they having this habitual knowledge before, that love to him (for instance) or faith in him, or the like, are descriptive characters of the persons whom he accepts and delightfully loves; how suddenly may the divine light irradiate, or shine upon those pre-conceived notions (which were begotten in them by the interveniency of the external revelation before) and excite those before implanted principles of faith, love, &c. so as to give them the lively sense of them now stirring and acting in their hearts; and thence also enable them unwaveringly to conclude (and with an unexpressible joy and pleasure) their own interest in his special love, in this way shedding it abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them, Rom. 5:5. This may be so suddenly done, that they may apprehend the testimony to be immediate, when indeed it is not. Nor are they able to prove from Scripture the immediateness of it; for as to what it doth to them in particular, Scripture says nothing, they not being so much as mentioned there;

what it doth, or hath done, to this or that person there mentioned, signifies nothing to their case, if any thing were said that must have that import (which will be hard to evince): and that it is any where in Scripture signified to be its usual way, in common, towards them on whose hearts it impresses this persuasion, to do it immediately, is much less to be evinced. For what scripture saith so? and that famous text that speaks so directly to this matter, "The Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," seemeth rather to imply the contrary: inasmuch as the Spirit of God is there expressly said to co-witness with our spirit (as the word there used signifies), by which it would seem to take the same course in testifying which our spirit or conscience doth, that is, of considering the general characters of his children laid down in his word, reflecting upon the same in ourselves, and thereupon concluding we are his children: which if it were supposed the only thing the Spirit of God ordinarily doth in this matter, we may with much confidence make the following remarks:—

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

2. That it doth not a less thing than if it testified the same matter in a way altogether immediate. For wherein is it less? Is the matter less important? that cannot be said; for the thing we are assured of is the same, howsoever we be certified thereof. Is it less evident? that can with as little pretence be said; for doth any one account a thing not evident in itself, and that needs to be proved to him some way or other, the less evident for being proved to him in a discursive way? What pretence can any one have to say or think so? Is it that reasoning is more liable to error and mistake? but I hope the reasoning of God's Spirit is not so, when it enables us to apprehend the general truth we should reason from; to assume to it; to collect and conclude from it, guiding us by its own light: in each of these surely we have as much reason to rely upon the certainty and infallibility of the Spirit's reasonings, as of its most assertory dictates; otherwise, we would (most unreasonably) think the

authority of those conclusions laid down in the epistle to the Romans, and other parts of scripture, invalidated by the Holy Ghost's vouchsafing to reason them out to us, as we know it most nervously and strongly doth. Or, is it less consolatory? that cannot be, for that depends on the two former, the importance and evidence of the thing declared: the former whereof is the same, the latter not less.

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

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

There is such a thing in itself very necessary, and to be attained and sought after:—and that it is highly delectable when he doth vouchsafe it.

1. That there is such a thing to be sought after as a communicable privilege and favour to holy souls, this is evident enough from multitudes of Scriptures. Those that have been occasionally mentioned, in speaking (what was thought fit to be said) of the way of his doing it, need not to be repeated; unto which we may add what we find is added to those above-recited words, "Eye hath not seen, &c. the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, viz. but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit," 1 Cor. 2:9, 10. And that Spirit not only gives those lovers of God above-mentioned a clearer view of the things prepared for them, so as that the nature of them might be the more distinctly understood, (as is argued in the latter part of this, and in the following verse;) but also of their own propriety and interest in them; "Now we have received not the spirit



of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God," v. 12. Whence therefore they are revealed by the Spirit, not as pleasing objects in themselves only, but as gifts, the evidences and issues of divine love; their own proper portion, by the bequest of that love, to whom they are shown. Nor is this the work of the Spirit only, as inditing the Scriptures, but it is such a work as helps to the spiritual discerning of these things; such as whereto the natural man is not competent, who yet is capable of reading the Scriptures as well as other men. And what will we make of those words of our Saviour, when having told his disciples, he would "pray the Father, and he should give them another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, that he might abide with them for ever: even the Spirit of truth," &c. he adds, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you;" that is, (as is plain) by that Spirit; and then shortly after subjoins, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him?" John 14:16–21. Here is an express promise of this love-manifestation, whereof we speak, by the Spirit, (the Comforter mentioned above) not to those particular persons only unto whom he was then directing his speech, or to those only of that time and age, but to them indefinitely that should love Christ, and keep his commandments. Which is again repeated in other words of the same import; after Judas' (not Iscariot) wondering expostulation touching that peculiarity of this loving manifestation; "Jesus answered and said unto him, If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," v. 23. So that such a manifestation as is most aptly expressive of love, such converse and cohabitation as imports most of kindness and endearedness, they have encouragement to expect that do love Christ and keep his words; the same thing no doubt with that shedding abroad of the love of God in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them, mentioned before. And whereas we have so plain and repeated mention of the seal, the earnest, the first-fruits of the Spirit, what can these expressions be understood to import (and

they do not signify nothing) other than confirmation of the love of God, or assuring and satisfying evidences and pledges thereof?

And that there should be such an inward manifestation of divine love superadded to the public and external declaration of it (which is only made indefinitely to persons so and so characterised) the exigency of the case did require; that is, wherein it was necessary his love should be distinctly understood and apprehended, it was so far necessary this course should be taken to make it be so. A mere external revelation was not sufficient to that end; our own unassisted reasonings therefrom were not sufficient. As other truths have not their due and proper impression merely by our rational reception, be they never so plain, without that holy, sanctifying influence before insisted on; so this truth also, of God's love to this person in particular, hath not its force and weight, its efficacy and fruit, answerable to the design of its discovery, unless it be applied and urged home on the soul by a communicated influence of the Spirit to this purpose: many times not so far as to overcome and silence tormenting doubts, fears, and anguish of spirit in reference hereto; and, where that is done, not sufficient to work off deadness, drowsiness, indisposition to the doing of God cheerful service, not sufficient to excite and stir up love, gratitude, admiration, and praise. How many who have learned not to make light of the love of God, as the most do; who reckon in his favour is life, to whom it is not an indifferent thing whether they be accepted or no; who cannot be overly in their inquiry, nor trifle with matters of everlasting consequence; who are not enough atheists and sceptics to permit all to a mad hazard, nor easy to be satisfied; walk mournfully from day to day, with sunk, dejected spirits, full of anxiety, even unto agonies, under the clear external discovery of God's love to persons of that character whereof they really are! Such as observe them judge their case plain, and every one thinks well of them but themselves; yea, their mouths are sometimes stopped by such as discourse the matter with them, but their hearts are not quieted:—or, if they sometime are in a degree, yet the same doubts and fears return with the former importunity, the same work is still to be done, and it is but rolling the

returning stone: and all human endeavours to apply and bring home the comforts proper and suitable to their case prove fruitless and ineffectual; nothing can be fastened upon them; they refuse to be comforted, while God himself doth not create (that which is the fruit of his own lips) "peace, peace;" while, as yet, they are not "filled with joy and peace in believing, and made to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost," Rom. 15:13. It is plain there needs a more learned tongue than any human one, to speak "a word in season to such weary ones," Isa. 50:4.

How many, again, have spirits overcome with deadness and sloth, under a settled (perhaps not altogether mistaken, but mere notional) apprehension of the same love! They have only that assurance which arises, it may be, not from a, false, but the single testimony of their own spirits; at least, unaccompanied with other than the ordinary help of the Spirit, not very distinguishable from the workings of their own;—have reasoned themselves (perhaps regularly, by observing the rule and the habitual bent of their own spirits) into an opinion of their own good estate, so that they are not vexed with doubts and fears as some others are. But they do not discover to others, nor can discern in themselves, any degree of life and vigour, of heavenliness and spirituality, of love to God or zeal for him, proportionable to their high expectations from him, or the great import of this thing, to be beloved of God. There is no discernible growth or spiritual improvement to be found with them. How remote is their temper from that of the primitive Christians! It is apparent what is yet wanting, they are not edified (as those were), "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," Acts 9:31. Wherefore the matter is plain, there is such a thing as an effectual overpowering communication of the Holy Ghost, for the manifesting of the love of God, of great necessity and importance to Christians; that may be had and ought to be diligently sought after.

2. And if it be afforded (which was the other thing proposed) how infinitely delectable is that manifestation! the thing itself carries its own reason and evidence with it,—

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

True ingenuity values love for itself. If such a one will think of me, if I shall have a place in his remembrance, if he will count me among his friends; this we are apt to be pleased with. And tokens are sent and interchanged among friends, not only to express love, but to preserve and cherish it, and keep up a mutual remembrance among them. And as there is a great pleasure conceived in receiving such expressions or pledges of love from a friend, not so much for the value of the thing sent, as of what it signifies, and is the token of his love, his kind remembrance; so is there no less pleasure in giving and sending, than in receiving; because that hereby, as we gratify our own love by giving it a kind of vent this way, so we foresee how we

shall thereby excite theirs; which, therefore, we put a value upon, even abstracting from any advantage we expect therefrom. And this hath a manifest reason in our very natures; because we reckon there is an honour put upon us, and somewhat is attributed to us, when we are well thought of, and a kindness is placed upon us; especially by such as have themselves any reputation for wisdom and judgment. How dignifying is the love of God! How honourable a thing to be his favourite! The apostle seems to put a mighty stress on this, when he utters those so emphatical words, "Wherefore we labour (so, defectively, we read it; covet, or are ambitious of it as our honour, as that word signifies) that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him," (2 Cor. 5:9;) q. d. neither life or death, neither being in the body or out of it, signify anything to me, or they are indifferent things in comparison of this honour, that he may accept me, that I may be pleasing to him and gracious in his eyes, that I may stand well in his thoughts, and he bear a kind and favourable regard to me.

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

why, into a state of acceptance and favour with him! and his love is declared to be towards me! And why towards me? in myself so vile! and such love! the love of a holy, glorious God, towards one in whose very nature was such a horror and hell of wickedness! Why towards me, rather than others not naturally more vile than I?" How can this be thought on without crying out, O wonderful! O the depths, breadths, lengths, and heights of this love, that so infinitely passeth knowledge! And here the greater the wonder, the greater is also the delight.

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

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

They are seen as most sure and certain. Such love, now manifested and apprehended, leaves no place for doubtful thoughts and suspicious misgivings. There is no fear that this love intends to impose upon us, or mock us with the representation of an imaginary heaven; or that it will fail to do what can be expected from it, to bring us to the real one. How pleasant is it now to behold the great and sure products of this mighty love! its admirable designs and projects, as they appear in the gospel-revelation (now illustrated and shone upon by divine light) to lie ready formed in the pregnant womb of this great productive cause. It cannot but be an unspeakable pleasure which such a discovery will carry with it, when we thus behold the matter itself that is discovered and offered to our view; unto which it must be a very considerable additional pleasure that will arise,—

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

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

will withal bespeak and procure a suitable entertainment of it. And hence, particularly, it will be,

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

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

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

Most efficacious and overcoming; that makes its own way, scatters clouds, drives away darkness, admits no disputes, makes doubts and misgiving thoughts vanish, pierces with a quick and sudden energy like lightning, and strikes through the mind into the heart; there sheds abroad this love, diffuses the sweet refreshing savour of it; actuates spiritual sense, makes the soul taste how gracious the Lord is, and relish the sweetness of his love; puts all its powers into a suitable motion, and excites answerable affection, so as to make the soul capable of interchanging love with love. In all these respects, this manifestation of love cannot but be very delectable; and they who have not found it to be so will yet apprehend that it must be so, if they have found and experienced the cravings of their own hearts directed this way, and can upon inquiry find this among the things they would fain have from God; "O that I might be satisfied of his love! that I might, know his good will towards me!" for to such



cravings must this delight at least be commensurate (as was formerly said). But to them that are indifferent in this matter and unconcerned, to whom the love of God is a fancy or a trifle, no real or considerable thing, all this will be as tasteless as the white of an egg.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(8.) That for the most part, if Christians, upon whom the renewing work of the Holy Ghost in that former communication hath in some degree taken place, do yet want that degree of this also which is necessary to free them from very afflicting doubts and fears, and enable them to a cheerful and lively walking with God; it is to be reckoned their own fault; either that they put too much upon it (too little minding his public declarations in his word,) or do unduly seek

it, or unseasonably expect it; or that they put too little upon it, and expect or seek it not; or that by their indulged carnality, earthliness, vanity of spirit, they render themselves incapable of it; or by their careless and too licentious walking, or their either resisting or neglecting holy motions, they grieve that Spirit that would comfort them. For though the restraint, of such more pleasant communications, may proceed, sometimes, from an unaccountable sovereignty, that owes no reason to us of its arbitrary way of giving or withholding favours; yet withal, we are to know and consider, that there is such a thing as paternal and domestic justice proper to God's own family, and which, as the Head and Father of it, he exerciseth therein; whereby (though he do not exercise it alike at all times) it seems meet to his infinite wisdom to awaken and arouse the sloth, or rebuke the folly, or check the vanity, or chastise the wantonness of his offending children; and that, even in this way, by retiring himself, becoming more reserved, withdrawing the more discernible tokens of his presence, and leaving them to the torture, sometimes, of their own conjectures, what worse thing may ensue. And herein he may design, not only reformation to the delinquents, but instruction to others, and even vindication to himself. For however these his dealings with men's spirits are in themselves (as they must needs be) secret, and such as come not under the immediate notice of other men; yet somewhat consequential thereto doth more openly appear, and becomes obvious to the common observation of serious Christians with whom such persons converse; that is, not only such as languish under the more remarkable terrors of their spirits, and are visibly, as it were, consuming in their own flame, (of which sort there occur very monitory and instructive examples, at some times;) but even such also as are deprived of his quickening influence, and have only somewhat remaining in them that is ready to die, that are pining away in their iniquities, and sunk deep into deadness and carnality (for his comforting communication is also quickening, and he doth not use to withhold it as it is quickening, and continue it as it is comforting, but if such have comfort, such as it is, they are their own comforters) do carry very discernible tokens of divine displeasure upon them; and the evils and distempers under which

their spirits lie wasting are both their sin and punishment. Their own wickedness corrects them, and their backsliding reproves them. And that reproof, being observable, doth at the same time warn others, yea, and do that right to God, as to let it be seen he makes a difference, and refuses the intimacies with more negligent, loose, idle, wanton professors of his name, which he vouchsafes to have with some others that make it more their business and study to carry acceptably towards him, and are more manifestly serious, humble, diligent, obedient observers of his will. If therefore we find not what we have found in this kind, however the matter may possibly be resolvable into the divine pleasure, (as it is more likely to be in the case of such desertions as are accompanied with terror, when no notorious apostacy or scandalous wickedness hath gone before,) it is both safe and modest, yea, and obvious, to suspect such delinquencies as were before-mentioned are designed to be animadverted upon; and that the love hath been injured which is now not manifested as heretofore.

(9.) That yet such a degree of it as is necessary to a comfortable serving of God in our stations being afforded; such superadded degrees, as whereby the soul is in frequent raptures and transports, are not to be thought withheld penally, in any peculiar or remarkable respect; or otherwise than it may be understood some way a penalty, not to be already perfectly blessed. For it is certain, that such rapturous sensations, and the want of them, are not the distinguishing characters of the more grown, strong, and excellent Christians, and of them that are more infirm, and of a meaner and lower pitch and stature. Yea, those extatical emotions, although they have much of a sensible delectation in them (as more hereafter may be said to that purpose;) and though they may, in part, proceed from the best and most excellent cause, do yet, if they be frequent (which would signify an aptitude thereto,) import somewhat of diminution in their subject, and imply what is someway a lessening of it; that is, they imply the persons that are more disposed this way to be of a temper not so well fixed and composed, but more volatile and airy; which yet doth not intimate, that the chief cause and author of those

motions is therefore mean and ignoble, nay, it argues nothing to the contrary, but that the Holy Spirit itself may be the supreme cause of them. For admitting it to be so, it doth not alter men's natural tempers and complexions, but so acts them, as that they retain (and express upon occasion) what was peculiar to their temper notwithstanding. The work and office of the Holy Ghost, in its special communications, is to alter and new-mould men in respect of their moral dispositions, not those which are strictly and purely natural; the subject is in this regard the same as it was; and whatsoever is received, is received according to the disposition of that; and it gives a tincture to what supervenes and is implanted thereinto; whence the same degree of such communicated influence will not so discernibly move some tempers, as it doth others; as the same quantity of fire will not so soon put solid wood into a flame, as it will light straw. That some men therefore are less sensibly and passionately moved with the great things of God (and even with the discovery of his love) than some others, doth not argue them to have less of the Spirit, but more of that temper which better comports with deeper judgment, and a calm and sober consideration of things. The unaptness of some men's affections unto strong and fervent motion, doth indeed arise from a stupid inconsiderateness; of some others, from a more profound consideration, by which the deeper things sink, and the more they pierce even into the inmost centre of the soul, the less they move the surface of it. And though I do not think the saying of that heathen applicable to this case, "It is a wise man's part to admire nothing;" for here is matter enough in this theme, the love of God, to justify the highest wonderment possible; and not to admire in such a case, is most stupidly irrational; yet I conceive the admiration (as well as other affections) of more considering persons, is more inward, calm, sedate, and dispassionate; and is not the less for being so, but is the more solid and rational; and the pleasure that attends it, is the more deep and lasting; and the fervour that ensues upon the apprehended love of God, prompting them to such service as is suitable to a state of devotedness to his interest, is more intense and durable; of the others, more flashy and inconstant. As, though flax

set on fire, will flame more than iron; yet withal it will smoke more, and will not glow so much, nor keep heat so long.

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

Thus far we have given some account of the object to be delighted in; wherein, if any think strange that we have spoken so much of the delectable divine communication as belonging to the object; (which how it doth hath been sufficiently shown) let them call it, if they please, a preparing or disposing of the subject; (which it also, making its own way into the soul, as hath been said, effectually doth) and if the necessity of it be acknowledged upon that account, it equally answers the main purpose aimed at in all this; and had it been only so considered, would but have inferred some alteration in the frame and method of this discourse, but not at all of the substance and design of it.

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

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

For instance, whatsoever we can love is either things or persons; whatsoever things we love, is for the sake of persons, either ourselves or others, whom also we love either supremely or subordinately. And whomsoever we love supremely, as it is certainly either God or ourselves, we love whatsoever else, person or thing, either for God's

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

But now because this present state is mixed, and not simply evil, or such wherein we find no present good; therefore the love which is suited thereto, ought consequently to be mixed of these two especially (unto which two the present discourse is both extended and confined, because these two affections only are mentioned in the text) desire and delight. So far as things are otherwise than we



practically apprehend it is fit they should be, with ourselves or others whom we love, our love is exercised in desire; wherein they are as we would have them, in delight; for then our desire is so far satisfied; and desire satisfied ceases, though love do not cease. Or, it ceases not by vanishing into nothing, but by being satisfied; that is, by being perfected in the delight which now takes place.

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

It is true that love, as such, hath ever somewhat of delectation in it; for we entertain the first view of any thing we apprehend as good, with some pleasedness therein, (so far as it is loved) it is grateful to us, and we are gratified some way by it; yea, there is somewhat of this before any emotion by desire towards it, for we would not desire it, if it were not pleasing to us; which desire is then continued (as far as love is in exercise) till it be attained for ourselves or others, according as the object of our love (i e. the object for whom, as we may call it) is. Nor is that a difficulty, how yet there may be

somewhat of delectation, and even of rest, in this love of desire. For the soul doth in that case, while it is thus desiring, rest from the indetermination of desire: that is, if it have placed love upon any one (itself or another) upon whom therefore it doth with a sort of pleasedness stay and rest; it doth first, in the general, desire it may be well with such a one; and then, if any thing occur to its notice that it apprehends would be an advantage to the person loved, though it cease not desiring it, yet it ceases from those its former hoverings of desire; being pitched upon this one thing, as satisfied that this would be a good to him it loves. The appetite stays and insists upon this thing; as the Psalmist, "One thing have I desired," Psalm 27:4. It hath here, as it were, a sort of hypothetical rest; q. d. How well pleased should I be if this were compassed and brought about! Or it hath an anticipated and pre-apprehended rest, a rest in hope (by which the object is some way made present) as it is said, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." For there is no rational desire which is not accompanied with hope. Despair stifles desire. That which appears simply impossible, passes for nothing; and goodness goes not beyond the compass of being. But whatsoever appears to us a good (whether for ourselves or another) that is suitable and possible; that, if love stir in reference to it, becomes the object of complacential desire; that is, it pleases us first upon sight, or upon such an apprehension of it; the appetite pitches, centres, and rests upon it; and then we pursue it with desire. But then our delectation therein grows, as our hope doth it will be attained; and still more (if we find it to answer its first appearance) as, by degrees, it is attained actually; till being fully attained, our desire (as to that thing) ends in all the delight and satisfaction which it can afford us. So that the delight and rest which follows desire, in the actual fruition of a full and satisfying good, is much more intense and pure, than that which either goes before, or doth accompany it; and is indeed the same thing with fruition or enjoyment itself; only that this term hath been, by some, more appropriated to signify the delectation which is taken in the last end, unto which yet it hath no more native designation than divers other words. We have then thus far some general notion of delight, and also of desire, which is taken in here only on the bye, and as tending

somewhat to illustrate the other, whereof yet what we now say may be of some use hereafter.

