

THE

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT:

BEING

A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW

OF THE

PRINCIPAL GRACES WHICH ADORN

THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

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1841.

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To them who with due fervency and constancy ask it, God hath in the gospel promised to grant his Holy Spirit, to guide them in their ways, to admonish them of their duty, to strengthen them in obedience, to guard them from surprises and temptations, to sustain and cheer them in afflictions.—DR. ISAAC BARROW.

If any man have not the SPIRIT OF CHRIST, he is none of his.

Romans viii. 9.

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PREFACE.

It is not uncommon to meet with books bearing religious titles, which are occupied almost exclusively in the treatment of moral topics. Though we find in their pages original remarks, ingenious distinctions, and sparkling maxims, accompanied with all those beauties of language which gratify a literary taste, they afford to the Christian no wholesome and savoury food. Those who are delighted with the perusal of such writings are in danger of fixing their dependence on the treacherous ground of self-righteousness: their religion differing little from paganism, except in a few terms; they begin to take alarm at every plain and prominent avowal of evangelical truth.

On the other hand, it must be acknowledged, that some good men, from a dread of sinking the gospel into a mere system of morals, have almost lost sight of its practical precepts. Their outline is correct and good, but it wants to be filled up and finished: the principles at the foundation are sound and well laid, but they neglect to carry up the superstructure.

Whoever seriously and impartially weighs the Scriptures, must perceive that principles and precepts are inseparably connected; and that the doctrines necessary to be believed, are traced forward and branched out into the duties necessary to be performed. Yet there may be a formal and large statement of leading gospel truths, including ample details of a practical tendency, where something of essential importance is felt to be wanting. We see the materials of religion, but they appear in fragments, which exhibit no symmetry and beauty as a whole. The Christian character, in such representations, resembles a dry skeleton, without the blooming features, the sacred unction, and vital spirit which constitute its chief excellency.

Whatever contempt may be cast upon it, there is such a thing as religious experience. The truths of the gospel must be felt as well as known. While the judgment is informed, the heart must be affected. Though Christ is an infallible Teacher, who only has the words of eternal life, we must not forget that he is also a Saviour. The grand end for which he came into the world was "to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Believers are said to taste that the Lord is gracious, and to be partakers

of a Divine nature. It has been my aim in the following pages to prove the necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence for effecting that change of heart, without which the profession of the Christian faith will profit us nothing. Yet, as the mere establishment of such a doctrine in a systematic manner, would answer no good purpose, I have endeavoured to exhibit the happy fruits which the Spirit produces.

As the Holy Spirit is promised to help our infirmities, and God deals with us as rational and accountable creatures, I have pointed out at large the means which are to be used, in cultivating the graces and virtues of personal piety. If any should think I have been too copious and minute in this part of the work, let me request them seriously to consider its vast importance.

I need make no apology for introducing a considerable number of quotations from ancient and modern writers. I grant that if any sentiment found in this book be contrary to the language of revelation, no props of human authority can sustain it. But if the principles here taught are consistent with the Scriptures, it will not be thought a fault to borrow from some of our best authors a few striking passages, which express my meaning better than I could express it myself.

This work is presented to the public, with the humble hope that it will assist the Christian reader in the exercises and duties of pure religion; and the fruits of righteousness are so valuable, that the smallest success in promoting their growth yields the highest satisfaction.

J.T.

THE

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT:

CHAPTER I.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

GAL. v. 22, 23.—But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

THE Scriptures draw the characters of the righteous and wicked in the most exact lines and glowing colours. The men of the world, and the children of God, are painted to the life. Here we see the disguises of flattery removed, and the stains of slander wiped away. In these pictures no feature is distorted, defective, or overcharged. In Gal. v. 16–23, the apostle presents a striking contrast between the old and the new man, or the propensities of corrupt nature, and the tendency of Divine grace. "This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelling, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Dr. Doddridge, on this passage, observes, "As it is plain

that by the flesh, which is the same that the apostle elsewhere calls 'the body of sin,' and the 'old man,' Rom. vi. 6; we are to understand that corruption, or depravity, which is the ruling principle in a state of nature, and has so far infected all our faculties, that even the regenerate are troubled still with the remains of it, and find it working in the motions of indwelling sin: so, by the Spirit, which is here set in opposition to it, and is elsewhere expressed by the new man, which is put on such as are renewed in the spirit of their mind, Eph. iv. 23; we are to understand that supernatural principle of grace which is imparted from above, to overcome the passions of the carnal mind, to set us free from the dominion of our lusts, and inspire us with a love to holiness." This exposition of the passage seems agreeable to the words of our Lord, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," John iii. 6. "Every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights," and the Fountain of life and love, James i. 17. All the excellent fruits of pure religion spring from a heavenly stock. Before, however, I describe the several graces mentioned by the apostle in this passage, I shall take a general view of the reality, the nature, the necessity, and the evidence of the Holy Spirit's influence; and attempt to answer some of the objections that are usually opposed to this doctrine.

I. I need not spend much time in proving the reality of the Spirit's influence on the mind.

That it is possible, must surely be admitted by all. It is the highest reach of presumption, to deny that God can, in a manner far beyond our comprehension, direct and control all the secret springs and movements of the human soul. The only question then is, whether he will, in this way, exert his power and communicate his grace. It may not be improper to advert to the ideas which some of the wisest heathen entertained on this subject. Almost every one knows that Socrates represented virtue as an effect produced by a Divine cause; and declared that good men were formed neither by nature nor by art, but by Divine inspiration. Plato taught the same doctrine in various parts of his writings. Tully says, "No man was ever truly great without some Divine influence." [1] How much further did these men go, how much better did they see, with their candle, than many, in our day, who have the light of the sun!

But whatever were the ideas and opinions of ancient sages, the sacred Scriptures most clearly teach the doctrine of the Spirit's influence. By a serious attention to the inspired volume, we shall be convinced that no doubt can remain as to the possibility of enjoying this inestimable privilege. The words of Jesus

Christ convey at once the clearest instruction and the sweetest encouragement. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13. Our apostasy, ingratitude, and disobedience, have rendered us utterly unworthy of every heavenly blessing. It is, therefore, entirely in consequence of the merit and mediation of Christ, that we enjoy the Divine influences. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them," Psalm lxxviii. 18. Oh the riches, the unsearchable riches of Divine grace! After Jesus had finished his work, and the everlasting gates of heaven had received him, what precious, what abundant gifts did he bestow upon the church! He now sits on his throne, and sends forth the Holy Spirit to visit and reclaim the vilest sinners. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men!" Rev. xxi. 3. Are we not wretched outcasts, odious rebels? What then could we expect but Divine wrath? Wonder, O heavens! Sing a new song, ye holy angels; for lo, the God of love comes to dwell among us!

That this truth may be more duly apprehended, it is illustrated by an allusion to the residence of Jehovah in the ancient temple at Jerusalem. Although God fills immensity, and cannot be excluded from any part of the vast regions of nature; yet he promised his special favouring presence in that place, where he had put his name. His glory visibly shone between the cherubim, and often filled the whole house. "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy," Psalm cxxxii. 13–16. The apostle Paul thus addresses the church at Corinth: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? even as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people," 1 Cor. iii. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16. There is in the figure here used by the apostle, something admirably fitted to impress upon the mind, the grand doctrine under consideration.

II. Let us consider the nature of the Holy Spirit's influence on the mind.

1. One part of the Spirit's work is, to enlighten the understanding, and to rectify the judgment. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3. But how is this inestimable knowledge to be obtained? By what power can the dismal shades of ignorance,

and the thick clouds of error and superstition, be dispelled? What shall turn the midnight darkness into noon day? Some, indeed, have boasted that all this may be effected by the stores of learning, the powers of reason, and the efficacy of philosophy. Ah! vain hope; "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God," 1 Cor. iii. 19. Into what a wretched state were some of the most famous nations of the heathen sunk! "Professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever," Rom. i. 22, 23, 25.