We are next to speak of this delight in special, which is here to be placed upon God. About which we are to consider, both—What it is we are called to—and how we are to reckon ourselves called to it. And,

First. That we may show, what we are called to. Having in this general account spoken only of human delight, or of delight as it is to be found among men; it will now be necessary to distinguish his into merely natural and holy. And when we thus distinguish, it is to be understood that by natural we mean what is within the sphere of nature in its present corrupted state; otherwise, what was natural to man did (taken in a larger sense) include holiness in it; and so the addition of holiness doth but make up purely natural delight, as it was at first; but as the case now is, the distinction is necessary.—And the latter of these only will be the subject of our following discourse; as being only suitable to the blessed object whereon it must terminate, and only capable of being applied thereto. When therefore our delight is to be placed and set on God, this must be understood as presupposed, that it be purified, drained from the pollution and impure tinctures which it hath derived from our vitiated natures, and further contracted by our converse with impure, mean, and vile things. For only that delight is to be placed on God which can be so placed; and delighting in God being duly designed, that is by consequence designed which is necessary thereto; and thereto is necessary, not merely the direction of one such particular act towards God, but a holy principle, as prerequisite to the right doing even of that also. Unholy love declines God; and indeed it is unholy inasmuch as it doth so. Whence therefore it is as impossible it should be set on God, remaining unholy, as that it should be another thing from itself, and yet be still wholly what it was. Although it cannot be another thing in its general nature (as it is not necessary it should) it must be a much altered thing, by the accession of holiness thereto. And this coming upon the whole soul, even upon all its faculties and

powers, doth therein spread itself unto its delight also. Delight in God is not the work of an unholy heart. And (as may be collected from what hath been said) holiness consisting in a right disposition of heart towards God, a divine nature participated from him, conformed to him, which works and tends towards him, and in itself so delightful a thing; it may thence be seen what holy delight is, or wherein the holiness of it stands.

It must to this purpose be considered, that this holy delight is twofold, according to a twofold consideration of the delectable object; into which what was formerly said about it may be reduced. All delight in God supposes, as hath been said, some communication from him.

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

Answerably hereto, the delight that is taken in him, is either more open and explicit, and wherein a person reflects upon and takes notice of his own act, and whereupon it is exercised—or, more latent, implicit and unobserved, when his delight lies folded up in other acts and dispositions, which have another more principal design, though that also is involved in them. The former way the soul delights in God more directly, applying itself thereto on purpose, and bending the mind and heart intentionally thereto; its present views of him having that very design and aim. The latter way it delights in him rather collaterally, when its present action (as well as the disposition leading to it) hath another more direct scope and aim. And the

delight only adheres to the act, as being in itself delightful; as for instance, the acts of repentance, trust, self-denial, &c. which have another end than delight, though that insinuates into them. The former of these may be called contemplative delight: the soul solacing itself in a pleasant meditation of God, whereby its delight in him is excited and stirred up. The latter (understanding sense spiritually, as it belongs to the new creature, and is taken Phil. 1:9; Heb. 5:14,) may be called sensitive delight; whereby the soul, as it were, tastes how gracious the Lord is. Which though it doth by the other also, yet the distinction holds in respect of the way wherein the delight is begotten and begun, if not in respect of the thing itself, begotten, or wherein the matter ends. In the former way, the soul more expressly reflects upon its own present exercise, which it directly intends. In the latter, it may not reflect expressly either upon its actual delight which it hath, nor actually consider God as the object that yields it that pleasure; as I may be delighted by the pleasant taste of this or that food, without considering what the thing is I am feeding on; nor have distinct reflection on the pleasure I take therein: having another and more principal design in eating, the recruiting of my strength, and that delight being only accessory and accruing on the bye. The former is less durable, and sooner apt to vanish upon the cessation of the present act, like the delight of the eye. The latter is more permanent, as that of the taste, and habitual; such as is the pleasure of any thing whereof one hath a continued possession, as of a confirmed state and habit of health, or of the riches, dignities, pleasant accommodations which belong to any one's settled condition; of which he hath that continual enjoyment that insensibly forms his spirit, raises and keeps it up to a pitch suitable to his condition, though he have not every day or hour distinct formed thoughts of them, nor is often in that contemplative transport with Nebuchadnezzar,—"Is not this great Babylon which I have built?" &c.

Both these are holy delight, or delight in God. In both whereof may be seen, added to the general nature of delight, a holy nature as the principle, inferring a powerful, steady determination of the heart

towards God, as the object and end which it ultimately tends to, and terminates upon. Though in the former way of delighting in God, the soul tends towards him more directly: in the latter (according as the acts may be to which the delight adheres,) more obliquely, and through several things that may be intermediate unto that final and ultimate object.

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

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

If therefore it be inquired, wherein the delight of this more imperfect sort doth consist? I answer, in the soul's sensation and relish of

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

ungodliness and worldly lusts; to a sober, righteous, and godly life in this present world; to the exercises of piety, sobriety, righteousness, charity, mercy, &c. and now this or the like heavenly dictate occurs to us, "Delight thyself in the Lord," what doth it import? what must we understand it to say or signify to us? Though this that hath been mentioned, and which we are now saying is not all that it signifies (as will be shown hereafter;) yet thus much we must understand it doth signify and say to us: "Thy only true delights are to be found in a course of religion; they are not to be expected from this world, or thy former sinful course, but in exercising thyself unto godliness, in receiving and complying with the divine discoveries, recommended to thee in the gospel, and (through them) the influences of life and grace which readily flow in upon any soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness; and by which thou mayest be framed in all things after the good and holy and acceptable will of God. Herein thou shalt find such pleasures and delights entertaining thy soul, as that thou wilt have no cause to envy wicked men their sensual delights, which they find in their sinful way; if thou wilt but observe what thou findest, and exercise thy sense to discern between good and evil, and set thyself to consider whether there be not as well more satisfying, as purer relishes of pleasure, in mortifying the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, in denying thyself, in dying to this world, in living to God, in minding the things of another world, in giving up thyself to the several exercises of a holy life, watching, praying, meditating, &c. in trusting in the Lord with all thy heart, and in doing all the good thou canst in thy place and station, 'letting so thy light shine before men, that they seeing thy good works may glorify thy Father which is in heaven;' in contentment with what thou enjoyest, and patience under what thou sufferest, in this world; in doing justice, loving righteousness, and walking humbly with thy God; than ever the vanishing pleasures of sin did or can afford." Thus into these two things may all be summed up, which delighting in God imports according to this notion of it.—The applying ourselves to those things, by the help of God's own communicated influence (which in that case will not be withheld) wherein the matter of delight lies; and—The reflecting upon the things themselves that are



so delightful, and setting ourselves to discern, and tasting actually the delectableness of them. And surely, if such words, "Delight thyself in the Lord," do say to us all this, they do not say nothing; nor say anything impertinent, either to their own native import, or our state and condition in this world.

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

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

Secondly, But are not all these truly delectable? Is there not a real delight to be had in them? Let any man, that hath tried, consult his experience; yea, let any one that hath not besotted his soul, and infatuated his understanding, but seriously consider the very ideas of these things, and revolve the notions of them in his mind, and then soberly judge, whether they be not delightful? And if so, when there is an actual sense of pleasure and sweetness in the communicated power, and in the practice of them, why is not this delighting in God? Admit that he is not actually thought on in some of these exercises; as when I freely forgive a wrong, or relieve a distressed person, or right a wronged one; if yet I do these things from the radical principle of the love of God deeply settled in my soul, and with a sensible delight accompanying my act, and the disposition I find in my heart thereunto; here is not, it is true, the very act of delighting in God, formally terminated upon him as the Object, but it is he that gives me this delight, and is the material Object (as well as Author) of it. The communication is from him, whereby I am delighted, and enabled to do the things that are further delightful. As if I converse with an excellent person, my intimate friend, who is at this time incognito, and by a disguise conceals himself from me, or I through my forgetfulness or inadvertency have no present thoughts of this person; but I hear his pleasant discourse, and am much taken with it, and the person on the account of it; it is my friend that I delighted in all this while though I knew it not.

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

Fourthly, And what, is that an absurdity that, under the name of delighting in God, the several acts and exercises of religion besides should be comprehended? How often in scripture are other (no more

eminent) parts of religion put for the whole. "The knowledge of God," "calling upon God," "the fear of God," &c. How commonly are these things acknowledged to be paraphrases of religion. And shall I not add the love of God? that most authentic and owned summary of all practical religion, and which ought to influence all our actions. And then how far are we from our mark? What is the difference between loving God, and delighting in him? But I moreover add, that delight itself in him, cannot but be so taken in that sharp passage, (though misapplied to the person of whom it was meant,) "For Job hath said, what profit is it that a man should delight himself with God?" (Job 34:9,) i.e. or be religious? It fitly enough signifies religion, as thus modified or qualified, viz. as having this quality belonging to it, that it is delightful, or tinctured with delight in God. But this (so large) is not the only sense, as we have said, wherein we are to take delighting in God. And when any part of religion casts its name upon the whole, it would be very unreasonable to exclude the part from which the denomination is taken, or not to make that the principal thing there meant. We therefore proceed to speak,

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

1. Its nature; which from what hath been said of delight in the general, with the addition of holiness thereto, (which is the work of God's Spirit, determining the act or faculty to which it adheres towards God,) may be conceived thus,—That it is the acquiescence or rest of the soul in God, by a satisfiedness of will in him, as the best and most excellent good. That it be the rest of the soul, belongs to its general nature. And so doth the mentioned kind of rest, more distinguishingly, by the will's satisfiedness in him; because the soul may be also said to rest satisfied (in respect of another faculty) by the mere knowledge of truth; but this supposes so much of that also as is necessary. And because the acts of the understanding are subservient and in order to those of the will, in the soul's pursuit of a delightful good, which is so far attained as it actually delights therein, therefore this may more simply be called the rest of the whole soul, whereas

that other is its rest but in some respect only; especially when we add, as in the best and most excellent good: for this signifies the good wherein it rests to be ultimate, and its last end, the very period of its pursuits, beyond which it neither needs nor desires to go further, viz. as to the kind and nature of the good which it is now intent upon; though it still desire more of the same, till there be no place left for further desire, but it wholly cease and end in full satisfaction. And that we may speak some what more particularly of this rest in God; it supposes,

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

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

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

(4.) Desire directed towards him, upon the apprehension that somewhat is absent, either of what is due to him, or lacking to ourselves from him.

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

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

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

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

there will be occasion more at large to insist on them in the discourse of the practice of this duty, reserved to the Second Part.

2. We now proceed to the modification of this delight in God; or the right manner or measure of it. Concerning which it is apparent in the general, it can be no further right than as it is agreeable to its object. That our delight should ever be adequate, or of a measure equal to it, is plainly impossible: but it must be some way suitable, or must bear proportion to it. I shall here mention but two (and those very eminent) respects wherein it must do so; viz. in respect of the excellency, and the permanency of the good to be delighted in.

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

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

And if we put the comparison between our spiritual, eternal life and him; though he and that can never be in opposition, (as there may be

often an opposition between him and this present life, so that the one is often quitted for the other,) yet neither is there a co-ordination, but the less worthy must be subordinate to the more worthy. We are to desire the enjoyment of him for his own glory. And yet here is a strange and admirable complication of these with one another. For if we enjoy him, delight and rest in him, as our best and most satisfying good, we thereby glorify him as God. We give him practically highest acknowledgments, we confess him the most excellent one. It is his glory to be the last term of all desires, and beyond which no reasonable desire can go further. And if we seek and desire his glory supremely, sincerely and really beyond and above all things; when he is so glorified to the uttermost, or we are assured he will be, our highest desire is so far satisfied, and that turns to, or is, our own contentment. So that by how much more simply and sincerely we pass from, and go out of ourselves, so much the more certainly we find our own satisfaction, rest, and full blessedness in him. As it is impossible the soul that loves him above itself can be fully happy while he hath not his full glory; so it is for the same reason equally impossible, but it must be so when he hath.

(2.) Our delight must be suitable to the object, (the good to be delighted in,) in respect of the permanency of it. This is the most durable and lasting good. In this blessed object therefore we are to "rejoice evermore," 1 Thess. 5:16. As in the matter of trust, we are required to "trust in the Lord for ever, because in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength," Isa. 26:4, everlasting strength gives sufficient ground for everlasting trust; so it is in the matter of delight. A permanent, everlasting excellency is not answered but by a continual and everlasting delight. Therefore, is it most justly said, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say unto you rejoice," (Phil. 4:4;) alway, and still on. If through a long tract of time you have been constantly alway rejoicing in the Lord, begin again, I again say to you rejoice; or rather never give over. The object will warrant and justify the act, let it be drawn forth to never so vast a length of time. You will still find a continual spring, unexhausted fulness, a fountain never to be drawn dry. There will never be cause of diversion with this pretence, that

now this object will yield no more; it is drained to the uttermost, and is now become an empty and gustless thing. With other things it may be so; and therefore our delight doth not answer the natures of such things, but when we "rejoice in them as if we rejoiced not," (1 Cor. 7:30,) they are as if they were not. All the things of this world are so. "For even the fashion of this world passeth away," as it is afterwards added, v. 31. Therefore no delight can fitly be taken in them, but what is volatile and unfixed as they are; lest otherwise it over-reach, and run beyond its object. And how absurd and vain is it to have our hearts set upon that which is not, that takes wing, and leaves us in the dirt? This object of delight is the "I am, yesterday and to-day the same, and for ever; without variableness and shadow of change." Therefore the nature of it cannot allow us a reason, wherefore if we be delighted therein yesterday, we should not to day; or if to-day, why not to-morrow, and so on to for ever. Whence then we may see no one can say he hath answered the import of this exhortation, "Delight thyself in the Lord," by having delighted in him at some time. It is continual, as well as highest, delight we are here called to. We see then thus far what we are called to when we are here directed to delight ourselves in the Lord.

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

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

2. By way of authoritative command. For we must know, that delight in God is to be considered not only under the notion of a privilege



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

Delight in God is a great piece of homage to him, a practical acknowledgment of his sovereign excellency, and perfect, all-comprehending goodness. When we retire from all the world to him,

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

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

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

enemies to him without excuse; so that the very blood of the reconciling sacrifice cries against them.

And surely since (as was formerly said) it is God in Christ that is the entire object of this delight or love, it is a fearful penalty that is determined upon them that do not so place it, when it is said, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha," 1 Cor. 16:22. And when also it is said, "Grace be upon all them that do," (Eph. 6:24,) it is plainly implied that the penalty belongs to all them that do not "love him in sincerity." Of which sincerity therefore of delight in God, (to keep within the compass of our present theme,) it is necessary to be, as we may be, well informed; from what hath been said before; that is,

(1.) That we delight in him supremely, and above all things else, viz. with our highest and deepest complacency of will. For it is not necessary (nor ordinarily possible) that our delight in him should be ever accompanied with such sensible agitation of the corporeal spirits, as we find in reference to merely sensible objects: which is not essential to such delight, but an accident that follows union with the body; and more frequently, and to a greater degree, in some tempers of body than others. But it is necessary there be that practical estimation of him, and propension towards him, as the best and most excellent good; as that we be in a preparation of mind and heart to forego whatever can come into any competition with him for his sake: that though we do not thus delight in him so much as we should, yet we do more than in anything else.

(2.) That we continue herein; that this be the constant, habitual temper of our spirits towards him; that we cleave to him with purpose of heart, as not only the most excellent, but the most permanent object of our delight; having settled the resolution with ourselves, "This God shall be our God, for ever and ever; he shall be our God and guide even to the death," (Ps. 48;) and that there be frequent actual workings of heart towards him agreeable to such a temper, though they are not so frequent as they ought. Which

account we give, of this sincerity of delight in God, not to encourage any to take up with the lowest degree of that sincerity; but that none may be encouraged, upon their own mistake in this matter, to take up with anything short of it: and that we may see whence to take our rise in aiming at the highest pitch thereof: and that we may (understanding the highest intenseness and most constant exercise of delight in God that our natures are capable of, to be our duty) understand also, that in reference to our gradual defects and intermissions herein, we ought to be deeply humbled, as being faulty; not unconcerned, as though we were innocent in this regard:—that we need continual pardon upon these accounts:—that we owe it to the blood of the Redeemer, that such things can be pardoned:—that we are not to reckon, or ever to expect, that blood should stand us instead, to obtain our pardon for never delighting in God sincerely at all; but only (supposing we do it sincerely) that we do it not perfectly; for most certainly, they whose hearts are never turned to him as their best and most sovereign Good or Portion, and Ruler or Lord, but do still remain "alienated in their minds, and enemies through wicked works," will perish notwithstanding:—and that we might the more distinctly, together with the apprehension of what we are called to in this matter, understand also how we are called to it, i.e. not by an invitation only, that leaves us at liberty whether we will or will not, as we think fit; but by express command, and that also backed with the severe determination of most dreadful penalty in case of omission.

And thus we have in some measure shown the import of the direction in the text,—that we "delight ourselves in the Lord."

## **PART II**

# **CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF DELIGHT IN GOD**

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

According to this diverse import of the precept enjoining this duty, it will be requisite to speak diversely of the practice of the duty itself: that is, that we treat of the practice and exercise of delight, 1, as a thing adherent to the other duties of religion, and 2, as it is a distinct duty of itself.

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

First, That religion which is not so we have great reason not to acquiesce in, or be contented with, for it is plainly such as will not defray itself, or bear its own charges, as having only cumber and burden in it, no use or end; I mean the dead formality of religion only. We find it natural and pleasant to carry about with us our own living body; but who would endure (how wearisome and loathsome a task were it!) to lug to and fro a dead carcass? It will be upon this account needful to insist in showing more distinctly, what sort of religion it is that is in itself wholly undelightful, and propound some things to consideration concerning it that may tend to beget a dislike of it, and so incline us to look further.

1. That we may know what we are not to take up with; because our present subject confines us to this one measure of religion, that it be delightful, it will be proper to limit our discourse to this character only of the religion we are to pass from as vain and worthless, viz. that which is without delight; which it also will be sufficient to insist

on to our present purpose. For since (as hath been largely shown) the delightfulness of the religion which is true and living is intrinsical and most natural to it, it will therefore be certainly consequent, that which is not delightful is dead, and can serve for nothing.

But here it will be necessary, for caution, to insert,

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

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

Therefore, that which is here intended, is not that the religion should be rejected in some present exercises whereof we have not the actual relish of a present pleasure, (as that should not be embraced, wherein upon any whatsoever terms we find it;) but that which can rightfully, and upon just terms, afford us none; and which, upon our utmost inquiry and search, cannot in reason (as it is not unfit that



spiritual reason should be employed in making a judgment what may) be thought spiritually delectable. We shall therefore, in some particular heads, give a short account of such religion as rationally cannot but be judged undelightful, or which hath not that in it which can yield pleasure to a sound and well-complexioned spirit; but that if any be taken therein, that very pleasure is so unnatural and out of kind, as to be the argument rather of a disease in the subject, than of any real goodness in the thing itself.

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

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

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

delight which in a fever one should take in gratifying his distempered appetite, whereby he doth not so much relieve nature as feed his disease.

And so we may say that religion is undelightful, i.e. not duly delightful,

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

surfeits his eye with beholding the food he is to live by, and who in the meantime languishes in the want of appetite, and a sickly loathing of his proper nutriment; surely such a one hath a pleasure that no sober man would think worth the having.

And the more any one doth only notionally know in the matters of religion, so as that the temper of his spirit remains altogether unsuitable and opposite to the design and tendency of the things known, the more he hath lying ready to come in judgment against him; and if therefore he count the things excellent which he knows, and only please himself with his own knowledge of them, it is but a like case as if a man should be much delighted to behold his own condemnation written in a fair and beautiful hand; or, as if one should be pleased with the glittering of that sword which is directed against his own heart, and must be the present instrument of death to him; and so little pleasant is the case of such a person in itself, who thus satisfies his own curiosity with the concernments of eternal life and death, that any serious person would tremble on his behalf, at that wherein he takes pleasure, and apprehend just horror in that state of the case whence he draws matter of delight.

(2.) It is yet a more insipid and gustless religion which too many place in some peculiar opinions, that are either false and contrary to religion, or doubtful and cumbersome to it, or little and inconsiderable, and therefore certainly alien to it, and impertinent. For if that religion only be truly delightful which hath a vital influence on the heart and practice,—as that must needs be indelectable, which is only so notionally conversant about the greatest truths as that it hath no such influence;—much more is that so, which is so wholly conversant about matters either opposite or irrelative hereto, as that it can have none. It must here be acknowledged, that some doctrines not only not revealed in the word of God, but which are contrary thereto, may (being thought true) occasion the excitation of some inward affection, and have an indirect influence to the regulating of practice also, so as to repress some grosser enormities: as the false notions of pagans concerning

the Deity which have led them to idolatry, have struck their minds with a certain kind of reverence of invisible powers, and perhaps rendered some more sober and less vicious than had they been destitute of all religious sentiments. And yet the good which hath hence ensued, is not to be referred to the particular principles of idolatry, which were false; but to the more general principles of religion, which were true. Yea, and though such false principles viewed alone, and by themselves, may possibly infer somewhat of good; yet that is by accident only, and through the short-sightedness and ignorance of them with whom they obtain; who, if they did consider their incoherence with other common notions and principles most certainly true, would receive by them (if thought the only principles of religion) so much the greater hurt, and become so much the more hopelessly and incurably wicked. As most manifestly the principles which (looked upon by themselves), while they are reckoned true, do lead to idolatry, and consequently by that mistake only to some religion, do yet, being really false, lead to atheism, and of themselves tend to subvert and destroy all religion. Therefore such doctrines as cohere not with the general frame of truth, whatever their particular aspect may be considered apart and by themselves, are yet in their natural tendency opposite and destructive to the true design of religion; and the pleasure which they can any way afford is only stolen and vain; such as a person takes in swallowing a potion that is pleasant, but which, if it perform what belongs to it, he must with many a sickly qualm refund and disgorge back again.

We also acknowledge some truths of less importance may be said to concern practice, though not so immediately. Nor is it therefore the design of this discourse to derogate from any such, that are of apparently divine revelation or institution; which, however they justly be reckoned less than some other things, yet for that very reason, as they are revealed by God for such an end, are by no means to be esteemed little, or inconsiderable; be their subserviency to the great design of religion never so remote. Upon the account of which subserviency they are also to be esteemed delectable, that is, in proportion thereto; but when they are so esteemed beyond that

proportion, and are exalted into an undue preference to their very end itself, so as that, in comparison of them, the great things of religion are reckoned low, frigid, sapless things; when men set their hearts upon them abstractly, and without consideration of their reference and usefulness to the greater things of religion; the delight that is so taken in them argues but the disease of the mind that takes it, and so great a degree of dotage, that a serious person would wonder how men can please themselves with such matters, without considering, and with the neglect of, so great things they have relation to.

(3.) And hither is to be referred the much less rational pleasure which is taken by some in the mere dress wherewith such notions and opinions may be artificially clothed by themselves or others; rhetorical flourishes, a set of fine words, handsome cadences and periods, fanciful representations, little tricks and pieces of wit, and (which cannot pretend so high) pitiful quibbles and gingles, inversions of sentences, the pedantic rhyming of words, yea, and an affected tone, or even a great noise; things that are neither capable of gratifying the Christian nor the man; without which even the most important weighty matters do to so squeamish stomachs seem gustless and unsavoury, and are reckoned dull and flat things. And most plain it is, (though it is not strange, that so trifling minds should impose upon themselves by so thin a sophism,) that such are in a great mistake, whose delight being wholly taken up in these trifles, do hereupon think they taste the delights of religion; for these are nothing of it, are found about it only accidentally; and by a most unhappy accident too, as ill (for the most of those things) agreeing to it, and no more becoming it than a fool's coat doth a prudent, grave person; and the best of them agreeing to it but in common with anything else about which such arts may be used; so that they are no way any thing of it, or more peculiarly belonging to it, than to any theme or subject besides, unto which such ornaments (as they are thought) can be added. How miserably therefore do they cheat themselves, who, because they hear with pleasure a discourse upon some head of religion, thus garnished according to their idle, trifling

humour; and because they are taken with the contrivance of some sentences, or affected with the loudness of the voice, or have their imagination tickled with some fantastical illustrations, presently conclude themselves to be in a religious transport; when the things that have pleased them have no affinity or alliance with religion, befall to it but by chance, and are in themselves things quite of another country!

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

Again, (5.) the religion is akin to this, which stands all in hearing. It is as remote (at least) from the heart, when it is wholly placed in the

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

Lastly, (6.) It is a most undelightful religion, which consists entirely in the external additaments and forms of worship which this or that party have chosen to affix to it: yea, though those forms be never so certainly of divine prescription; which, however God hath appointed them, were never appointed or intended by him to be our religion, but to be subservient helps and means to it. Being enlivened by it, they are comely and delightful; but severed and cut off from it, or the course of vital spirit that should flow into them being obstructed and repressed, they have no more pleasure in them than a dead arm or finger. Such divine appointments themselves, severed from the things wherein substantial religion consists, have been an abomination to the Lord; "Your new moons and sabbaths, &c. (Isa.

1:14,) my soul hates;" and then sure there is little reason they should be a delight to us. If they be, it is as fond and trifling a delight, as when one hath the opportunity of conversing with some excellent person, to neglect all his wise sayings, and pleasant, instructive discourses, and only to please one's self in viewing his handsome apparel; yea, though I should know at the same time that I thereby greatly displease him whom (as is also supposable) I were greatly concerned to please. Thus it is with them that mind only the solemnity of God's worship, not the design. And more gross the matter is with such as, by their observance of the external modes of religion, think to expiate the badness of their most vicious conversation; that will steal, and murder, and commit adultery, oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow; and yet presume to stand before the Lord in his house, and cry, "The temple of the Lord," &c., Jer. 7:4. This is the pharisaical religion, that is scrupulous in "tithing mint, anise, cummin, and neglects the weighty things of the law, justice, judgment, and truth." These men delight in what not only is dead in itself, but will be mortal unto them. And if the divine institution of the things wherewith they so vainly please themselves will not bear them out, much less their own; be their discriminating denomination or profession what it will. And now all these things (whether severally or together) and whatever else of like kind, do at the best make but a dead, and consequently an undelightful religion, such as hath no pleasure in it, because it hath no life. It remains therefore,

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



That we may be here somewhat more particular, let it be considered,

(1.) That the religion which is in itself undelightful, is, for the same reason for which it is so, incapable of growth; that is, because it is a dead thing. For that reason it is without delight; and for the same reason admits not of improvement. It wants the self-improving principle. "He that drinks of that water (saith our Saviour) which I shall give him, it shall be in him as a well of water, springing up in him unto life eternal," John 4:14. That only principle of all true religion and godliness, the divine nature, the seed of God, is of that heavenly tendency, it aims and aspires upward; and will never cease shooting up till it reach heaven; and the pleasure and delightfulness of it stands much in its continual springing up towards a perfect state, from a grain of mustard-seed to the tallness of a cedar. It is pleasant to behold its constant, undecaying greenness and verdure; such as renders its subject "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth fruit in season, whose leaf also doth not wither, and whatsoever he doth prospers," (Ps. 1:3;) or, "as plants set in the house of the Lord, that flourish in the courts of their God: that shall still bring forth fruit even in old age, and be fat and flourishing," Ps. 92:13, 14. The dead, dry forms, or other appendages of religion, that have no communion with a living root, or the religion that is only made up of these, gives no such hope of improvement. A great and most considerable prejudice against anything that pretends to the name of religion, which being at first an imperfect thing (as that especially which itself is but pretence and shadow cannot but be), if it shall never be expected to be better, can have little claim or title to any excellency. The value even of true religion, though it be of an excellent nature and kind, stands much in the hopefulness and improveableness of it; and is not so much to be considered in respect of what it is, as what it shall come to. This lank, spiritless religion, as soon as you assume and take it up, you know the best of it. It is not of a growing, thriving kind; never expect better of it. It is true, the notional knowledge, opinionativeness, and external observances, which we have spoken of, may be so increased, as a heap of sand may

be; but the religion of such grows not as a thing that hath life in it, by vital self-improvement.

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

(3.) While it doth last, it wants the fruit and profit which should be designed and sought by religion; even for the same reason for which it is without delight, it is also fruitless and vain, i. e. because it hath no life in it; so that all that is done in this way of religion is only labour and toil to no purpose. And what do or can we propose to ourselves from religion, as the proper design of it, but to have our spirits fitted to the honouring and enjoying of God, unto service to him, and blessedness in him; and that we may, hereupon, actually

both serve and enjoy him? Both these chiefly depend upon his favourable acceptance of us. He will neither reckon himself served by us, nor allow himself to be enjoyed, if he be not pleased with us. And how shall we expect to please him with that, wherewith, the more our minds come to be rectified and made conformable to the rule of righteousness and life, the more impossible it is that we can be pleased ourselves? Can we please him by a religion that is in itself unsavoury, spiritless, and dead; and that affords not to ourselves the least relish of true pleasure? And partly the success of our religion in the mentioned respects depends upon the due temperament our spirits receive by it. But what good impression can that light, chaffy, empty religion that hath been described, ever be hoped to make there? Is it a likely means of refining and bettering our spirits? Even as it is void of spiritual delight it is also of spiritual benefit; for certainly our spirits are like to embrace and retain nothing in which they can take no pleasure. How vain then is that religion by which we can neither please God nor profit ourselves?

(4.) It ought to be considered how foolish a thing it is, and unworthy of a reasonable creature, to do that in a continued course and series of actions wherein we can have no design, and do aim at nothing. Even they that place their religion in things so remote and alien to the spirit and power of it, do yet spend a considerable part of their life-time in those things. And how becoming is it of a man to have spent so much of his time in doing nothing! and that from week to week, or from day to day, the seasons should return of which he hath constantly this to say, "Now comes the time of doing that whereof I can give no account why I do it!"—that there should be so constant a defalcation of such portions of time for that which a man can neither call business nor recreation, which tends to no advantage in any kind. For it tends not to promote his secular interest, but in so indirect and by a way, and with so sinister and basely-oblique respects, as an honest man would abhor, and an ingenuous man be ashamed to profess; and his spiritual and eternal interest much less. This were therefore the same thing as to proclaim one's self a fool or a vain trifler. The things that have been instanced in, (considered so

abstractly from the substance of religion as we have considered them,) being such, some of them, as carry not with them so much as that very "show of wisdom," (Col. 2:23,) of which the apostle speaks; and others of them, so faint a show as it ill becomes a wise man to be pleased with, while they do his better part no good, and carry not that show in any provision (as that word  $\tau\upsilon\eta$  sometimes signifies) for the satisfying of the flesh.

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

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

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

(6.) Let it be seriously pondered how offensive it must be to the jealous God that any should thus trifle with him and his holy things, under a show and pretence of religion and devotion to him. Not to please him by the sincerity and truth of our religion, loses the end and the reward we would expect. But that is not all. To provoke him by the hypocritical pretence and abuse of it, cannot but infer a sharp revenge which it may be we expected not. And let us bethink ourselves how high the provocation is! Either we design to please, honour, and enjoy him by that irrational and undelightful course of religion, or we do not. If we do not, this signifies nothing but highest contempt and defiance of him; and that we are not for his favour, nor fear his displeasure. Yea, inasmuch as such religion is pretended as a homage to him, it is nothing really but most profane and insolent mockery; as if we would join in the same breath and in the same act, "Hail, Jesus!" and "Crucify him;" and at once invest him with the purple robe, and spit in his face. But if we have such a design, and do really think to please him by such trifling with him; and that these vain fancies and formalities shall make amends for all our neglects of him through the whole course of our lives besides; then how vile thoughts have we of him! What do we make of the God we serve? How justly may that be applied to us, "Ye worship ye know not what!" John 4:22. Who gave us our idea of that ever blessed Being? It is not God, but a despicable idol of our own creating, we are thinking to please. We may see how well he is pleased with the external show and the appendages of religion (which, being his own appointments, would in conjunction and in subserviency thereto have signified

somewhat, but disjoined from it, and accompanied with the neglect and abandoning of real piety and righteousness, signified nothing but an affront to him) in that remonstrance by the prophet; "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol," Isa. 66:3. He is pleased with their religion as he would be with murder, profaneness, and idolatry. And is it strange this should be his estimate, when he is hereby practically represented as such a one that will not be displeased with real wickedness, and that will be pleased with the thinnest and most superficial show of devotion?

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

Secondly, To the other head we proposed; the positive judgment we are to make, What religion is fit to be chosen, and wherein we may safely acquiesce? whereof we shall only give the account which the subject we have in hand allows to be given, i.e. that it be such as is in itself rationally and justly delectable. And though religion is not to be chosen only, or chiefly, for the delightfulness of it; yet since, as we have seen, only that religion is true which is delightful; that only which is delightful is fit to be chosen. So that this is a certain character (though not the chief cause) of the eligibleness of religion. And when it is so expressly enjoined us as a duty, to delight ourselves in the Lord; if, as hath been shown, this be within the meaning of the precept, that in the general, we delight ourselves in a way and course of religion, it is plain such religion only can be meant or intended, as can afford us matter of delight, or as is itself truly and really

delectable. And here we shall not need to repeat what hath been so largely discoursed in the Former Part, tending to show the rich matter of delight which the several exercises of true living religion, and all the actions influenced and directed by it, do carry them. It will only be requisite to offer somewhat, partly to direct, partly to excite unto that delightful pleasant life.

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

(1.) Endeavour to have a mind well instructed in the knowledge of such things as more directly concern the common practice of a religious man, as such. That is, to be thoroughly insighted into practical truths, or into that truth which is after godliness. It hath been the merciful vouchsafement of the divine goodness so to order it, that those things are plain and but few which are of more absolute necessity in religion; as may be seen by the summary accounts which we find sometimes given thereof, "Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," (Acts 20:21,) which two things (intimated to comprehend the whole counsel of God) do manifestly suppose the state of apostacy, and express the way of remedy; whereinto when we are brought, how succinct and clear a recapitulation of our duty have we in that of our Saviour, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself!" To a well-complexioned spirit, how comprehensive and full, how savoury and acceptable, will these things appear! Nor would such a one part with the substantial fulness of these few words for all the treasures of both the Indies. How truly is it called, "That good, that acceptable, and perfect will of God!" Rom. 12:2. And how fitly to be preferred before thousands of gold and silver! Things of highest value are not bulky; their excellency is the greater by being contracted, and that, being in themselves precious, they are so conveniently portable. How easily are these dictates carried about with us through our whole course! And how universally useful are they for the well-guiding of it, to such as have a greater mind to do their duty than move questions about it! Two things are both opposite to this rule, and not a little

prejudicial to the delight of religious conversation, (by which it will appear, how conducive to it the matter here directed is) viz. excessive curiosity in the speculation of truths belonging to religion, without designing to refer them to practice, (which hath been animadverted on before;) and an equally excessive scrupulosity about matters of practice. It were indeed an argument of a desperate mind, and destitute of any fear of God, to be careless what we do, and unconcerned whether the way we take, in this or that case, be right or wrong. But it is certain there may be an excess in this matter, and too often is; that is, there may be a scrupulosity which is both causeless and endless. There is surely some medium in travelling, between a careless wandering, we mind not whither, and a perpetual anxiety whether we be in our way or no, with often going back to inquire. This would quite destroy both the pleasure of the journey, and the progress of it. Some difficulties may occur, which should justly occasion one to make a stand and consider; but probably very many cases that some do agitate, with much disquiet to themselves and others, would soonest be expedited by sincerity, and reducing them to the law of love.

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



would have them, and are yet not of authority enough with them to govern and command their practice) it is not strange they entangle and even lose themselves amongst thorns and briars, and meet with little delight in their way. Wherefore,

(2.) Be principally intent to have your soul become habitually good and holy, by its own settled temper and complexion inclined and made suitable to the way of righteousness and life. It was, no doubt, with a very sweet gust and relish of pleasure, that the Psalmist utters that gratulatory acknowledgment of the divine goodness in this, "He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths of righteousness, for his name's sake," Psalm 23:3. The paths of righteousness are very agreeable and pleasant to a restored, a sound and healthy soul; to one that is now got into a good habit, and a settled state of spiritual strength. You may therefore take the meaning and substance of this precept, in the apostle's (more authoritative) words, "Be ye transformed in the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, that acceptable, and perfect will of God," Rom. 12:2. You can never (q. d.) have a proof of it, the very palate of your soul will be vicious and still disaffected till then, that is, till that transformation and renewing change hath passed upon you. Then it will be pleasant to you to know the will of God; your delight will be in the law of the Lord, and in his law you will meditate both day and night. And it will be more pleasant to do it. You will esteem the words of his mouth as your appointed food, and it will be as your meat and drink to do his will. You can easily apprehend how toilsome and painful any thing of business and labour is, to a person that languishes under some enfeebling, lazy disease. A like case it is, when you would put one upon doing of any thing spiritually good, that is listless, indisposed, "to every good work reprobate." How will the heart recoil and give back! With how vehement a reluctance will it resist the proposal, as if you were urging it upon flames, or the sword's point! "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be," Rom. 8:7. But when once "the law of God is within your heart, you will delight to do his will," Psalm 40:8. To one "that is born of God, and hath therefore overcome the world, his commands

are not grievous," 1 John 5:5. Know therefore, you must be good (really and habitually so) in order to your doing good with any delight, in conformity to the blessed God himself (your pattern) who therefore "exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, as delighting in these things," Jer. 9:24. You must be partaker of a divine nature, and have the heart-rectifying communication before discoursed of, and become God's own workmanship a second time, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph. 2:10. It is not to be hoped it can be delightful to act against inclination; or that a forced imitation of that good whereof you want the implanted vital principle can be any more pleasing to you, than it is to God, whom you cannot mock or impose upon by your most elaborate or specious disguises. And therefore, since that holy heart-rectitude must be had, it must be sought earnestly and without rest. Often ought heaven to be visited with such sighs and longings sent up thither, O that my ways were directed to keep thy righteous judgments. "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed," Psalm 119:80. And it should be sought with expectation of good speed, and without despair, remembering we are told, if "we ask, we shall receive; if we seek, we shall find; if we knock, it shall be opened unto us;" yea, that our heavenly Father will much more readily give his Holy Spirit to them that ask, than you would bread to your child that calls for it, rather than a stone.

(3.) When once you find your spirit is become in any measure well-inclined, and begins to savour that which is truly good; know yet, that it needs your continual inspection and care, to cherish good principles, and repress evil ones. Your work is not done as soon as you begin to live; as care about an infant ceases not as soon as it is born. Let it be therefore your constant business, to tend your inward man; otherwise all things will soon be out of course. God hath coupled delight with the labour of a Christian, not with the sloth and neglect of himself. The heart must then be "kept with all diligence," (Prov. 4:23,) or above all keeping, inasmuch as "out of it are the issues of life." All vital principles are lodged there; and only the genuine issues of such as are good and holy will yield you pleasure.

The exercises of religion will be pleasant when they are natural, and flow easily from their own fountain; but great care must be taken that the fountain be kept pure. There are other springs besides, which will be apt to intermingle therewith their bitter waters, or a root of bitterness whose fruit is deadly, even that evil thing and bitter, forsaking the Lord. I wonder not if they taste little of the delights of religion, that take no heed to their spirits. Such a curse is upon the nature of man, as is upon the ground which was cursed for his sake, (till the "blessing of Abraham through Jesus Christ do take place, even the promise of the Spirit," Gal. 3:14,) that it brings forth naturally thorns and thistles, and mingles sorrows with his bread. But that promised blessing, that will enable a man to eat with pleasure, comes not all at once; nor do the increases of it come on, or the pleasant fruits of righteousness spring up, but in them that "give all diligence, to add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity;" which would make "that we be not barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. 1:5–9. Otherwise, look in upon thy soul when thou wilt, and thou wilt have no other than the dismal prospect of miserable wastes and desolation. Consider it seriously, wretched man! who tillest thy field, but not thy soul; and lovest to see thy garden neat and flourishing, but lettest thy spirit lie as a neglected thing, and as if it were not thine.

We are directed, for the moderating of our care in our earthly concernments, to consider the lilies, how they grow without their own toil, and are beautifully arrayed without their spinning; but we are taught by no such instances to divert or remit our care of our inward man. To these concernments let us then apply and bend ourselves; that is, carefully to observe the first stirrings of our thoughts and desires; to animadvert upon our inclinations as soon as they can come in view, upon our designs in their very formation, and inquire concerning each, Whence it is—from a good principle or a bad? Whither tends it—to good or hurt? Will not this design, if

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

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

your love, then your fear; none of these are placed in you, or sanctified, in vain. Retire much with God; learn and habituate yourselves unto secret converse with him; contemplate his nature, attributes, and works, for your excitation to holy adoration, reverence, and praise. And be much exercised in the open solemnities of his worship; there endeavouring that though your inward man bear not the only, it may be the principal, part. How delightful a thing is it, to be paying actual avowed homage to the great Lord of heaven and earth before angels and men! And never think your religious and devotional exercises can acquit you, or supply the want and excuse the absence, of sobriety and righteousness. Exercise a just authority over yourselves: keep your imagination, passions, sensitive appetite under a due restraint, so as to be moderate in your desires and enjoyments, patient as to your wants and sufferings: do to others as you would be done unto: study common good: endeavour, so far as your capacity can extend, all about you may be the better for you: forbear and forgive the injurious, relieve the necessitous, delight in good men, pity the bad; be grateful towards friends, mild and un-revengeful towards enemies, just towards all: abhor to do not only a dishonest, but even a mean and unworthy act, for any self-advantage: and all this out of an awful and dutiful respect to God; by which the ordinary actions of your life may become as so many acts of religion, or be directed and influenced thereby—tinctured as it were with the savour of godliness. Pass thus, in your continual practice, through the whole circle of Christian duties and graces, with an equal respect to all God's commandments, not so partially addicting yourselves to one sort of exercise as to disuse and neglect the rest; which kind of partiality is that which starves religion, and stifles the delight of it.