It is written, "They shall be all taught of God," John vi. 45. Surely it is not merely by possessing the Holy Scriptures that we are thus taught, but by having the eyes of our understandings enlightened to know what is the hope of the Lord's calling, "and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," Eph. i 18. Who will venture to deny, that true wisdom comes from above? The apostle uses the most forcible and emphatic language to express the truth on this subject. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. That this illumination is effected by the agency of the Holy Spirit, must be manifest to every one who closely and impartially examines the Scriptures. Our Lord promises the Spirit under this very character. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you," John xvi. 13, 14. It cannot be justly said, the promise above mentioned was confined to those infallible teachers who had the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; for we find the apostle John thus speaking to Christians at large: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things," 1 John ii. 20. This sacred anointing gives us a clear view and a lively apprehension of eternal things. It aids us to distinguish good from evil, and truth from error; so that we may walk on our way safely. The all-important concerns of religion now appear in their true value, and every thing else lighter than the small dust of the balance. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things," 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

2. Another part of the Spirit's work is, to awaken the slumbering conscience, and to subdue the obstinate, rebellious will.

Sin is a fatal opiate, by which the soul is intoxicated, and bewildered with visionary pleasures, and rendered insensible to its danger. Hence we see so many sunk into a state of brutish stupidity. The law of God thunders unheard; the judgments of God pass before their eyes unheeded; and they neither feel their load of guilt, nor fear the terrors of hell. But when the Spirit gives point and power to the word, it pierces to the quick, and arouses the man from the long sleep of sin. On the memorable day of Pentecost, while Peter was preaching, more than three thousand persons were at once pricked in their hearts, and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts ii. 37. When the mind is filled with strong conviction, and trembling anxiety, every inferior, every earthly concern, is swallowed up and forgotten. The salvation of the soul is the grand object of inquiry. Can it be doubted that such an awakening from the sleep of carnal security, is an effect of the Holy Spirit's influence? Was it not foretold by Christ, that the Spirit should reprove or convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment? It is by his Divine power that self-will receives its death wound. The sinner, whose neck was as an iron sinew, and his brow as brass, becomes yielding as clay in the hand of the potter, or wax to the impression of the seal. Arrested in his career of folly and wickedness, by the extended arm of Almighty grace, he makes a solemn pause, and turns to the Lover and Redeemer of souls with the humble language of entreaty, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Acts ix. 6. I have rebelled against thee; I have grievously sinned in thy sight. Wretched and undone, I have no excuse to offer, no plea to bring that can in the least palliate my guilt. O Lord, enter not into judgment with me, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified," Psal. cxliii. 2. Such instances of penitence, humiliation, and submission, exhibit a fulfilment of that remarkable prophecy, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Psal. cx. 3.

3. Another part of the Spirit's work is, to purify and raise the depraved and grovelling affections, and impart comfort and liberty to the soul.

While the sinner is wholly engrossed with the things of time and sense, eagerly intent on the pursuit of forbidden, polluted joys, or the attainment of wealth and power, what can be expected but a rapidly increasing progress in the course of this world? While the passions, those powerful ingredients in human nature, are inflamed with the poison of sin, and continue to inflame the whole man, what but the worst consequences can follow? It is the Spirit of God that raises and refines the affections of the soul. The new heart which is given according to the glorious covenant of grace, has new desires and aversions, new hopes and fears, new sorrows and delights. Behold the Christian, whose