There are those that affect the reputation of being sober, just, kind, charitable persons, and do appear such, who yet are great strangers to God, and to the more noble exercises of the divine life; know not what belongs to communion with God, live not in his love and converse, savour not heaven, have not so much as the taste of the great vital powers of the world to come:—others, that pretend to

much acquaintance with God, and are much taken up in discoursing of his love and of intimacies with him, that count justice and charity mean things and much beneath them; can allow themselves to be covetous, oppressive, fraudulent, wrathful, malicious, peevish, fretful, discontented, proud, censorious, merciless; and so glory in a religion which no one is the better for, and themselves least of all; and which is quite of another stamp from the "pure religion and undefined" (Jam. 1:27) which the apostle describes and recommends. And certainly, their religion hath as little of pleasure in it to themselves, as it hath of beauty and ornament in the sight of others. So maimed a religion can be accompanied with little delight. Would it not detract much from the natural pleasure of a man's life, if he should lose an arm or a leg, or have them useless and unserviceable? or if he should be deprived of some of his senses, or natural faculties, so as to be incapable of some of the more principal functions of life? And, if we should suppose the new creature alike maimed and defective, will there not be a proportionable diminution of its delight? But the Spirit of God is the Author of no such imperfect productions; and therefore the total absence of any holy disposition will not argue the true delight of such a one to be little, but none at all. However, let all the integral parts of the new man be supposed formed at first, and existing together; when this creature is thus entirely framed, it is our business to see to the due exercise, and thereby to the improvement and growth, of the several parts; wherein if one be neglected, it infers a general enfeeblement of the whole. "Let patience have its perfect work (saith that apostle), that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing," (Jam. 1:4,) implying, that not only the absence of that one grace, but its not being thoroughly exercised, would render us very defective Christians. We may say of the several members of this divine creature, as is said of the complex body of Christians, "If one suffer, all the members suffer with it; if one be honoured, all rejoice with it." Therefore that you may experience the delightfulness of religion, see that in the exercise and practice of it you be entire, thorough Christians.

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

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

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

That apprehension being thoroughly admitted, both these misapprehensions fall and vanish. And it will take place, if it be duly considered,—that there is a delight that will naturally arise from the congruity and fitness of actions in themselves, and the facility of them—that they flow easily from their proper principles. Whereupon there can be no true vital act of religion but will be delightful. And we may appeal herein to the judgments of such as shall allow themselves to consider, whether the matter do not evidently appear to be so, upon a serious review and revolving with themselves of the several gracious operations that proceed from the holy rectitude mentioned in the Former Part; as the acts of even repentance, self-abasement, self-denial, self-devoting, (appearing to be in themselves most fit and becoming things,) and readily without force proceeding (as they cannot but do) from a rectified and well disposed heart, how can they but be pleasant? And it is much in our way to the experiencing of such delight, to be at a point with ourselves, and well resolved wherein it is to be sought and found.

(6.) However all the acts and operations of true and living religion be in themselves delightful, yet apply yourselves to the doing of them

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

(7.) Yet disallow not yourself to taste and enjoy the pleasure of well-doing; yea, and (secondarily and in due subordination) to design and



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

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

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

(8.) And because that disposedness of heart unto such a course of holy practice, may not be constantly actual, and equally sensible at all times, (that all delight in the ways of God may not hereupon cease, and be broken off, which in those sadder intervals cannot but

suffer a great diminution,) you must take heed, that as to the distempers and indispositions you now discern in your own spirit, you do neither indulge yourself, nor despair; but take the proper course of redress.

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

displeased with yourself as your case now is; to dislike and abhor the present temper of your own soul. If the life of religion and its vigorous exercises be delightful, by that very reason it appears its faint and sickly languishings are not so.

Therefore know that self-indulgence is now most unsuitable and dangerous. Labour to awaken in yourselves some sense of your condition. Think, "Whither am I going?" Represent to your own soul the terrors of death. Admit the impression thereof. Behold its frightful visage, and be startled at it. Recount with yourself what you shall be if God who is your life quite depart; if this shall never be, yet know that your fear lest it should is the means of your preservation. And let the apprehension of the tendency of your distemper excite in you that just and seasonable fear. How sure soever you are of the principle that God will never utterly forsake those that are his (as most certainly he never will) yet you cannot be so sure of your application of it to yourself, as your case stands, but that there will now be room for this fear; therefore let it be entertained.

But though you admit a just and very solicitous fear, be sure that you exclude not hope; though you apprehend your case dangerous, look not upon it as desperate. Your hope must not be in yourself, but in Him that raises the dead, and calleth things that are not as though they were; yea, makes them exist and be. But if you cast away all hope, you yield yourself to perish. This stops your breath; so that even all strugglings for life, and the very gaspings of your fainting heart, must immediately cease and end in perfect death. The danger of your case, as bad as it is, calls not for this; nor will the exigency of it comport with it; when once the soul says, "There is no hope," it immediately proceeds to say, "I have loved strangers, and after them will I go," Jer. 2:25. Your hope is as necessary to your safety as your fear; "we are saved by hope," (Rom. 8:24,) i.e. of the end itself, which therefore animates to all the encounters and difficulties of our way, as well from within as from without. Great distempers appear in you and often return; yea, such as are of a threatening aspect and tendency. You should yet consider you are under cure; the prescribed

means and method whereof are before you. There is balm in Gilead, and a physician there; One in whose hands none that trusted him ever miscarried. It is well if you find yourself sick. "The whole need him not," and will not therefore commit themselves to his care. He hath relieved many such as you, that, apprehending their case, have been restored to him; let them despair that know no such way of help. Say within yourself, "Though I am fallen and low, I shall rise and stand, renewed by thee, O my God." Was there never such a time with you before, when in the like case you "cried to the Lord and he answered you, and strengthened you with strength in your soul?" Ps. 138:3. Say, within yourself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance (where health shows itself in lively, sprightly, pleasant looks) and my God," Ps. 42:11. And this very hope, as it preserves life, so it doth the delight and pleasure of life, from being quite extinct. The joy of hope is not to go for nothing, when it can only be said, not, it is well, but, it shall be. It is pleasant to consider that the state wherein saints on earth are is a state of recovery; that though it be not a state of perfect health, yet it is not (also) a state of death, but wherein they are tending to life in the perfection of it; and their frequent (and very faulty) relapses shall be found but to magnify the more the skill and patience of their great Physician. Therefore, however you are not hence to be secure, or imposing upon him; yet let not your hearts sink into an abject despair and sullen discontent, that you find a distempered frame sometimes returning. Let there be tender relentings after God. Your heart ought often to smite you, that you have been no more careful and watchful, but not admit a thought that you will therefore cast off all; that it is in vain ever to strive more, or seek to recover that good frame that you have often found is so soon gone.

Instead of that, apply yourself with so much the more earnestness to the proper course of remedy; and therein you must know your own labour and diligence; your contentions with yourself must have a great place; otherwise it would never have been said, "Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die," (Rev.

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

[1.] Dependence and trust: as that like phrase imports, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God," &c. Ps. 71:16. And that, "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name," (Zech. 10:12,) at once shows us both the communication of the divine power, "I will strengthen them in the Lord;" and the way wherein it is communicated, their "walking up and down in his

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

And then surely he will not frustrate the expectation which he hath himself been the Author of. He would never have induced those to trust in him, whom he intended to disappoint. That free Spirit (which, as the wind, blows where it listeth) now permits itself to be brought under bonds, even the bonds of God's own covenant, whereof we now take hold by our faith: so that he will not fail to give forth his influence, so far as shall be necessary for the maintaining a

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

[2.] Subjection to our dependence; a willing, obedient surrender and resignation of ourselves to the conduct and guidance of that blessed Spirit: a dutiful yielding to his dictates, so as that they have actually with us the governing, binding force and power of a law, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ," as it is called, Rom. 8:3. Great care must be taken of grieving and quenching the Spirit, of rebelling and vexing it, of resisting it, and of striving against it, (which appears to have



been the horrid crime of the old world; his Spirit, it is intimated, had striven, when it is said it should no longer strive; Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19; Isa. 63:10; Acts 7:5; Gen. 6;) and that it had striven implies a counter-striving that was now, by his penal retirement, permitted to be victorious, but to their own sudden ruin) of "despiting the Spirit of grace," (Heb. 10:29;) a wickedness aggravated by the very style and title there given it, "the Spirit of grace;" and unto which only such a vengeance (as is intimated in what follows) which it peculiarly belonged to God himself to inflict could be proportionable. When we permit ourselves entirely to the government of the Holy Ghost, thereby to have our spirits and ways framed and directed according to his own rules, his quickening influence, and the pleasure and sweet relishes thereof, will not be withheld. And if the experience of some Christians seem not constantly to answer this, who complain they pray often for the Spirit, and desire earnestly its gracious communications but find little of them, they are concerned seriously to reflect, and bethink themselves whether their distrust or disobedience, or both, have not made them desolate. Surely we are altogether faulty in this matter; his promise and faithfulness do not fail, his Spirit is not straitened. But we either do not entirely commit and entrust ourselves to his guidance, or we obediently comply not with it; but either indulge our sluggishness and neglect, or our contrary inclinations, and resist his dictates, are intractable and wayward, not apt to be led by the Spirit, and hence provoke him to withdraw from us. Hereto we are in justice to impute it that we find so little of that power moving in us, all the motions whereof are accompanied with so much delight.

2. For EXCITATION. Little one would think should be needful to be said, more than only that we would bethink ourselves what all this while we have been directed to, and are, by this text. If that be once understood, hath it not in itself invitation enough? Do we need further to be invited to a life of delight? Do we need to be pressed with arguments to choose delightful and wholesome food, rather than gall and wormwood, or even very poison? It is a sad argument of the deplorable state of man that he should need arguments in such

a case! But because (moreover) much is to be said hereafter to persuade unto delighting in God, considered in the stricter notion of it, and that will also be applicable to this purpose, therefore little is intended to be said here. Only it is to be considered, Do you intend to proceed in any course of religion, or no? If not, you are to be remitted to such discourses as prove to you the reasonableness and necessity of it; which if you think nothing you meet with sufficiently proves, think with yourself how well you can prove that there is no God, and that you are no man, but a perishing beast. For these things they are concerned not fondly to presume and wish, but most clearly and surely to demonstrate, who will be of no religion. But if you think that horrid, and resolve to own something or other of religion; will you here use your understanding, and consider? Is it indeed so horrid a thing to disavow all religion? And what is it better to pretend to it to no purpose? You find the religion is all but show and shadow, mere empty vanity and mockery, which is not delightful. If you will not choose a better, because it is delightful, (as you are not advised to do for that as your chief reason) yet at least choose that which is so, because it is in other more considerable respects eligible, as being most honourable and pleasing to him that made you, and only safe and profitable to yourself. And what shall your religion serve for, that will not answer these purposes? And if you be not ashamed to spend so considerable a part of the time of your life, as the exercises of your religion will take up, in doing that (as was said before) whereof you can give no account; yet, methinks, you should be afraid to make such things the subject of your vanity, as do relate to God, either really or in your opinion. Can you find nothing wherein vainly to trifle but the sacred things of the great God of heaven, and the eternal concernments of your own soul? And shall the time spent about these matters be peculiarly marked out as your idle time, wherein you shall be doing that only which shall wholly go for loss and signify nothing? The religion which is not delightful can turn to no better account.

If therefore you will have a religion, and you have any reason for that resolution, by the same reason you would have any, you must have

the pleasant, delightful religion we speak of. You have no other choice. There is no other will serve your turn. And therefore what hath been said to divert you from the other, ought to persuade you to the choice of this. And besides, since there is so much of secret delight in true, substantial religion, that ought not to signify nothing with you. If we did consider the delightfulness of it alone, upon that single account it surely challenges the preference before that which is neither profitable nor delightful. And that it is in itself so delightful, if you had nothing to inform you but the report of such as profess to have tried and found it so, methinks that at least should provoke you to try also. How sluggish a temper doth it argue, not to be desirous to know the utmost that is in it! It were even a laudable curiosity to resolve upon making trial; to get into the inmost centre of it; to pierce and press onward till you reach the seat of life, till you have got the secret, and the very heart of religion and your heart do meet and join in one. Did you never try experiments for your pleasure? Try this one. See what you will find in withdrawing yourself from all things else, and becoming entirely devoted to God through the Redeemer, to live after his will, and in his presence. Try the difference between viewing truths to please your genius, or using divine ordinances to keep up the custom, to conform yourself to those you live among, and help to make a solemn show; and doing these things with a serious design to get into an acquaintance with God, to have your soul transformed into his image, that you may have present and eternal fellowship with him. Try how much better it is to have your lives governed by an awful and dutiful respect to God, than to follow your own wild and enormous inclinations; and whether it be not better, what good things soever you do, to do it for the Lord's sake, than from base and sordid motives.

And why should you be of so mean and abject a spirit, as to content yourself to be held at the door and in the outer courts of religion, when others enter in and taste the rich provisions of God's house? Why will you distinguish yourselves by so debasing a character? It is a just and commendable ambition, to be as forward here as the best. Why will you suffer this and that and the other man to enter into the

kingdom of God before you; even that kingdom which consists in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" Think not so meanly of yourself; impose not on yourself that needless, unwarrantable modesty, as to account you are of a lower rank than all that ever became intimately acquainted with the hidden delights of a godly life. At least you are as capable of being thought worthy as any, for His sake upon whose account all must be accepted. Therefore think with yourselves, "Why should I not labour to attain as far in the matter of religion, as this or that neighbour of mine? What should hinder? Who restrains or forbids me?"

But you cannot, if you consider, but have somewhat more to assure you of the delightfulness of it, than the mere report of others; for your own reason and conscience cannot but so pronounce, if you go to the particulars that have been instanced in. If you acknowledge a God, and consider yourself as a reasonable creature, made by him, and depending on him; you cannot but see it is congruous and fit your spirit should be so framed and affected towards him, towards your fellow creatures of your own order, and all things else that do and shall circumstantiate your present and future state, as hath been in some measure (though very defectively) represented; and that it must needs be very pleasant, if it were so. You can frame in your mind an idea of a life transacted according to such rectified inclinations. And when you have done so, do but solemnly appeal to your own judgment whether that were not a very delectable life, and thereupon bethink yourself what your case is, if you cannot actually relish a pleasure in what your own judgment tells you is so highly pleasurable. Methinks you should reflect thus, "What a monstrous creature am I, that confess that delightful wherein yet I can take no delight! How perverse a nature have I! Surely things are much out of order with me; I am not what I should be!" And one would think it should be uneasy to you to be as you are, and that your spirit should be restless till you find your temper rectified, and that you are in this respect become what you should be. And will you dream and slumber all your days? How much time have you lost, that might have been pleasantly spent in a course of godliness! Do you not aim at a life of

eternal delights with God? If you now begin not to live to God, when will you? That life which you reckon shall never end with you, must yet have a beginning. Will you defer till you die your beginning to live? Have you any hope, God will deal in a peculiar way with you from all men, and make the other world the place of your first heart-change? How dismal should it be to you to look in, and still find your heart dead towards God and the things of God, so that you have no delight in them. Think what the beginnings of the divine life, and the present delights of it, must be the earnest of to you, and make sure the ground (betime) of so great a hope.

But I forbear here to insist further; and pass on to the discourse of Delighting in God, under the other more strict notion of it, viz. as the very act of delight hath its direct exercise upon himself.

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

First. Both sorts are to be expostulated with; and no doubt the great God hath a just quarrel with mankind (whom these two sorts do

comprehend) upon the one or the other of these accounts; wherein it is fit we should plead with men for his sake and their own. And,

1. With the former sort; them who are altogether disaffected to God; alienated and "enemies in their minds through wicked works," and (excepting such as deny his Being, with whom we shall not here concern ourselves) at the utmost distance from delighting in him. And as to such, our expostulation should aim at their conviction, both of the matter of fact, that thus the case is with them, and of the great iniquity and evil of it.

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

[1.] Therefore first you must be supposed such as believe the account true, which that book gives of the common state of man; that it is a state of apostacy from God; that "the Lord looking down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if any did understand and seek God," finds they are all "gone aside," (Ps. 14:2, 3,) i.e. (that the return may answer to the meaning of the inquiry) gone off from him. "Every one of them is gone back," (Ps. 53:3,) or revolted, as it is expressed in the parallel psalm; "there is none that doeth good, no not one," (Rom. 3:12,) which is quoted by the apostle, to the intent that "every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may become guilty before God," v. 19. This is then a common case. And as the same

apostle charges it upon the Gentiles that they were haters of God, so doth our Saviour as expressly on the Jews, (who no doubt thought themselves as innocent of this crime as you) that "they had both seen and hated both him and his Father." And when it is said of men, that they were "by nature the children of wrath," Eph. 2:3, (they to whom he writes even as others) do you think that is spoken of any lovers of God, as their present state, or that when all by nature are children of wrath, any are by nature lovers of him, so as to love him and be under his wrath both at once? It is likely then that against so plain evidence, while you confess yourselves men, you will not deny you were sometime haters of God. Well then, is the case altered with you? It is a conviction against you, that you are of human race, till it can be evidenced you are born from above, and are become new creatures. And what, do you find this? It is not expected you should be able to tell the very moment when you ceased from your enmity against God, and became his friends; or give a punctual account of every turn or motion of thoughts in such a change; but it is to be supposed the work was not done upon you in your sleep, so that you could have no animadversion of what was doing. However, comparing what you sometime were with what you are, what difference do you observe? What! were you sometime haters of God, and are you now come to love and delight in him, without perceiving in yourselves any difference? Bethink yourselves; is not the temper of your spirits just such Godward as it was always wont to be, without any remarkable turn or alteration? That is a shrewd presumption against you, that your case is most deplorable. But,

[2.] What is your present temper, in itself considered? You do love God and delight in him; How do you make it appear? Wherein doth that friendly and dutiful affection towards him evidence itself? Sure, love and hatred are not all one with you. Whereby would you discern your hatred towards one you did most flatly and peremptorily disaffect? You would dislike the thoughts of him, hate his memory, cast him out of your thoughts. Do you not the same way show your disaffection to God? Do you not find that so a wicked man (his enemy) is branded and distinguished, "God is not in all his

thoughts?" Ps. 10:4. Are not they who shall be turned into hell described thus, "the people that forget God?" (Ps. 9:17,) that is, who willingly and of choice forget him, or from the habitual inclination of their hearts? And is not that your case? What could hinder you to remember him, if you were so disposed?

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

And what though you think not of many to whom you bear no ill will, nor have any converse with many such; is it enough to bear no ill will to God? Will that suffice you to delighting in him? Are you no more concerned to mind God and converse with him, than with the man you never knew, or had to do with? Your unconversableness with God, and unmindfulness of him, can proceed from nothing but ill will, who daily offers himself to your converse, who seeks and invites your acquaintance, would have you inwardly know him, and lead your lives with him: why is it that you do not so, but that you like not to retain him in your knowledge, and that this is the sense and language of your hearts towards him, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" It can proceed from nothing but ill will



and a disagreeable temper, that you shun the converse of one that seeks yours; that you will take no notice of one that often offers himself to your view, one that meets you at every turn, and aims to draw your eye, and cannot gain a look. When this is your deportment towards God, that he passes by you, and you perceive him not; he "compasses you about, behind and before, and is acquainted with all your ways," and with him and his ways you will have no acquaintance, remain alienated from the life of God, and as without him in the world; is not this downright enmity? Or can this deportment agree with habitual, and the frequent, actual, delight in God which is required?

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

with you, to the altering of your course, and rendering it such as may comport and square with the belief of such things? Would not the word of an ordinary man, premonishing you of any advantage or danger which you have no other knowledge of, be of more value with you? Constant suspicion of any one, without cause or pretence, most certainly argues radicated enmity. You love him not whom you cannot trust.

Do you love him whom upon all occasions you most causelessly displease; whose offence you reckon nothing of? Is that ingenuous towards a friend, or dutiful towards a father or a lord? How do you, in this, carry towards the blessed God? Are you wont to displease yourselves to please him, or cross your own will to do his? Do you take delight in him whom you make no difficulty to vex; whose known, declared pleasure, though you confess him greater, wiser, and more righteous than yourself, you have no more regard to, wherein it crosses your own inclination, than you would have to that of your child, your slave, or a fool? Have you anything to except against that measure and character of loyal affection to your Redeemer and Lord, "If ye love me, keep my commandments:—ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you:—this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments?" Do you not disobey the known will of God, in your ordinary practice, without regret? Do you not know it to be his will, that you "strive to enter in at the strait gate;"—that you "seek first the kingdom of heaven;"—that you "keep your heart with all diligence;"—that you "deny yourself, crucify the flesh," be temperate, just, merciful, patient? Do you aim at obeying him in these things? Can you say, "Lord, for thy sake I refrain the things to which my heart inclines?" Hath his prohibition any restraining force upon your hearts? Do you not allow yourself to be licentious, earthly, vain, proud, wrathful, revengeful, though you know it will offend him? And is this your love to him, or delight in him? Do you bear goodwill to him whose reproach and dishonour you are not concerned for, yea, whom you stick not to dishonour and reproach; whose interest among men hath no place in your thoughts, whose friends are none of yours, whose enemies are your friends,

whose favour you care not for, nor regret his frowns; whose worship is a burden to you, (that you had rather do anything than pray to him,) and his fellowship an undesired thing? Make an estimate by these things of the temper of your hearts towards God; and consider whether it bespeak delight in him, or, not rather habitual aversion and enmity.

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

You may further say, God is out of your sight, and therefore how can it be expected you should find a sensible delight in him? But is he out of the sight of your minds? If he be, what would you infer? That then you cannot delight in him at all, and therefore that you do not; the thing that you are charged with all this while. But he is out of sight by

the high excellency of his Being; for which reason he should be delighted in the more, i. e. with a deeper delight, though not like that you take in the things of sense; and he hath been so beyond all things, notwithstanding his abode in that light which is inaccessible. This therefore is confession without excuse; and would never be offered as an excuse by any but those that are lost in flesh and sense, have forgot they have reasonable souls, and had rather be numbered with brutes than men; as if there were not many things you have not seen with the eyes of flesh, more excellent than those you have! or as if you had no other faculty than eyes of flesh to see with! Which since you have, and the deprivation thereof is vicious and sinful; as your not delighting in God (the matter of fact) seems to be yielded, and so you quit your first post; it will thence appear, that it cannot but be sinful too. And since at that you seem to make a stand (as at your next post,) either thinking to deny or extenuate the evil of it, our expostulation must follow you thither, and be aimed,—

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

you of? Whence is the glorious excellency of this great creation, the beauty, loveliness, pleasantness of any creature? Must not all that, and infinitely more, be originally in the great Creator of all? This, if you consider, you cannot but see and own.

While then your own hearts tell you you delight not in God, do not your consciences begin to accuse and judge you, that you deal not righteously in this matter? And ought it not to fill your souls with horror, when you consider you take no delight in the best and sovereign good? Yea, when you look into your disaffected hearts, and find that you not only do not delight in God, but you cannot; and not for the want of the natural power, but a right inclination; should you not with astonishment bethink yourself, every one for himself, "What is this that has befallen me? I am convinced this is the best good, every way most worthy of my highest delight and love, and yet my heart savours it not!" You can have no pretence to say "that because your heart is disinclined, therefore you are excused, for you only do not what through an invincible disinclination you apprehend you cannot do." But you should bethink yourself, "What a wretch am I, that am so ill-inclined!" For is not any one more wicked according as he is more strongly inclined to wickedness, and averse to what is good? But how vincible or invincible your disinclination is, you do not yet know, not having yet made due trial. That you cannot of yourselves overcome, it is out of question: but have you tried what help might be got from heaven, in the use of God's own prescribed means? If that course bring you in no help, then may you understand how much you have provoked the Lord. For though he hath promised, that for such as turn at his reproof he will pour out his Spirit to them; yet "they who when he calls refuse, and when he stretches out his hand regard not, but set at naught all his counsel, &c., may call and not be answered, may seek him early and not find him," Prov. 1:23, 29. And that wickedness may somewhat be estimated by this effect, that thus it makes the Spirit of grace retire, that free, benign, merciful Spirit; the Author of all love, sweetness, and goodness, become to a forlorn soul a resolved stranger. If you are so given up, you have first given up yourselves; you have wilfully cast

him out of your thoughts, and hardened your own hearts against him, who was the Spring of your life and being, and in whom is all your hope. And whether this malignity of your hearts shall ever finally be overcome or no, (as you have no cause to despair but it may be overcome, if, apprehending your life to lie upon it, you wait and strive, and pray and cry, as your case requires;) yet do you not see it to be a fearful pitch of malignity, and so much the worse and more vicious by how much it is more hardly overcome?

That we may here be a little particular, consider,

[1.] How tumultuous and disorderly a thing this your disaffection is. You are here to consider its direct tendency, its natural aptitude, or what it doth of itself, and in its own nature, lead and tend to. If you may withdraw your delight and love from God, then so may all other men as well. Therefore now view the thing itself in the common nature of it: and so, is not aversion to delight in God a manifest contrariety to the order of things; a turning all upside down; a shattering and breaking asunder the bond between rational appetite and the First Good; a disjointing and unhinging of the best and noblest part of God's creation from its station and rest, its proper basis and centre? How fearful a rupture doth it make! How violent and destructive a dislocation! If you could break in pieces the orderly contexture of the whole universe within itself, reduce the frame of nature to utmost confusion, rout all the ranks and orders of creatures, tear asunder the heavens, and dissolve the compacted body of the earth, mingle heaven and earth together, and resolve the world into a mere heap; you had not done so great a spoil as in breaking the primary and supreme tie and bond between the creature and his Maker: yea, between the Creator of all things and his more noble and excellent creature. All the relations, aptitudes, and inclinations of the creatures to one another, are but inferior and subordinate to those between the creatures and their common Author and Lord; and here the corruption of the best cannot but be worst of all. Again,

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

of thy eternal hope. "All that hate him love death," Prov. 8:36. Further,

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

[4.] It is a most reproachful, contemptuous wickedness! To him, I mean, whom it most directly offends against!—Carries it not in it most horrid contumely and indignity to the most high God? It is a practical denial of all those excellencies in him, that render and recommend him the most worthy object of our delight; it is more than saying, "He is not good, holy, wise, just, and true." Things may on the sudden be said that are not deliberately thought, and may be retracted the next breath; but a man's stated, constant course and way, signifies the apprehension it proceeds from to be fixed, and that it is the settled habitual sense of his soul. Yea, and since, as hath been said, "Thou delightest in other things, whilst thou delightest not in him;" it plainly imports it to be the constant sense of thy very heart, that those things are better than He. What is it then that hath thy delight and love? Whereon is thy heart set? Commune with thyself. Dost thou not tremble, when thou findest this to be thy very case, that thou mayest truly say, "I can delight in creatures, but not in God; can take pleasure in my friend, but none in him! I must confess it to be the temper of my heart, that I love my father, mother,



son or daughter more than Christ?" Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:26. Is it not then to be concluded from his own express word, that thou art not worthy of him, and canst be none of his disciple? Nay, mayest thou not moreover truly say that thou lovest this base, impure earth more than God? That thou takest more delight in thy companions in wickedness; canst more solace thyself with a drunkard on the ale-bench, with a lascivious wanton, with a prophane scoffer at godliness, than with the blessed God? That thou canst allow thyself to riot with the luxurious, and eat and drink with the drunken, "and not only do such things, but take pleasure in them that do them," yea, and thyself take pleasure to commit iniquity; but in the glorious, holy God thou canst take no pleasure! Then wouldst thou be content to carry the plain sense of thy heart written on thy forehead, and proclaim it to all the world as thy resolved, practical judgment, that thou accountest thy friends, thy relations, this vile and vanishing world, thy wicked associates, thine own impure lusts, better than God? And dost thou not yet see the horrid vileness of thy own heart in all this? Art thou yet a harmless innocent creature, an honest, well-meaning man for all this?

Yea, wilt thou not see that thine heart goes against thy conscience all this while? That thou disaffectest him in whom thou knowest thou shouldst delight? That the temper of thy spirit is a continual affront to thy profession, through the perfidious falsehood and vanity whereof thou dost but cover hatred with lying lips? Is not that an odious thing which thou so seekest to hide; and which, though thou art not loath to be guilty of it, thou art so very unwilling should be known? And since thou art so very loath it should be known, how canst thou hold up thy head before that eye that is as a flame of fire, that searches thy heart and tries thy reins, that observes thy wayward spirit, and sees with how obstinate an aversion thou declinest his acquaintance and converse? Wilt thou stand before the glorious Majesty of heaven and earth, who knows thy disaffected heart, and say it is but a small transgression thou hast been guilty of, in not loving him and making him thy delight? Dost thou think this will pass for a little offence in the solemn judgment of the great day that

is drawing on? Or will thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong, when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, thou shalt stand convicted before his tribunal, in the sight of angels and men, of having borne all thy days a false, disloyal heart, full of malignity and ill-will to thy Sovereign Lord, whom thou wast so many ways obliged to serve and cleave to with delight and love? When the difference shall be visibly put between those that delighted in God and them that never did, and thou shalt be marked out for one of them that didst in heart depart from him all thy days, and be thereupon abandoned to the society of that horrid accursed crew in whom only thou didst delight; surely thou wilt not then say thy transgression was small.

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

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

[1.] How directly opposite is it to the law of God! Not only to his express written precept, but to that immutable, eternal law which arises from our very natures referred unto his! The obligingness or binding force whereof doth not so much stand in this, That the thing

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

That great law of love to God (which comprehends this of delighting in him) is, you may be sure, of that former sort, it being impossible there should be a reasonable creature in being, but it will immediately and always be his duty to love God supremely and above all things; yea, that you must know is the most fundamental of all such laws. And therefore when, because original impressions were become so obscure and illegible in our natures, it became necessary there should be a new and more express edition of them in God's written word, this is placed in the very front of them, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" which signifies only the having of a God in name, and no more, if it doth not signify loving him before all other. Wherefore, when our Saviour was to tell which was the first and great commandment, he gives it thus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," Matt. 22:37. The thing enjoined by this law is most substantial, the life and soul of all other duty, and without which all that we can do besides is but mere shadow; for whatsoever we are enjoined to do else, we must understand enjoined to be done out of love to God as the principle whence it must proceed; and, not proceeding thence, the moral goodness of it vanishes as a beam cut

off from the sun. For on this (with the other which is like unto it, and which also hangs upon this) "hang all the law and the prophets." And what! durst thou who knowest God, or rather art known of him, neglect so great and substantial a duty? This is not like the command of wearing fringe on the borders of the garment, or of not wearing a garment of linen and woollen; wherein sure they whom it concerned should have been very undutiful to have disobeyed: but it is the very greatest among the great things of the law; a duty upon which all duty depends, even for life and breath! Should not this have obtained in thy practice, that ought to run through and animate all the rest? Or was it fit it should lie dead, and bound up in the habitual principle, and not go forth (or very rarely) into act and exercise? Or didst thou do thy duty herein, by being only inclined to do it? Or would not the inclination, if it were right, infer (or otherwise is it like to last long without) suitable exercise? Why was so express a law neglected, so often enjoined (or the practice mentioned with approbation, or the neglect of it animadverted upon with abhorrence, in the very terms, or in terms evidently enough of the same import) in the Sacred Volume?\* How could you turn over the leaves of that book, and not often meet with such words, "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous: rejoice in the Lord; and again I say unto you, rejoice," &c.† Should not so frequent inculcations of the same thing have been answered by the frequency and continuedness of your practice of it? Or was it enough now and then, as it were casually and by chance, to hit upon the doing of what is so momentous a part of your religion, and ought to be the business of your life? Ought it not to cut your heart to find yourself convicted herein of a disobedient omission? And when the great God exacts that stated homage from you, a frequent, practical, explicit recognition and owning of him as the supreme delight, the great solace, repose, and rest of your souls, that you have been so little awed with the apprehension of his authority and right in this case; when he hath mercifully chosen to make that the matter of his command and claim, wherein your own advantage, satisfaction, and content doth so entirely consist? That your practice is herein disagreeable to a law, speaks it sinful; that it transgresses so great a law, highly aggravates your sin; a law so

important, upon which so much depends, so express and plain, legible in the very nature of things, and in reference whereto the very excellency of the object would suffice to be law to you, and dictate your duty, if no command had been otherwise given in the case. Surely the neglect of such a law cannot have been without great transgression.

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

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

[4.] And what will you say to the great obligations which the love and kindness of God have laid upon you? Will you not esteem yourselves to have been thereby bound to place your love and delight on him? Could you decline doing so without putting a slight upon his love who is infinite in what he is, and who is love? Was not his love enough to deserve yours?—the love of a God, that of a silly worm! Were you not obliged to love him back again, who was so much beforehand with you in the matter of love; "to love him who had loved you first?" 1 John 4:19. The first love is therefore perfectly free; the latter is thereby certainly obliged and become bounden duty. How variously, and with how mighty demonstration, hath that love expressed and evidenced itself? It hath not glanced at you, but rested on you, and settled in delight. He hath so stood affected towards the people of his choice, and put a name on them on purpose to signify his delight in them, Isa. 62:4. "He rejoices over them with joy, and rests in his love" to them, Zeph. 3:17. "The Lord taketh pleasure in

his people," Ps. 149:4. "His delights have from of old been with the sons of men," Prov. 8:31. Could he delight in such as you, and cannot you in him? Be amazed at this! How mean an object had he for his delight! How glorious and enamouring a one have you! Excellency and love in conjunction! whereas in you were met deformity and ill will! He hath loved you so as to remit to you much, to give to you and for you a great deal more; Himself and the Son of his delights. He then (thou shouldst recount) did invite thee to delight in him who hath always sought thy good, done strange things to effect it, takes pleasure in thy prosperity, and exercises lovingkindness towards thee with delight; who contrived thy happiness; wrought out thy peace at the expense of blood, even his own; taught thee the way of life, cared for thee all thy days, hath supplied thy wants, borne thy burdens, eased thy griefs, wiped thy tears. And if now he say to thee, "After all this couldst thou take no pleasure in me?" will not that confound and shame thee? He hath expressed his love by his so earnest (and at last successful) endeavours to gain thine: by this, that he hath seemed to put a value on it, and that he desisted not till in some degree he had won it; whereupon there hath been an acquaintance, a friendship, some intimacies between him and thee, according as Sovereign Majesty hath vouchsafed to descend, and advance sinful dust. And how disingenuous, unbecoming, and unsuitable to all this is thy strangeness and distance afterwards! It is more unworthy to cast out of your hearts, than not to have admitted, such a guest.

[5.] How contrary is this omission to what by solemn vow and astipulation you have bound yourselves to! It hath graciously pleased the blessed God in his transactions with men to contrive his laws into the form of a covenant, wherein, upon terms, he binds himself to them, expecting (what he obtains from such as become his own) their astipulation. Wonderful grace! that he should article with his creatures, and capitulate with the work of his own hands! And whereas his first and great law (and which virtually being submitted to comprehends our obedience to all the rest) is, as hath been noted, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" this also he gives forth often, as the sum and abridgment of his covenant, "That he will be

our God, and we shall be his people." Now this you have consented to; and therein bound yourselves (as you have heard our Saviour expounds the first and great commandment) to "love him with all your soul," &c. And how well doth your neglect to delight in him agree and consist with this? What, love him with all your soul in whom you can rarely find yourselves to take any pleasure? Surely your hearts will now misgive and admit a conviction you have not dealt truly (as well as not kindly) in this. What, not to keep faith with the righteous God! To deceive a deceiver some would think not intolerable, but what pretence can there be for such dealing with the God of truth? You have vowed to him; what think you of this drawing back? Such trifling with him, the great and terrible God, who keeps covenant and mercy for ever, how unbecoming is it! To dally with him as you would with an uncertain whiffling man! To be off and on, to say and unsay, that he shall be your God, and that he shall not, (for how is he your God if you delight not in him?) imports little of that solemn gravity and stayedness which becomes a transaction with the most high God. "He takes no pleasure in fools; wherefore pay that which you have vowed," Eccl. 5:4.

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



—I am his and he is mine." And how ill do such words become the mouth that utters them not from the abundance of the heart, even from a heart abounding and overflowing with love and joy!

[7.] And how doth the temper of your heart and your practice, while you take not actual, ordinary delight in God, clash and jar with your profession? For admit you do not then make an express verbal profession of actual delight in God at such times when you find it not, yet you still avow yourselves, and would be accounted and looked upon, as related to him; and the just challenges of that relation are not any way answered, but by a course of ordinary actual delight. So much your profession manifestly imports. Whilst you profess the Lord to be your God, you profess him to be your supreme delight. And how is he so, when you seldom have a delightful thought of him, or look to him with any pleasure, and the temper of your spirit towards him is usually strange and shy? And bethink yourselves, what would you then be esteemed? Such as care not for him, as value him not! Would you willingly be taken for such in all those long intervals wherein your actual delight in him is wholly discontinued? Would you not be ashamed the disposition of your heart towards him at such times should be known? Do you not desire to be better thought of? What is there then at the bottom, and under the covert of your yet continued profession at such times, but falsehood? A correspondent affection there is not. Is not your very profession then mere dissimulation and a lie; a concealment and disguise of a heart inwardly bad and naught, but which only comforts itself that it is not known; that is all day long full of earth and vanity, and wholly taken up with either the contentments, delights, and hopes, or the cares, fears, and discontents that do naturally arise from these vile, mean objects, and so are of a kind as mean and vile as they; only makes a shift to lie hid all the while, and lurk under the appearance such a one hath put on of a lover of God, and one that above all things delights in him? But is this honest dealing? Or was this indeed all that was this while to be got of God, the credit of being thought his?

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

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

And again, can you be confident that so much as you suppose was true? Are you sure of this, that, because you sometimes found some motions of heart towards God, it is therefore habitually inclined to him, when it very rarely puts forth itself in any suitable acts, and for the most part works quite another way? Whereby are habits to be known but by the frequency of their acts? Do not you know, there are many half-inclinations and workings of heart with some complacency Godward that prove abortive and come to nothing, as that of the stony ground, and that of Heb. 6:4, do more than intimate? Surely your hope and safety more depend upon your repentance, your return and closer adherence to God thereupon, than the supposition your heart is in the main sound and right amidst those more notable declinings from him. But we will admit your supposition true (which the consideration of the persons we are now dealing with, and the design of this present piece of our discourse, requires), and take it for granted that amidst this your great neglect you have, notwithstanding, a principle, a new and holy nature in you, whose tendency is Godward; whereupon, we further say then,

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

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

[9.] That it is an offence against the Spirit of grace, whose dictates are herein slighted and opposed: for surely with the tendencies of the new creature he concurs. It is maintained by him as well as produced, continually depends on him as to its being, properties, and all its operations. Nothing therefore can be cross to the inclination of a renewed soul, as such, which is not more principally so to the Holy Ghost himself. And particularly the disposing of the soul unto delight is most expressly ascribed to him, that very disposition being itself "joy in the Holy Ghost," (Rom. 14:17;) and we find it numbered

among "the fruits of the Spirit," Gal. 5:22. You may possibly be less apprehensive of your sin in this, because you find him not dictating to you with that discernible majesty, authority, and glory, that you may think agreeable to so great an Agent. But you must know he applies himself to us in a way much imitating that of nature. And as in reference to the conservation of our natural beings, we are assured the First Cause cooperates with inferior causes, (for "we live, move, and have our being in him,") though the divine influence is not communicated to this purpose with any sensible glory, or so distinguishably that we can discern what influence is from the superior cause and what from subordinate; our reason and faith certainly assure us of what our sense cannot reach in this matter; so it is here also; the divine Spirit accommodates himself very much to the same way of working with our own, and acts us suitably to our own natures. And though by very sensible tokens we cannot always tell which be the motions that proceed from him; yet faith teaches us from his word to ascribe to him whatever spiritual good we find in ourselves, inasmuch as we are not of ourselves sufficient to think a good thought. And if by that word we judge of the various motions that stir in us, we may discern which are good and which not; and so may know what to ascribe to the Spirit, and what not. Whereas, therefore, that word commands us to delight in God, if we find any motion in our hearts tending that way, we are presently to own the finger of God, and the touch of his Holy Spirit therein. And what, have you found no such motions excited, no thoughts cast in that have had this aspect and tendency, which your indulged carnality and aversion have repressed and counter-wrought? Herein you have grieved and quenched the Spirit.