affections, in all their force and fervency, are turned from sin to holiness, from earth to heaven, from the creature to God! He waits upon the Lord, mounts up with wings as the eagle, runs without weariness, and walks without fainting, Isa. xl. 31. Ask him what wrought the change, and he will instantly answer, "Nothing short of the power and Spirit of God could renovate my heart. Alas! how long I thirsted for what tended only to vitiate, but could never satisfy the mind! How earnestly I followed through all the mazes of folly and delusion, the most empty flattering vanities that glittered before my eyes! How thoughtlessly I danced on the borders of the infernal pit! Bless the Lord, O my soul, for his sparing mercy and his wonderful love! He showed thee the evil of sin, and the bitterness which lies at the bottom of all forbidden sweets! He broke the fatal enchantment of the world, and set thee free! He liberally granted to thee the joys of his salvation. Now, I know, from experience, that 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' 2 Cor. iii. 17. Yes, that liberty is here, in this soul, which was so long held in the bondage of corruption! Blessed and adorable Spirit, truly art thou called the Comforter; for no power but thine could impart the strong consolation I now enjoy."

III. Let us consider the absolute necessity of the Divine Spirit's influence.

The perfect purity of heaven forbids us to indulge the thought, that either sin or those who are infected with it, can have admission there. Oh, let it never be forgotten, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. Such is the deep-rooted depravity of human nature, that a thorough inward change must take place, ere any one can inherit eternal glory. When pollution is ingrained in every thread of a garment, is it an easy matter to have it entirely washed out? When a disease has struck to the vitals, and infected the whole mass of blood, will it be removed by a fanciful charm, or the feeble remedies and outward applications of some bold boaster in the art of healing? In the strong language of Scripture, men are all "as an unclean thing," Isa. lxiv. 6; they have deeply corrupted themselves. And if we may apply, by way of accommodation, the language of the prophet, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint: from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness," Isa. i. 5, 6; it is vain to think that this dark stain can be washed away with the sponge of charity, or that this radical disease may be cured by a few outward ceremonies. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Jer. xiii. 23. Would not the very attempt be absurd and ridiculous? But though the Ethiopian's skin cannot be changed, it may be painted; and the leopard's spots may be concealed. How often do sinners endeavour, by the most contemptible and wretched arts of

deception, to hide, both from their own eyes and the eyes of others, their odious deformity and sad condition! So great is the change that must pass upon us, before we can be made truly happy, that nothing short of the Holy Spirit can produce it. This change, in the Scriptures, is called a new birth, a resurrection from the dead, and a new creation, John iii. 3. 7; v. 25. 2 Cor. v. 17.

1. It is sometimes called a new birth.

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 12, 13. We readily grant this language to be figurative, but it would scarcely retain the shadow of a meaning, should we deny it to teach us, that the entire renewal of the mind is an effect of Divine power accompanying the gospel. The discourse of Christ with Nicodemus, sets the doctrine in a most impressive light. "Jesus said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3–7. The ruler of the Jews betrays his ignorance, and expresses his astonishment, by exclaiming, "How can these things be?" ver. 9. Did our Lord recall his words, or explain them away as some of our modern divines do, who hate mysteries, and affect a great love to morality? Had he meant no more than some assert, it is natural to suppose he would have said, "Be not surprised, Nicodemus; all I intend is this, that notorious profligates must be reformed by their own diligent endeavours, in the right use of good moral rules." Instead of which, he repeats his declaration in a still stronger form; "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," ver. 5. This remarkable passage claims the most serious attention. The subject is uncommonly interesting. If the attainment of heaven, with all its inconceivable glory and everlasting felicity, is an object desirable, or the possibility of falling short of it a matter of painful apprehension, then the doctrine here taught is of infinite importance. The speaker demands submission and reverence: even Nicodemus owned him to be a teacher sent of God. And when the faithful and true Witness declares, with such solemnity, and repeats with such emphasis, the doctrine of the new birth, shall we not cordially set our seal to his testimony? To assert with some, that the soul is regenerated by the baptism of water, is quite unscriptural. In the first age of Christianity, the influences of the Spirit often accompanied baptism, and from their being commonly, some concluded they were necessarily connected. It was natural enough for the ancient fathers to call baptism the new birth; but in our age it is absurd and dangerous. Yet how many

hold fast the feather, when the bird is flown, and substitute a form for the sacred unction it was meant to represent.