And if it have not over-borne you into what you should have understood to have been your duty, but have upon your untractableness retired and withdrawn from you, do not therefore make the less reckoning of the matter, but the more rather; this carries more in it of awful consideration to you, and smarter rebuke, that he desisted. You must consider him as a free Agent, and who "works to will and to do of his good pleasure." His influence is

retractable, and when it is retracted, you ought in this case to reckon it signifies a resentment of your undutiful and regardless carriage towards him. And ought you not to smite upon the thigh then, and say, What have I done? You have striven against the Spirit of the most high God; you have resisted him in the execution of his office, when you were committed to his conduct and government; you have fallen out and quarrelled with your merciful guide, and slighted at once both his authority and love. This could be no small offence. And you are also to consider that when such a province was assigned him in reference to you, and such as you, and the great God set his Spirit to work about you, it was with a special end and design, being the determination of most wise counsel. And how highly doth this increase the offence, that—

[10.] You have herein directly obstructed the course and progress of that design, which could be no other than the magnifying of his grace in your conduct to blessedness! This is that whereon he hath been intent; and he hath made his design herein so visible, that "they that run might read" what it was. The very overture to you of placing your delights on him, speaks its end; it is that whereby he should be most highly acknowledged, and you blessed, both at once. His known design you ought to have reckoned did prescribe to you, and give you a law. It is a part of civility towards even an ordinary man, not to cross his design, which I know him earnestly to intend, when it tends no way to my prejudice, or any man's; yea, to do so would in common interpretation, besides rudeness, argue ill nature and a mischievous disposition. Much more would duty, and just observance towards a superior, challenge so much as not to counter-work him, and awe a well-tempered spirit into subjection and compliance; but a stiff reluctancy to the great and known design of the blessed God, meant so directly to our own advantage, speaks so very bad a temper, hath in it such a complication of peevish wilfulness, of undutifulness and ingratitude to him, of negligence and disregard of ourselves, that it must want a name to express it.

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

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

[1.] Great blindness and ignorance of God. For is it possible any should have known and not have loved him; or have beheld his glory and not have been delighted therewith; and that with such delight and love as should have held a settled seat and residence in them? And can your ignorance of God be excusable or innocent? The apostle's words are too applicable; "Some have not the knowledge of God, I speak it to your shame," 1 Cor. 15:34. Do you pretend to him, and know him not? Worship him so oft, and worship you know not what? Had such opportunity of knowing him, and yet be ignorant? At

least it would be thought, "In Judah is God known, and that his name were great in Israel," (Psalm 76:1, 2,) where he hath had his tabernacle and dwelling place. Here one would think his altar should not bear the same inscription as at Athens, "To the unknown God." How express hath his discovery of himself been to you, and how amiable! What was there in it not delectable, or in respect whereof he hath not appeared altogether lovely—as it were composed of delights? You have had opportunity to behold him clad with the garments of salvation and praise; and as he is in Christ, in that alluring posture, "reconciling the world to himself," wherein all his attributes have visibly complied to the reconciling design; his boundless fulness of life and love not obstructed by any of them from flowing out in rich and liberal communications. If you had not excluded that glorious, pleasant light wherein he is so to be beheld, you would have beheld what had won your hearts fully, and bound them to him in everlasting delight and love. And have you not reason to be ashamed you have not known him better, and to better purpose? "Alienation from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18) proceeds from blindness of heart, i.e. a chosen, affected, voluntary blindness. Or, if your knowledge of him be not little,

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

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



hasty passant glance, the careless cast of a wandering eye; and was this likely to beget an abiding, permanent delight? Have you been wont to compose yourselves designedly and on purpose to think of him, so as your thoughts might be said to have been directed towards him by the desire and inclining bent of your heart; according to that, "the desire of our soul is towards thy name, and to the remembrance of thee?" Isa. 26:8. Whence it is that it is represented as the usual posture of them whom he reckons among his jewels, and for whom the book of remembrance was written, that they thought on his name: a thing that they might be known by, and distinguished from other men. Wherefore it is observable that their remembrance of him was thought worth the remembering, and to be transmitted into records never to be forgotten, Mal. 3:16, 17. The evil of your not delighting in God hath a great accession from your negligent thinking of him.

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

Thirdly. Have they not been hard thoughts; full of censure, and misjudging of his nature, counsels, ways, and works? Have there not been perverse reasonings, with dislike of his methods of government over men in this present state; as if he had too little kindness for such as you would have him favour, and too much for others; judging his love and hatred by false measures? This seems to be much the evil unto which the injunction of delight in God is here opposed in this

psalm, and whence it may be estimated how directly that militates against this, and, prevailing, excludes it. Perhaps you have delighted so little in God because you have thought (the thing that is so wearisome to him,) "Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them," (Mal. 2:17;) and have said in your hearts, "Where is the God of judgment?" Or have you not been more peccant in your apprehensions of his rules and resolutions for the disposing of men as to their eternal states? Have you not disbelieved the revelation he hath given of his nature, and express declarations of his mind and purpose touching these matters? Was it not enough for you to have known his gracious propensions towards returning sinners that desire him again for their God, and willingly accept the grace, and submit themselves to the conduct and government of his Son? Should not this have allured and won your hearts to him, and made you, with humble, thankful admiration of his grace, resign and yield yourselves to be his for ever? Have you not measured your apprehensions of him by the suggestions and misgivings of your guilty, jealous hearts; or by your experienced animosity, and the implacableness of your own spirits towards such as have offended you; as if he could forgive no more than you are disposed to do? Have you not opposed your own imaginations of him to his express testifications of himself, that "He is love;—slow to anger, and of great mercy," &c. and that, "as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts?" Have you not (against his plain word) thought him irreconcilable, and averse to the accepting of any atonement for you; prescribed and set bounds to him, and thought your sin greater than could be forgiven? And if hereupon you have not delighted in him, and have found all ingenuous affection towards him stifled within you, as your not delighting in him was a foul evil, the more sinful injurious cause (denying the infinite goodness of his nature, and giving the lie to his word) hath made it beyond all expression worse. And further at least consider,

Fourthly. Have not your thoughts of God been few? Is not the meditation of him with you an unwonted thing? The Psalmist,

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

[3.] It supposes much carnality, a prone inclination and addictedness to this earth and the things of it; and thereupon argues in you a very mean, abject spirit. While you can take no pleasure (or do take so little) in God, is there nothing else wherein you take pleasure? And what is it? God hath in this matter no other rival than this world. It is its friendship that is enmity to him, (Jam. 4:4;) something or other of it, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life," prevails far, while "the love of the Father" hath so little place in you, 1 John 2:16. Whither are you sunk? into how low and vile a temper of spirit, when you can take pleasure in so base things rather than in the blessed God; and quit so high and pure delights for mire and dirt? What hath thus carnalized your minds, that you savour only the things of the flesh, and divine things are tasteless and without relish? Nor are you to think more favourably of your case, if you take little actual complacency in the world also; probably it is because you have little of it to delight in; it may be you are more acquainted with the cares of it than the delights; or your desire after it is much larger than your possession. It is all one for that. But what are your hearts most apt to delight in; or what is most agreeable to your temper? It is the same thing what earthly affection predominates in you, while the temper of your spirit is earthly, and it is thereby held off from God. Your not having actual earthly delights to put in the balance against heavenly, is only by accident. But all your cares, desires, and hopes of that vile kind, would turn into as vile delights, if you had your wills. In the meantime you are the more excuseless, and your sin is the grosser, that even the cares and troubles of this world are of more

value with you than delight in God. How far are you from that temper, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and whom do I desire on earth besides thee?" Ps. 73:25.

[4.] And how sad an argument is it of downright aversion and disaffectedness to God, in a great degree at least, yet remaining! Whence can your not delighting in him proceed, but from this, as its most immediate cause? What could hinder you, if your heart were inclined? Are you not astonished to behold this as the state of your case, that you delight not in him because your heart is against it; that is, from flat enmity? And what doth more naturally import enmity to anything than to turn off from it, as not being able to take pleasure in it? So God expresses his detestation of apostates, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. 10:38. And his contempt of Jechoniah is signified by the like manner of speaking. Do you not tremble to think that should be the temper of your spirit towards God, and that your estimate of him, as if he were a despised, broken idol, and as mean a thing as a vessel wherein is no pleasure? Jer. 22:28. Reckon then thus with yourself; as your case stands, and things do lie between God and you, your little delight in God can have no more favourable account given of it, nor be resolved into any gentler or milder cause, than enmity. And if this seem to you not to be a cause, but to be coincident and fall in with it, so much the worse. By how much less this enmity hath of antecedency to your neglect, or the more it seems the same with it, so much the more it discovers the evil of the thing itself. For by what worse name can we call anything than enmity to God? But we speak of your habitual temper, as that which is the cause of your actual neglect. And since you have a discovery of God as the most delectable object, cannot pretend there is a better, have leave and free permission to place your delight on him, yea, are earnestly invited and pressed to it; it is plain nothing else is in your way to hinder you. Therefore you delight not in him, because your heart only is averse.

(3.) We also might insist further to show the evils that ensue and follow upon this neglect; such, I mean, as do not follow casually and

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

Now therefore if you did delight much in God, would you not be pressing hard after him? Ps. 63:8. Would you not be following on to know him? Hos. 6:3. And then would his goings forth be prepared before you as the morning, and he would be still visiting you with fresh and increasing light; whereupon your pleasure would be renewed and increased by every fresh view, and consequently your progress would be from sight to sight, and from pleasure to pleasure; whereas now this wheel stands still, or you are going back into darkness and desolation. Have you not much the more to answer for upon this account? The like may be said as to the rest. The irrectitude

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

And though this discourse hath been drawn out to a greater length than was intended, it will not be lost labour, if by all that hath been said, any that fear God shall be brought to apprehend more of the odiousness of this sin; and the self-indulgent thought be banished far from them, that this is either an indifferent matter, or at least (if it be somewhat a careless) it is one of their more harmless inadvertencies and omissions. Which good effect, if through the blessing of God it may accomplish, there will be the less need unto such to read on, but take their nearer way to the immediate present practice of this great duty; and because also it is to be hoped that the evil of this neglect once apprehended, will prompt and quicken serious and considering persons to set upon the enjoined duty, it will be the less necessary to enlarge much in that other kind of discourse which we now come to; viz.—

Secondly,—Invitation thereunto. Wherein yet we have reason to fear it may be too needful to place some part of our present labour. For though in matters of an infinitely inferior nature and concernment, any practice is readily undertaken that is once represented reasonable and gainful, in such a business as this a hundred difficulties are imagined; we stand as persons that cannot find their hands; and all the question is, (even if there be some inclination to it, or conviction at least it should be done,) But how shall we go about it? We are apt to grope as in the dark, even at noonday, and cannot find the door or way that leads into a practice wherein there is so much both of pleasantness and duty. Therefore, as the case is, the invitation to this exercise ought, if it were possible, to be a kind of manuduction; and it is needful we be not only called and pressed, but even led into it. This then we are to endeavour, the giving of some plain prescriptions that may put us into an easy and direct way of falling expeditely upon this delightful work. And here it must be considered that all (as hath been said) are not in an equal disposition to it. Some are more averse, others less, but all too much; therefore are we to begin as low as their case may require, who are less disposed; and so proceeding on in our course, somewhat may fall in

more suitable to them who are in some disposition to it, but do yet need (as who do not?) some help and furtherance in order thereto.

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

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



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

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

3. Yet do not think it unalterable. Do not conclude it as a determined and undoubted thing that matters can never be taken up between God and you, or you become suitable and acceptable to him. Look

not upon your vile, wicked heart as unalterably wicked; nor upon him therefore as an irreconcilable enemy. Account he waits for your turning to him, as being inclined to friendship with you. Otherwise, would vengeance have suffered you so long to live? Have you not been long at his mercy? Hath he not spared you, when it was in his power to crush you at pleasure? Do not think therefore (what you have no pretence for) that he hath a destructive design upon you, and will accept of no atonement.

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

5. Make request to him that he would draw you into that union with his Son; unto whom none can come, but who are drawn by himself, John 6:44. Do not dream and slumber in this business, but know your all depends on it. Consider the exigency of your case. Do you find your heart sluggish, and indisposed to any such transaction with God and Christ? Doth it decline and draw back? Know it herein doth but act its own nature and do as it is, or like itself. Therefore stir up yourself, to "take hold of his strength," Isa. 27:5; in which way, if you have mind to be at peace, you shall make peace. Cry to him earnestly, "Draw a poor wretch out of darkness and death, that must otherwise be at eternal distance from thee, and be miserable for ever. Join me to Him who will bring me to thee, and make me one for ever with thee." Hereupon,

6. Accepting Jesus Christ as thy Saviour and thy Lord, accept in him, with all humble reverence, thankfulness, and admiration of divine mercy and goodness, the blessed God to be thy God; surrendering and yielding up thyself entirely and fully to be his for ever. Do this unfeignedly, and with great solemnity; and let it be to thee for an everlasting memorial! Record it as a memorable day wherein thou didst go out of thyself, and all finite, narrow, limited good, and pass into union with the eternal, immense, incomprehensible, and all-comprehending good, and enter upon it as thine own. And what! wilt thou delight in a God that is not thine? Canst thou be content to look wistly on him, as one unrelated and a stranger? Apprehend (and bless God that this is the state of the case) that in this way he offers himself most freely to thee. It were astonishing to think of purchasing so great a good; the matter were not to be offered at. But how transporting is it, that nothing but acceptance and resignation should be needful to make thee one with the great God, and make his fulness thine! Therefore make haste to do this, and be not hasty in doing it. Defer not, but do it with great seriousness, deliberation, and fulness of consent; considering you are about to enter into an everlasting covenant not to be forgotten; and doing a thing never to be again undone. Now if herein your heart be sincere, and there be a real and vital exercise of your very soul in this transaction with God

in Christ, so as that you truly take him for your God, preferring him in your estimation and choice above all things, and giving up yourself absolutely and without reservation to him as his, to be governed and disposed of by him in all things at his pleasure; you are hereby brought into that state that doth admit of delighting in him. And what remains to be said, will concern you as persons in a nearer capacity, and who have a kind of fundamental aptitude and disposedness of heart unto this spiritual work; and will therefore be directed to you, considered according to that supposition. Only it is withal to be considered, in the case of many such, that they were arrived hither long ago, and been (as was before supposed) hereupon somewhat exercised and versed in this piece of holy practice, have had many pleasant turns with God, and tasted often the delights of his converse; but have discontinued their course, and are grown strange to him who was their delight; have suffered themselves by insensible degrees to be drawn and tempted away from him; or there hath been some grosser and more violent rupture, by which they have broken themselves off. It will be requisite to say somewhat more peculiar to these, for the reducing of them again even to this unitive point. After which what shall ensue may in common concern them, and all that are arrived so far, together. For such therefore whose case this is, it will surely both become and concern you to take this course:—

1. Make a stand, and bethink yourselves: Can you justify your carriage towards him whom you have taken to be your God? Can you approve your own way? Was this all that you obliged yourselves unto in the day of your solemn treaty with him; only to take on you the name of a relation to him, and so (excepting that you would now and then compliment him in some piece of external, heartless homage) take leave till you meet again with him in another world: and that in the meantime this present world, or your carnal self (to be gratified and served out of it) should really be your god, and he only bear the name? Was this indeed your meaning? Or if it was, did you deal sincerely in that treaty? Or can you think it was his meaning, and that he would expect no more from you? Can you allow yourselves so

to interpret his covenant, and give this as the summary account of the tenor of it? How would you then expound it to nothing, and make a mere trifle of it, and make your religion a fitter service for an inanimate, senseless idol, than the living and true God! Do you not yet know what the name of God imports? Can he be a God to you that is not acknowledged by you as your very best, the universal, and absolutely all-comprehending good? But if you apprehend there was really more in the matter; and that you have been altogether faulty in this thing, then,—

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

3. Return to him with weeping and supplication. Open yourselves freely to him. Let him hear you bemoaning yourselves; pour out your souls to him in large acknowledgments and confessions of your guiltiness, which, while you keep silence, will consume your bones and waste you to nothing. "Remember whence you are fallen, and repent, and do your first works." Till then, he hath this against you, that you have left your first love. And consider, is it not a grievous thing to you? Doth it not pain your hearts, that your Lord and

Redeemer should have somewhat against you, as it were laid up, noted, and put on record, kept in store, and, as himself remarkably expresses it, "sealed up among his treasures," (Deut. 32:34;) somewhat that sticks with him, and which he bears in mind, and hath lying in his heart against you? Is this a small thing with you, when that must be apprehended to be his sense (and suppose him saying to you), "I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals?" Jer. 2:2. And now since those former days, "What iniquity hast thou found in me, that thou art gone far from me, and hast walked after vanity, and art become vain?" How confounding a thing were it if he should say, as sometime to others in a case resembling yours, (and why should you not take it as equally belonging to you?) "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me!" Mic. 6:3. And while the case admits such sharp and cutting rebuke, and that it is the matter of rebuke (not rebuke itself abstracted from the matter, i. e. if it were causeless) that should smart or wound; how becoming is it, and suitable to the case, to cast down a wounded, bleeding heart before the Lord, and be abased in the dust at the footstool of his mercy-seat! And though your sin be great and heinous,—

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

were secret between God and you, is it the less evil in itself for that? If you had dealt unworthily, and used base treachery towards a friend in a matter only known to him and yourself, would you not, when you have reflected, blush to see his face till matters be composed betwixt you? And is there another way of having them composed, and of restoring delightful friendly converse, than by your seeking his pardon, and his granting it? Could you have the confidence to put yourself upon conversing with him as at former times, without such a preface; or were it not great immodesty and impudence to offer at it? But that when this hath been the case between the blessed God and you, and you now come with deep resentments, and serious, unfeigned acknowledgments of your most offensive neglects of him, to seek forgiveness at his hand, he should be easy and facile to forgive: how should this melt you down before him! And this is what his own word obliges you to apprehend and believe of him. These words he hath required to be proclaimed to you; "Return, you backsliding ones, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever," Jer. 3:12. "Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree; (your offence hath been idolatry as well as theirs) turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you," v. 13. What heart would not break and bleed at this overture? You can be recovered to no capacity of delighting in God, as heretofore, till you sensibly feel the need of great forgiveness, and have a disposition of heart inwardly to relish the sweetness and pleasantness of it; till these words do agree with the sense of your hearts, and you can (as in a transport) cry out, "O the blessedness of the man (as the expression imports) whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered!" &c. Ps. 32:1. And now when you are come thus far, if the temper of your spirit be right even in this, there will be in conjunction with the desire, hope, and value of forgiveness, at least an equal dread of such future strangenesses and breaches between God and you; and that will be very natural to you, which I next add as further advice;

5. Most earnestly seek and crave a better and more fixed temper of spirit; more fully determined and bent Godward; that your heart may be directed into the love of God; that the spirit of love, power, and a sound mind may bear rule in you, 2 Thess. 3:5. Be intent upon the recovery of that healthy soundness which, wheresoever it hath place, will with a certain steady power and a strong inclining bent of love, carry your heart toward God. And take heed lest you be satisfied in the expectation and hope of forgiveness as to your former neglects of God, without this; there is a manifest prejudice daily accruing to the Christian name and profession, by the unequal estimation which that part of the doctrine of Christ hath that concerns the work of his Spirit upon us,—regeneration, the new creature, repentance, and a holy life; in comparison of that which concerns his performances and acquisitions for us,—expiation of sin, satisfaction of divine justice, forgiveness, and acceptance with God. How sweet, ravishing, transporting doctrines, and how pure gospel, are these latter accounted by many, who esteem the former cold, sapless, unpleasant notions! Thence comes the Christian religion to look with so distorted a face and aspect, as if it suffered a convulsion that hath altered and disguised it unto that degree that it is hardly to be known; being made to seem as if it imported only a design to rescue some persons from divine wrath and justice, without ever giving them that disposition of heart which is necessary both to their serving of God and their blessedness in him. This is not to be imputed so much to the misrepresentation made of it by them whose business it hath been to instruct others, (though of them too many may have been very faulty in almost suppressing, or insisting less, or very little, upon doctrines of the former strain, while the stream of their discourses hath mostly run upon the other;) for it must be acknowledged, that by very many in our age the absolute necessity of the great heart-change hath been most clearly represented, and as urgently pressed as perhaps in most that have gone before. But the matter is plainly to be most attributed to that depravedness of man's nature, whence there is a most unequal and partial reception of the truth of God; and that which seems (taken apart by itself) to import more of indulgence to sinners is readily caught at; that which more



directly strikes at the very root of sin is let pass, as if it had never been spoken. And so men make up to themselves a gospel of this tenor and import, that let the temper of their spirits towards God be what it will, if they rely and rest upon the righteousness of Christ, God will be reconciled to them; and they think they need take no further care. But whatever is said in the gospel of Christ besides, of the necessity of being born of God, of partaking a divine nature, of putting off the old man, and putting on the new, &c. is looked upon as if it had been thrown in by chance, and did signify nothing. And the other, without this, is thought to be pure gospel; as if these were impertinent additions and falsifications. But will not such men understand, that the detracting of any thing from the instrument or testament of a man, as well as adding thereto, makes it another thing, and none of his act or deed? and so, that their pure gospel, as they call it, is another gospel, nay (because there cannot be another) no gospel? Or will they not understand how simply impossible it is, in the very nature of the thing, that the end should be attained, of bringing men to blessedness, (i. e. to a delightful rest in God,) without their having a new nature, a heart inclined and bent toward God, wrought to a conformity and agreement with God's own holy nature and will, unto which the offer and hope of forgiveness by the blood of Christ is designed to win and form them? For can men be happy in him in whom they take no delight; or delight in him to whom the very temper of their spirits is habitually unsuitable and repugnant? How plain are things to them that are not resolved not to see!

Wherefore beware of contenting yourselves with the mere hope, that upon your having admitted a conviction, and felt some regret in your spirits, for former strangeness to God, you shall be pardoned; so as thereupon never to design a redress, but run on the same course as before; and when you have hereby contracted a new score, and the load of your guilt begins to be sensibly heavy upon you, then betake yourselves to God for a new pardon. What presumptuous trifling is this with the Lord of heaven and earth! And what do you mean by it, or seem to expect? Is it not, that God should, instead of remitting your sin to you, remit your duty; cancel the obligation of that very

supreme, universal, fundamental law of nature itself, and excuse you quite from ever loving, delighting in him, or setting your heart upon him at all? Think not forgiveness alone then will serve your turn; it will signify as much as a pardon will do to a malefactor just ready to die of a mortal disease. He, poor man! as much needs a skilful physician, as a merciful prince; and so do you. And your matter is nothing the worse (sure) that the person of each is sustained by the same Jesus, and that both parts can be performed by the same hand. And know that a restored rectitude of spirit Godward, a renewed healthiness and soundness of heart, with your actual delighting in God thereupon in your future course, stands in nearer and more immediate connexion with your final, perfect, delightful rest and blessedness in him, than your being perpetually forgiven the not doing of it; if this were supposed possible without that. But it is not indeed supposable, for if God would not therefore hereafter banish you his presence (as now he does not) you would for ever banish yourselves, as now you do.

6. Let there be a solemn recognition and renewal of your engagement and devoting of yourself to God. Again take hold of his covenant, and see that it take faster hold of you. Do it as if you had never done it, as if you were now to begin with him; only that your own sin and his grace ought now to appear greater in your eyes; that more odious, that you have added treachery to disaffection; this more glorious and admirable, that yet he hath left open to you a door of hope, and that there is place for repentance, and that he is ready to treat with you again on a new score. With what humility, shame, fear and trembling, distrust of yourself, resolution of future more diligent circumspection and observation of your own spirit, trust and dependence on his, ought this transaction now to be managed with the holy God! And when you are thus returned into the way and course of your duty, then may what follows concern you in common with all others, that (being entered) desire direction how to proceed and improve in this holy exercise of delighting in God. Because therefore such as have been somewhat practised in this course, and being convinced of the equity and excellency of it desire to make

progress therein, do yet find a difficulty in it; it goes not easily with them, they are easily diverted and can hardly hold on it; somewhat is intended to be said that possibly may, through the Lord's blessing, be of some use to that (too common) case.

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

You need to have somewhat else than sense, even a spirit of might and power, that may countermand and over-rule in every of those ports, and turn the battle in the gate. Those used to be the places of most strength; and surely here there needs most. Your case and present state cannot admit that you securely give up yourselves to unmixed, unsolicitous delight, even in the best object. If you intermit care and vigilancy, you will soon have such things come in upon you, as will make a worse mixture in your delight than they can do, and corrupt and spoil all. Your delight were better to be mixed with holy

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

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

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

See then to the usual temper of your spirit; and do not think it enough that you hope the great renewing change did sometime pass upon it, and that therefore your case is good and safe, and you may now take your ease and liberty; but be intent upon this, to get into a confirmed growing spirituality, and that you may find you are in your ordinary course after the Spirit; then will you "savour the things of the Spirit," (Rom. 8:5;) and then especially will the blessed God himself become your great delight, and your "exceeding joy," Psalm 43:4. Retire yourself from this world; draw off your mind and heart. This is God's great rival. The "friendship of this world is enmity to him," (James 4:4,) which is elsewhere said of the "carnal mind," (Rom. 8:7;) that is indeed the same thing, viz. a mind that is over friendly affected towards this world, or not chastely; wherefore also in that forementioned scripture, they that are supposed and suspected to have made themselves, in that undue sense, friends of this world, are bespoken under the names of adulterers and adulteresses. You must cast off all other lovers, if you intend delighting in God. Get up then into the higher region where you may be out of the danger of having your spirit ingulphed, and, as it were, sucked up of the spirit of this world; or of being subject to its debasing, stupifying influence. Bear yourself as the inhabitant of another country. Make this your mark and scope, that the temper of your spirit may be such, that the secret of the Divine Presence may become to you as your very element, wherein you can most freely breathe and live, and be most at ease; and out of which you may perceive you cannot enjoy yourself; and that whatever tends to withdraw you from him, any extravagant motion, the beginnings of the excursion, or the least departing step, may be sensibly painful and grievous to you. And do not look upon it as a hopeless thing you should ever come to this; some have come to it; "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple," Psalm 27:4.

Nor was this a transient fit only with the Psalmist, but we find him frequently speaking the same sense: "Surely goodness and mercy

shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," (Psalm 23:6;) and again we have the like strains; "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord God of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; blessed are they that dwell in thy house," &c. Psalm 84:1–4. And what was this house more to him than another house, save that here he reckoned upon enjoying the Divine Presence? So that here was a heart so naturalized to this presence as to affect an abode in it, and that he might lead his life with God, and dwell with him all his days; he could not be content with giving a visit now and then. And why should this temper of spirit in the clearer light of the gospel be looked upon as an unattainable thing? A lazy despondency, and the mean conceit that it is modest not to aim so high, starves religion, and stifles all truly noble and generous desires. Let this then be the thing designed with you, and constantly pursue and drive the design, that you may get into this disposition of spirit towards God. His Spirit will not be restrained, if it be duly sought and dutifully complied with and obeyed; if you carefully reserve yourself for him, as one whom he hath "set apart for himself," Psalm 4:4. If you will be entirely his, and keep your distance, using a holy, chaste reservedness as to other things (that is, such things as any way tend to indispose your spirit towards him, or render it less suitable to his converse,) he will be no stranger to you. And that it may be more suitable and fit for him, you should habituate and accustom yourself to converse in the general with spiritual things. You will be as the things are you converse most with; they will leave their stamp and impress on you; wandering after vanity, you will become vain; minding earthly things, you will become earthly. Accordingly, being much taken up with spiritual things, you will bear their image, and become spiritual.

Think how unworthy it is, since you have faculties (and those now refined and improved by divine light and grace) that are capable of being employed about so much higher objects than those of sense, that you should yield to a confinement, in so great part, to so low and mean things; whence it is, that when you should mind things of a higher nature, it is a strange work with you, and those things seem

odd and uncouth to you, and are all with you as mere shadow and darkness, that you should be most familiar with. Urge on your spirit; make it enter into the invisible world. May you not be assured, if you will use your understanding, that there are things you never saw, that are unspeakably more excellent and glorious than any thing you have seen, or than can be seen by eyes of flesh? Why should your mind and thoughts be limited within the narrow bounds of this sublunary world; so small and minute, and (by the apostacy and sin of man) so abject and deformed a part of God's creation? Do not bind down your spirit to the consideration and view of the affairs and concernments only of this region of sin and wretchedness, where few things fall under your notice, that can be a comfortable (or so greatly edifying and instructive a) prospect to a serious spirit. But consider that as certainly as you behold with your eyes the wickedness and miseries of this forlorn world, that hath forsaken God, and is in great part forsaken of him; so certainly there is a vastly greater world than this, of glorious and innocent creatures, that stand in direct and dutiful subordination to their common Maker and Lord; loving, and beloved of him; delighting to do his will, and solacing themselves perpetually in his blessed presence, and in the mutual love, communion, and felicity of one another. Unto which happy number (or innumerable company rather as they are called) the Redeemer is daily adjoining such as he recovers, and translates out of the ruins and desolation of this miserable, accursed part of the universe.

Reckon yourself as somehow appertaining to that blessed society. Mind the affairs thereof as those of your own country, and that properly belong to you. When we are taught to pray, "That the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven," can it be supposed it ought to be a strange thing to our thoughts how affairs go there? Surely faith and holy reason, well used, would furnish us with regular and warrantable notions enough of the state of things above, that we should not need to carry it as persons that have no concern therein; or, when we are required to be as strangers on earth, that we should make ourselves such to heaven rather. Let your mind be much employed in considering the state of things between God and his



creatures. Design a large field for your thoughts to spread themselves in, (and you will also find it a fruitful one;) let them run backward and forward, and expatiate on every side. Think how all things sprang from God, and among them man, that excellent part of this his lower creation; what he was towards God, and what he is now become. Think of the admirable person, the glorious excellencies, the mighty design, the wonderful achievements and performances of the Redeemer; and the blessed issue he will bring things to at length. Think of, and study much the nature, parts, and accomplishments of the new creature; get your mind well-instructed, and furnished with apprehensions of the whole, entire frame of that holy rectitude wherein the image of God upon renewed souls doth consist; the several lovely ornaments of the hidden man of the heart, how it is framed and habited when it is as it should be towards God and towards men. Cast about, and you will not want matter of spiritual employment and exercise for your minds and hearts; nor have occasion, if any expostulate with you why you mind this earth and the things of sense so much, to say, you know not what else to think of; you may sure find many things else. And if you would use your thoughts to such converse, and thus daily entertain yourself, in this way you may expect a spiritual frame to grow habitual to you; and then would the rest of your business do itself. You would not need to be pressed and persuaded to delight in God, any more than to do the acts of nature, to eat, and drink, and move, yea, and draw your breath.

2. Endeavour your knowledge, or the conception you have of God, may be more distinct and clear. For observe whether, when you would apply yourself to delight in him, this be not the next, (or at least one) great obstruction after that of an indisposed, carnal heart; that though you would, and you know it is fit you should do so, you know not how to go about it; for you are at a loss, what or how to conceive of him. But is it fit it should be always thus? What, ever learning and never arrive to this knowledge? It is most true, "we can never search out the Almighty unto perfection;" and it will always be but a little portion we shall know of that glorious, incomprehensible

Being. But since there is a knowledge of God we are required to have our souls furnished with, and whereon eternal life depends, with all gracious dispositions of heart towards him, that are the beginnings of that life; certainly the whole compass of our duty and blessedness is not all laid upon an impossibility: and therefore, if we do not so far know as to love and delight in him above all things else, this must be through our own great default; and more to be imputed to our carelessness and contentedness to be ignorant, than that he is unknowable, or hath so reserved and shut up himself from us that we cannot know him. There are many things belonging to the Being of God which we are not concerned to know, and which it would be a vain and bold curiosity to pry into: but what is necessary to direct our practice, and tends to show how we should be and carry ourselves towards him, is not (such hath been his gracious vouchsafement) impossible or difficult to be known. We may apprehend him to be the most excellent Being; and may descend to many particular excellencies, wherein we may easily apprehend him infinitely to surpass all other beings.

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

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

But yet further. Can you not frame a notion of wisdom, goodness, justice, holiness, truth, power, with other known perfections, all concurring together in a Being purely spiritual, (not obvious to our sense) and that was eternally and originally of himself, the Author and Original of all things, and who is therefore over all and in all, infinite and unchangeable in all the perfections before-mentioned? Surely such conceptions are not impossible to you? And this is he in whom you are to delight. Lift up then your minds above your senses and all sensible things; use your understandings, whereby you are distinguished from brute creatures. Consider, this is he from whom you and all things sprang, and in whom your life is. Do you perceive life, wisdom, power, love in other things? these must all have some or other fountain. Other things have not these of themselves, for they are not of themselves, therefore they must derive and partake them from him; and thence, it is evident they must be in him in their

highest excellency. Of this, your understandings, duly exercised, will render you as sure as if you saw that infinite glory, in which all these meet, with your eyes; and will assure you, it is so much more excellent and glorious, for that it cannot be seen with your eyes. You see the external acts and expressions of these things from such creatures as you are. But life, wisdom, power, love, themselves are invisible things, which in themselves you cannot see; yet you are not the less certain that there are such things. And do you not find that the certain evidence you have that these things meet in this or that creature, do render it lovely and delightful in your eyes; especially if you have, or apprehend you may have, nearest interest in such a creature? The blessed God not only hath these things in himself, but is these very things himself; therefore must be invisible, as they are. And because he not only hath them, but is them, therefore they are in him perfectly, unchangeably, and eternally, as being his very essence. Think then of a Being that is pure, original, substantial, life, wisdom, power, love; and how infinitely amiable and delectable should that ever-blessed Being be unto you.

Converse with the word of God. Head his descriptions of himself; and do not content yourselves to have the words and expressions before your eyes, or in your mouths, that represent to you his nature and attributes; but make your pauses, and consider the things themselves signified by them; that is, when you read such passages of his own holy Book as that which tells you his name, that "He is the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful," &c. or that tell you "He is light, he is love, he is God only wise, he is the Almighty, God all-sufficient, he is all in all," and that the "Heavens, and heaven of heavens cannot contain him;" or wherein you find him admired as "glorious in holiness;" or that say he "is what he is," that "he is the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega," &c. Labour to fix the apprehension and true import of all such expressions deep in your mind; that you may have an entire and well-formed representation of him before you, unto which you may upon all occasions have recourse, and not be at a loss every time you are to apply yourselves to any converse with him, what or how to conceive of him. And

because mere words, though they may furnish you with a more full and comprehensive notion of him, yet it may be not with so lively a one, or that you find so powerfully striking your heart; compare with that account his word gives you of him the works which your eyes may daily behold, and which you are assured were wrought and done by him. To read or hear of his wisdom, power, goodness, &c. and then to have the visible effects within your constant view, that so fully correspond to what his word hath said of him, and demonstrate him to be what you were told he is; how mighty a confirmation doth this carry with it! You may behold somewhat of him in every creature. All his works do not only represent, but even praise and commend him to you.

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

3. Employ your knowledge in frequent and solemn thinking on him; which is one (and the next) end of that knowledge, and a further great means to your delighting in him. Your knowledge of God

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

It is not a brutal delight you are here invited to. Even such creatures have their pleasures also; and do need thereto, besides a suitable object, only the help and ministry of their senses. Your delight in God can find no way into your hearts, but by the introduction of your exercised minds. There the matter must be prepared and formed by which your delight is to be nourished and maintained. Hereto then you must apply yourselves with design, and with serious diligence, and take pains with your recoiling thoughts. Do not make that fulsome pretence to excuse your slothful neglect, that you cannot command your own thoughts. The thing itself is unquestionably true, and that you are not of yourselves sufficient to think any thing that is good, as of yourselves; and so you may truly enough say that you cannot think any thought at all without God, or so much as draw a breath. Only, as besides your natural dependence on God for the support of your natural life and being, there must be that course taken, and those things done, by which in an orderly course of providence you may live; so for the maintaining of your spiritual life (which very much stands in delight and joy in God) you must join a

spiritual dependence for that special influence and concurrence which is necessary hereto, with the doing of such things as by God's appointment and prescription are to serve this end. They who complain therefore they cannot attain to it, to delight in God, or their delight in him is faint and languishing, while in the meantime they use no endeavour to bend and direct their thoughts towards him, do make as idle a complaint as he that shall say he is in a miserable, starving condition, and nothing nourishes him, who, wanting nothing suitable for him, is so wretchedly slothful that he will be at no pains to prepare, or so much as eat and chew his own necessary food. You may not imagine you have all that is needful for the well-governing of your spirits in your own hands and power. Nor ought you therefore to think that what is simply needful is not to be had. God is not behind-hand with you: he is no such hard task-master, as to require brick and allow no straw; but may most righteously say, "Ye are idle, and do therefore only complain like the sluggard in his bed, whose hands cannot endure to labour." You dare not deliberately go to God, and tell him you do all you can to fix the thoughts of your hearts on him, and yet it will not be; or that he gives you no help. Though he can be no way indebted to you, but by his own free promise, he giveth meat to them that fear him, being ever mindful of his covenant; (yea, he doth it for ravens and sparrows) he will not then famish the souls that cry to him, and wait on him; "their heart shall live that seek God." It is becoming and suitable to the state of things between him and you, that he should put you upon seeking that you may find. Your reasonable nature and faculties (especially being already rectified in some measure, and enlivened by his grace and Spirit) do require to be held to such terms. It is natural to you to think; and there is nothing more suitable to the new creature than that you apply and set yourselves to think on him, and that your thoughts be set (and held) on work to inquire and seek him out. Know therefore, you do not your parts unless you make this more your business. Therefore, to be here more particular;

(1.) Solemnly set yourselves at chosen times to think on God. Meditation is of itself a distinct duty, and must have a considerable

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

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



for want of a right employing of their thoughts, is from hence only; they set their thoughts upon things that tend either to corrupt and deprave their spirits, or to disquiet and afflict them.

At this inlet, and by the labour of their own thoughts, sins and calamities are brought in upon them as a flood; which very thoughts, if they were placed and exercised aright, would let in God upon them, fill them with his fulness, replenish their souls with his light, grace, and consolations. And how much more easy an exercise were it to keep their thoughts employed upon one object that is ever full, delectable, and present; than to divide them among many, that either lie remote, and out of their power, to be pursued with anxiety, toil, and very often with disappointment; or, being nearer hand, are to be enjoyed (if they be things that have an appearance of good in them) with much danger and damage to their spirits, and with little satisfaction; or (if they appear evil) to be endured with pain and sorrow! So that the labour of their thoughts among those many things brings them in torture, when their rest (Ps. 25:13) upon God alone would be all pleasure, delight, and joy: here their souls might dwell at ease, or (as those words import) rest in goodness (even with that quiet repose which men are wont to take by night,—for so the word we read dwell peculiarly signifies—after the weariness which we may suppose to have been contracted by the labour of the foregoing day.) And if no such sweet and pleasant fruit were to be hoped for from the careful government and ordering of our thoughts, is the obligation of God's law in this matter nothing with us? Whom we are bound to fear and love, to trust and obey, above all things, of him are we not bound so much as to think? And what is loving God with all our mind, so expressly mentioned in that great summary of our duty towards him? Or what can it mean, after the required love of all the heart and all the soul, to add so particularly, "and with all thy mind," whenas the mind we know is not the seat of love? Surely it cannot, at least, but imply that our thoughts must be much exercised upon God even by the direction of our love, and that our love must be maintained by thoughts of him; that our minds and hearts must

continually correspond and concur to the loving of God; and so our whole soul be exercised and set on work therein.

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

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

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

You sometimes find them in a most complacential adoration of his wonderful wisdom and counsels. "O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. 11:33. And again, "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

Ch. 16:27. "To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever," &c. 1 Tim. 1:17. "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and ever," &c. Jude 25. Elsewhere we have them in transports admiring his holiness. "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods! Who is like thee, glorious in holiness?" "There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none besides thee, neither is there any rock like our God!" Exod. 15:11; 1 Sam. 2:2. And this is recommended and enjoined to his holy ones as the special matter of their joy and praise; "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." Ps. 97:12. At other times we have their magnificent celebrations of his glorious power, and that by way of triumph over the paganish gods; "Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased," Psalm 115. "Their idols are silver and gold," &c. "Be thou exalted, O God, in thine own strength. We will sing and praise thy power," Psalm 21:13. "Forsake me not until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come," &c. Psalm 71:18. This is given out as the song of Moses and the Lamb; "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty," &c. And how do they magnify his mercy and goodness both towards his own people, and his creatures in general. "O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, that thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the children of men!" Psalm 31:19. "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright; praise the Lord with harp; sing unto him with the psaltery,—the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord," Psalm 33:1. "I will extol thee, my God, O King; I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts, they shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works," Psalm 145:1, &c. To insert all that might be mentioned to this purpose, were to transcribe a great part of the Bible. And in what raptures do we often find them in the contemplation of his faithfulness and truth, his justice and

righteousness, his eternity, the boundlessness of his presence, the greatness of his works, the extensiveness of his dominion, the perpetuity of his kingdom, the exactness of his government; "Who is a strong God like unto thee, and to thy faithfulness round about thee!" Psalm 89:8. "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and thy faithfulness reaches unto the clouds," Psalm 36. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth or the world, from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God," Psalm 90:2. "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee," 1 Kings 8. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of them that have pleasure therein," Psalm 111. "His work is honourable and glorious," &c. "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee; they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power, (Psalm 145) to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations."

And his glory in the general (which results from his several excellencies in conjunction), how loftily is it often celebrated, with the expression of the most loyal desires that it may be every where renowned, and of greatest complacency in as far it is apprehended so to be. "The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever. They shall sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord. Be thou exalted above the heavens, let thy glory be above all the earth. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is excellent, his glory is above the earth and the heavens."\* When you read such passages as these (whether they be eulogies or commendations of him, or doxologies and direct attributions of glory to him), you are to bethink yourselves with what temper of heart these things were uttered; with how raised and exalted a spirit; what high delight and pleasure was conceived in glorifying God, or in beholding him glorious! How large and unbounded a heart, and how full of his praise, doth still every where discover itself in such strains; when all nations, when all creatures, when every thing that hath breath, when heaven and earth, are invited together, to join in the concert, and

bear a part in his praises! And now eye him under the same notions under which you have seen him so magnified, that in the same way you may have your own heart wrought up to the same pitch and temper towards him. Should it not provoke an emulation, and make you covet to be amidst the throng of loyal and devoted souls, when you see them ascending as if they were all incense; when you behold them dissolving and melting away in delight and love, and ready to expire, even fainting that they can do no more; designing their very last breath shall go forth in the close of a song! "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live, I will sing praise to my God while I have my being!" Psalm 104:33. How becoming is it to resolve, "This shall be my aim and ambition, to fly the same, and, if it were possible, a greater height." Read over such psalms † as are more especially designed for the magnifying of God; and when you see what were the things that were most taking to so spiritual and pious hearts, thence receive instruction, and aim to have your hearts alike affected and transported with the same things. Frame the supposition that you are meant, that the invitation is directed to you, "O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise to him with psalms; for the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods," &c. And think with yourselves, Is he not as great as he was? Is he not as much our Maker as he was theirs? Is it not now as true, that "The Lord reigneth, and is high above all the earth, and exalted far above all gods?" Now since these were the considerations upon which so great complacency was taken in him, set the same before your own eyes. And since these were proposed as the matter of so common a joy, and the creation seems designed for a musical instrument of as many strings as there are creatures in heaven and earth, Awake, and make haste to get your heart fixed; lest "the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad, the world and all that dwell therein; lest the sea roar, and the fulness thereof, the floods clap their hands, the fields and the hills be joyful together, and all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord," while you only are silent and unconcerned.

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

We cannot hereupon but note therefore, by the way, how altered a thing religion is now become. Almost the whole business of it, even among them that more seriously mind any thing belonging to it, is a fear of going to hell; and hence perpetual, endless scruples, doubts and enquiries about marks and signs, and how to know what is the least degree of that grace which is necessary to their being saved. As if the intention were to beat down the price to the very lowest, and dodge always, and cheapen heaven to the utmost, it may be feared (as to many) with a design not to aim at any thing higher than what is merely necessary to that purpose only, and never to mind being



excellent, but only being saved. And yet also it were well, in a comparative sense, if that itself were minded in good earnest by many that profess beyond the common rate; and that whereas their own interest is the thing they most mind, it were not their meanest and least considerable interest, even that of their sense and flesh, and secular advantage; and that under the pretence too (which makes the matter so much the worse) of much love and zeal Godward, and devotedness to his interest, which they supposed involved and wrapt up wholly with theirs. Whence also all their delight and joy is measured only by the aspect of the world, and of public affairs, upon them and their private ones. And they are either overwhelmed with sorrow, or transported with joy, according as the state of things doth either frown upon or favour their concernments. In the days when the interest of Christ lay more entirely and undividedly among one sort of men, and more apparently, (their contests being less among themselves, and chiefly with the infidel world; and they had for the most part no enemies but those in common of the Christian name and cause; so that any common state of suffering to them, was the visible prejudice of that cause and interest:) why, what, did they delight and please themselves in nothing but a warm sun and halcyon seasons? Surely they had matter little enough for that sort of joy. And what, did they therefore dejectedly languish and despond, and give themselves up to sorrow and despair? Nor that neither; unless they had all had but one neck, and that also perfectly in the enemies' power, it had been an impossible thing to stifle and extinguish their delight and joy; so fully did Christ make it good to them, that their sorrow should be turned into joy, and their joy should no man take from them. For even that increased it which aimed at its suppression; and the waters thrown upon their flame became rivers of oil. They had got a secret way of "rejoicing in tribulation, of counting it all joy when they fell into divers temptations, of taking pleasure in reproaches for the sake of Christ," of turning difficulties and hazards into matter of triumph, of taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and glorying to be counted worthy to suffer any thing for so excellent a name. Insomuch that though their Head and Lord was in a most ignominious way taken

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

They that rejoice and place their delight in the blessed God himself through Jesus Christ, have for the object of their joy the everlasting I AM, him who "is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" and whose excellent glory may be clouded indeed, and eclipsed to the world and the eye of sense; but still shines in itself, and to the eye of faith, with the same bright and undiminished lustre. That delight will then be continued and permanent, and ever springing up in fresh liveliness and vigour, which is taken in this blessed object considered as it is in itself; and that hath place in a soul that acts in a steady, direct course towards that object, without sinister respects, or any selfish ones of even the highest kind, otherwise than in that subordination which will be suitable to the vast disproportion and inequality between God's interest and ours; that is, (looking upon our own external concernments as unworthy to be named in the same day) that though we reckon what there is delectable in God will make for our eternal advantage, yet to consider that advantage of ours so much less, and to be so much more pleased and satisfied that he is in himself blessed and glorious, as it is in itself a thing more considerable that he be so, than it is what becomes of us, or of any creature, or of this whole creation. We are not indeed concerned, nor may think it warrantable, to put ourselves upon any such severe and unnatural trials of our love and fidelity to him, as to put the question to our own hearts, could we be content to lie in hell, or be in the state

of the damned for ever, for his glory? For it were a most injurious and vile supposition of somewhat inconsistent with his own most blessed nature, and eternal, essential felicity, (for his happiness cannot but be much placed in the benignity of his nature) to imagine that he ever can be pleased, or esteem himself glorified, by the everlasting miseries of any one that truly loves him. We ought to abhor the mention or imagination of such a thing as a blasphemy against his infinite goodness; the denial whereof were to deny his Godhead. And it were also an absurd and self-contradicting supposition; for none can be in the state of the damned, but they must be also in a state of extreme enmity to God, and of all wickedness and malignity arrived and grown up to its highest pitch; which indeed is the very horror and inmost centre of hell, wickedness and eternal misery differing (for the most part) but in degree, as grace and glory do. So that to put ourselves upon this trial of sincerity towards God, were to ask ourselves whether we would be willing to express our sincere love to God by everlasting hatred of him; and the truth of our grace by being as maliciously wicked as the devil and his angels! The expressions of Moses and Paul so frequently alleged can be wiredrawn to no such sense. This is no place to discuss the importance of them. But it were certainly most imprudent (whatsoever they import) to seek marks of sincere love to God thence, which may be fetched from so many plain texts of Scripture. But it is out of question, that we may and ought to mind and take complacency in our own blessedness, in a degree inferior and subordinate to that which we take in the glory of the blessed God, without making the sinful and absurd supposition of their inconsistency: or that we can ever be put to choose the absence or privation of the one as a means to the other. And such complacency and delight in God as arises upon such grounds is of the right stamp and kind.

See then that yours be a well-complexioned delight, and such as inwardly partakes of the true nature of religion, i. e. that hath in it entire devotedness to God as the very life, soul, spirit of it. And if this be not the thing, but merely self-satisfaction, which you chiefly have

in pursuit under the name of delight in God, you beat the air, and do but hunt after a shadow. For there is no such thing as real, solid delight in God anywhere existing, or ever will be, separately and apart from a supreme love and addictedness of heart to him and his interest, as our chief and utmost end: which temper of spirit towards him, must be maintained and improved by our fixed intuition and view of his glorious greatness, and absolute excellency and perfection, and the congruity and fitness which we thereupon apprehend, that we and all things (as all are of him) should be wholly to him, that he alone may have the glory.

5. And though you are not to prefer the consideration of your own interest in God as a good suitable to you, or to give it the highest place in your delight; yet also you must take heed of neglecting it, or of denying it any place at all. For though we may plainly observe, as hath been said, that it was the usual temper of holy men of old to be most taken up in admiring God upon the account of his own excellency and glory in itself considered; and may thence collect that to be the genuine right temper of a gracious heart when it is most itself; yet also it is as evident that they were far from neglecting their own interest in God, and that they counted it not a small matter; yea, that it had (though not the principal) a very great influence upon their delight and joy in him. No one can read the Bible, and not have frequent occasion to take notice of this. For how often do we find him spoken of under the names of their portion, heritage, &c. And in what raptures of joy do we often find them upon that account! So the Psalmist considers him, when he says, "the lines are fallen to him in pleasant places, and he had a goodly heritage," Ps. 16:6. How often do we find them glorying in their relation by covenant, and make their boasts of him as their God; "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength," &c., Ps. 18. You have my no less than nine times repeated in the beginning (the first and second verses) of that psalm, "my strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God," &c. And afterwards how glorious a triumph is there raised, and in what exultation do we behold them upon this! "Who is God save the Lord, and who is a rock save our God?" And again, "The Lord liveth, and

blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted." And this was some of the last holy breath uttered by that anointed one of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel; "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure; and this is all my salvation and all my desire," 2 Sam. 23:5. With this, how well satisfied and pleased did he expire, and go down to the grave! And the people of God are sometime represented as so taken with this apprehension of their peculiar relation to God, that they cannot be content to know, but they proclaim it; nor was it enough the present age should know, but they must have it told the following generation: "Let Mount Zion rejoice," &c. Mark—That ye may tell the generation following—"For this is our God," Ps. 48. See their ostentation of him; This God! q. d. Behold what a God have we! view him well, and take notice how glorious a God he is. And as they glory in the greatness of the God to whom they were related, so they do in the eternity of the relation. "This God is our God for ever and ever," &c. And how unexpressible was the inward pleasure wherewith we may suppose those words to have been uttered, "God, even our own God, shall bless us!" Ps. 67:6. How delightful an appropriation! as if it were intended to be said, the blessing itself were less significant, it could not have that savour with it, if it were not from our own God. Not only therefore allow but urge your spirits thus to look towards God, that you may both delight in him as being in himself the most excellent one, and also as being yours; for know, you are not permitted only, but obliged to eye, accept, and rejoice in him as such. It is his first and great law, and the form of his covenant which he requires you to enter into with him, to take him for your God. Herein to be shy and decline, is to rebel. And when he offers himself in all his rich fulness to be your portion and your God, how vile ingratitude were it to neglect and overlook the kindness of the overture. It is his glory to have indigent souls satiating themselves in him, drawing from him their vital breath, living upon him as their all; confessing they cannot live, but by his vouchsafed communications. And if you should say you love him, but, so he be ever glorious in himself, you care not to be happy; it would sound like a hollow compliment. You are not to deal with a God upon such terms. It becomes you not, nor

is suitable to him. It is fit for you to own it to him that he is your life, that you are a mere nothing in yourself, and must seek your all in him. Your song and your prayer must be directed to him as "the God of your life," Ps. 42:8. You do not own him as God, except you own and adore him as your all-sufficient good, and that "fulness which filleth all in all." You detract from the glory of his Godhead if you attribute not this to him; and if, accordingly, as one that cannot live without him, you do not seek union with him, and join yourself to him, and then rejoice and solace yourself in that blessed conjunction.

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

This makes delight in God a strange thing in the hearts and practice of many. They find too much cause of complaint concerning their own hearts, that they are disaffected, and disinclined Godward. And what is the course they take hereupon? Their religion is nothing but complaint: and all their days are spent in beholding that they are bad, without ever taking the way to become better. They conclude their case to be evil and full of danger because they find they can take no delight in God, and they will take no delight in him because they have that apprehension of the danger of their case. And so their not

delighting in God resolves into itself; and they delight not in him because they delight not in him. It is strange the absurdity of this is not more reflected on. And what now is to be done in this case? To rest here is to be held in a circle of sin and misery all your days; and would signify as if delighting in God were a simple impossibility, or as if not to delight in God were a thing so highly rational, as to be its own sufficient self-justification; and that it were reason enough not to delight in him because we do not. There can be no other way to be taken, but to behold him more in that discovery of him which his gospel sets before your eyes, and in that way seek to have your hearts taken with his amiableness and love, and allured to delight in him. And labour in this way to have that delight increased to that degree that it may cease to be a question or doubt with you, do I delight in God or no? Whence when you reflect and find that you do, then shall you have that additional matter of further delight, that whereas you before took delight in him because being in himself so excellent a one he hath freely offered himself to you to become yours, you may now delight in him also, because you are sure he is so: whereof you cannot have a more satisfying assurance than from his so express saying, "I love them that love me;" and "we love him because he loved us first," 1 John 4:19; Prov. 8:17.

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

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

7. Cherish the great grace of humility, and be ever mean and low in your own eyes. That temper carries in it even a natural disposition to delight in God. How sweet complacency will such a soul take in him! His light and glory shine with great lustre in the eyes of such a one, while there is not a nearer imagined lustre to vie therewith. Stars are seen at noon, by them that descend low into a deep pit. They will admire God but little that admire themselves much; and take little pleasure in him, who are too much pleased with themselves. And how sweet a relish have his love and grace to a humble, lowly soul, that esteems itself less than the least of his mercies! With what ravishing delight will divine mercy be entertained, when it is so unexpectedly vouchsafed; when this shall be the sense of the soul now caught into the embraces of God's love, "What! I, vile creature! impure worm! what, beloved of God!" Expectation, grounded especially upon an opinion of merit, would unspeakably lessen a



favour if it were afforded, as also expected evils seem the less when they come. But the lowly soul, that apprehends desert of nothing but hell, is surprised and overcome with wonder and delight when the great God expresses kindness towards it. Besides that, he more freely communicates himself to such: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit," &c. Isa. 66:1, 2. And he looks to such with a design of habitation; heaven and earth are not to him so pleasant a dwelling. Down then into the dust; there you are in the fittest place and posture for delightful converse with God.

8. Reckon much upon an eternal abode in that presence where is "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore." Enjoy by a serious, believing foresight, the delights of heaven: labour to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Look beyond this your present state. Confine not your eye and delight to what is now to be enjoyed, but think of what shall be. Set before your eyes the glorious prospect of the blessed God communicating himself to that vast assembly of angels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect," in clearest discoveries of his glory, and richest effusions of his goodness. The best appearance of things in this world makes but a dull scene in comparison of this. If you look towards God according to what now appears of his glory in the frame of the universe, and the course of his administrations and government over his creatures, he hath not, it is true, left himself without witness. And you may behold much that would be to you the matter of delightful admiration, if your eye be clear, and can pierce through clouds and darkness, and a manifold veil. He hath made this world, and is every where in it, but it knows him not. His "light shines in darkness, that doth not comprehend it." Beams of his glory do every where break forth, through every creature, providence, law, and ordinance of his. But much of his glory that shines in the creation is hid by a train of second causes, through which few look to the first. His laws, men judge of according to their interests and inclinations, while the holy, glorious Majesty that enacted them is out of sight. His work in the world is carried on in a mystery. His interest lives, but is depressed. They who are most devoted to him are supported indeed by his invisible hand, but are, in the meantime,

low, for the most part, and afflicted. If you now limit and confine your apprehensions of him to his present appearances, the matter of your delight is real, but much diminished. But conceive of him (as your faith can behold him at a distance) in that posture wherein, having settled the eternal state of things, he will finally show himself. Conceive him as having now gathered home all that have been recovered to him out of the apostacy, and joined them to those numberless legions of innocent and pure spirits about his throne, that never offended. Conceive him as dispensing rewards, pouring out blessings upon the loyal heads and hearts of them that expressed fidelity and duty to him, in the time and state of trial and temptation; letting his glory shine out with bright and direct beams, to so many beholding and admiring eyes; giving forth the full and satisfying communications of his love, and making rivers of pleasure flow perpetually to the replenishing the vast, enlarged capacities of so innumerable a multitude of grateful, adoring spirits, to whom it is now sensibly to be perceived how his "fulness filleth all in all." Take this view of him; and let your faith and hope thus "enter into that which is within the veil." And remember there is only a little time between you and that blessed state; that then you are to "enter into the joy of your Lord;" so that the very element and region wherein you are to live for ever, shall be nothing else but delight and joy. In this way of believing foresight, and by this lawful and allowed prepossession of future blessedness, much surely would be added to your present delight in God. Should not the thoughts of him be pleasant to you from whom you are expecting so great things? If your delight in him be any at all, upon what you have already found and experienced of his goodness; it should be abundantly the more, upon what you are by his word encouraged to look for.

And having thus given some account in what way delight in God is to be exercised and improved, it were a charitable hope that there would be little need to propound arguments to persuade unto it. But it were a hope not grounded upon common experience, which too plainly tells us, that though such directions as these are plain and obvious, not unknown to Christians, but only less considered,

(whence it was not needless here to recommend them) yet delight in God obtains little place in the practice of the most. There will therefore too probably be still much need of excitation.

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

Is it not a merciful vouchsafement, that the holy God allows you to place your delight on him, and invites you to it? How much grace and love breathes in these words, "Delight thyself also in the Lord!" Trust in him was recommended before, and now this being added also, how plain is it that your ease and rest is the thing designed! Is it fit to receive so much kindness with neglect? Again, he delights in you; I speak to such of whom this may be supposed. And it is indefinitely said, "His delights were with the sons of men," Prov. 8:31. Think what he is, and what you are; and at once, both wonder and yield. And what else have you to delight in? what thing will you name that shall supply the place of GOD, or be to you in the stead of him? Moreover, who should delight in him but you—his friends, his sons, those of his own house? Think what life and vigour it will infuse into you, and that "the joy of the Lord will be your strength," Nehem. 8:10. How pleasantly will you hold on your course, and discharge all the other duties of this your present state! You must serve him. Dare you think of throwing off his yoke? How desirable is it then to take delight in him whom I must serve; which only makes that service acceptable to him, and easy to myself! Further, this is a pleasure none can rob you of; a joy that cannot be taken from you. Other objects of your delight are vanishing daily. Neither men nor devils can ever hinder you delighting in God, if your hearts be so inclined. And were you never brought to take pleasure in any person or thing to which you had a former aversion? One that had wronged you might yet possibly win you by after-kindness. Give a reason why you should be more difficult towards the blessed God that never wronged

you, and whose way towards you hath constantly imported so much good will!

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

To these I add the consideration in the other part of the verse; "And he shall give thee the desire of thine heart." By desire it is plain we are to understand the thing desired, which is usual. By the thing desired, we must not be so unreasonable as to think is meant any thing, whatsoever it be, that, even with the greatest extravagancy, we may set our hearts upon; as worldly possessions, riches, honours, &c. for it were most unbecoming that delight in God should be so mercenary, or be propounded as the price of so mean things: yea, and if the matter were so to be understood, delight in God were a means to the attaining of these things as the end; which were to make the blessed God an inferior good to these. Nor can we suppose that one who delights in God should ever esteem any reward, or recompence of another kind, greater than what he finds in this very delight itself. And besides, we are very prone to desire things that (as the case may be) would prove very hurtful to us. If God should gratify us with every thing we fancy, he should many times please us to our ruin. And do we believe that when he hath won a person to place his delight and take pleasure in himself, he will requite him with a mischief? Since, then, we may not understand him to mean that whatsoever we desire, if we delight in him, we shall have; we are to inquire further. And it is plain the things that can be supposed to be desired by such persons as are here spoken to, must be one of these

two sorts; either things of a spiritual nature, that end directly to the gratification and advantage of the inward man; or else external good things, that make for the support and comfort of this present life. We will suppose it to be the one or the other of these: and shall show that whichsoever sort it be that is desired, delighting in God doth naturally infer the satisfaction (some way or other) of such desires.

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

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

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

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

And this love to God, or delight in him, as it entitles such to that his care and concern for them which is expressed in this promise; so it doth in its own nature dispose their hearts to an acquiescence and satisfiedness therein. For love to God, where it is true, is supreme, and prevails over all other love to this or that particular good. Whence it cannot be, but, if this love be in act, (as the text must be

understood to call unto actual and exercised delight in God) it must subdue, and keep the heart so far subject to the divine good pleasure, as that its desire and addictedness to this particular, lesser good (concerning which there may also be a just and rational doubt whether it will be now a good to him, yea or no) shall never be a matter of controversy and quarrel with him who is, unquestionably, the supreme and universal Good. How will that one thought overcome, if such a one shall but apprehend God saying to him, "Dost thou love me above all things, and wilt yet contend with me for such a trifle?"

And we may, by the way, note that upon this ground of the dubious mutability of external good things, (which, by circumstances, may become evil to this or that person,) as they are not here, so nor can they be anywhere, the matter of a general, absolute promise, to be claimed indefinitely by any one's faith. The nature of the thing refuses it. For suppose we that what may, in this or that case, become evil or prejudicial to this or that person, doth now actually become so, and is the matter of an absolute promise, now claimable by such a person, what would follow? That an evil is now the actual matter of a promise! than which, what can be said or supposed more absurd, when nothing can further or otherwise be the matter of a promise, than as it is good? Wherefore that promise would, in the supposed case, degenerate (as the matter of it is by the present circumstances varied) and turn into a threatening. Wherefore, when that condition or proviso is not expressly added to a promise concerning a temporal good, the very nature of the thing implies and requires it to be understood. For it is not, otherwise than as qualified by that condition, any way a promise. Now he that is in the present exercise of delight in God, hath his heart so set upon God and alienated from earthly things, as that the present temper of it bears proportion to the natural tenor of such promises; and is not otherwise than by the cessation of this delight liable to the torture of unsatisfied desire in reference to these lower things; "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom—yet I will rejoice in the Lord," &c. Hab. 3:17, 18. And as delight in God doth thus reduce and moderate desires in reference to

any inferior good, so that, if it be withheld, they admit a satisfaction without it, and the want of it is easily tolerable; so,—

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

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



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