2. Sometimes the change that must pass upon us before we can be fitted for heaven, is called a resurrection from the dead. When once the body is dissolved, and mingled with its original dust, it requires a power above that of any creature, to reassemble its scattered particles, and animate it afresh. Yet even this can be instantly effected by Him, who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working," Isa. xxviii. 29. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live," John v. 25. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1.

3. Sometimes this great change is called a new creation.

The same power that called light out of darkness, that reduced confusion to order, and that turned barrenness and deformity into fruitfulness and beauty, is necessary to raise our fallen nature, and fit it for perfect happiness. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," Eph. ii. 10, 2 Cor. v. 17. Here see and admire in the Christian, a little world of wonders. Compared with this sight, what is a glorious palace rebuilt from an unsightly heap of ruins? When this earth rose out of chaos, and was moulded, beautified, and enriched by the hand of its Maker, the morning stars sung together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. But when the Holy Spirit, moving upon the face of the deep, and scattering the moral darkness, new creates a soul, and at once enriches it with the treasure of wisdom, and adorns it with the beauty of holiness, the angels of heaven celebrate this miracle of power and grace in more rapturous strains than those which they sung at nature's birth. O, may you make this doctrine the ground of that fervent prayer, which is not less suitable to us, than to the psalmist: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me," Psal. li. 10.

IV. Let us consider the evidences of the Holy Spirit's influence on the mind.

1. One evidence of the Holy Spirit's special influence is, a strong, prevailing, and permanent aversion to sin, in all its kinds and degrees. The nature of the cause is known by the quality of the effects produced by it. Those who launch into open vice, or secretly cherish any known iniquity, and yet pretend to

have the Spirit, as their Guide and Comforter, are either wretched self-deceivers, or vile hypocrites. I have already said that it is a part of the Spirit's work to convince of sin, John xvi. 8, 9. Nor is a slight, transient uneasiness sufficient to prove that a gracious change has taken place. We read of the "deceitfulness of sin," the "strength of sin," the "law of sin," the active energy by which it brings forth fruit unto death. Its deceits must be detected, its strength broken, its law abolished, and its subtle-working poison counteracted. All this cannot be done without a very strong aversion to it. The sudden flows of penitence, which arise from a natural softness of the feelings, and the slender ties of resolution, which are formed on some solemn and affecting occasion, are generally of short continuance. But wherever the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit is enjoyed, sin will appear exceeding sinful, and be hated above all things. A slight skirmish will not suffice; there must be carried on a perpetual war with it. A Christian must not only fight against sin when it breaks out, and, by its ravages, aims to injure his character and destroy his comfort, but he must attack it, while it remains close hid in the entrenchments, the secret recesses and strongholds of the heart. Love and hatred are the two hinges on which the whole man turns. If we do not love God, and hate evil, we are strangers to religion. The language of the true Christian is, "O Lord, I desire to have every taint of the old leaven of malice and wickedness purged away, every idol cast out, all the strongholds of iniquity demolished, and all the works of the devil destroyed. Thou seest that I allow not any known enemy to thee a place in my bosom. My greatest struggle and conflict is with sin. I hate vain thoughts, and daily labour to exclude them. My desire is to live the rest of my time, not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God," 1 Pet. iv. 2. Now, wherever there is a hearty aversion to sin such as this language expresses, we may rest assured it is the effect of the Holy Spirit. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts," Gal. v. 24. Crucifixion is a painful and lingering death. The body of sin is not easily, or speedily destroyed; it will struggle hard before it expires, and often, when it appears dead, suddenly recovers its vigour. The meaning of the apostle, therefore, in the forecited passage may be this: "You have begun to crucify the flesh; the old man is dying." If we wish to form a just idea of our own state and character, we must not too hastily adopt a test. We have an excellent one in Rom. viii. 13: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Such a fixed and powerful hatred to sin, as will not only keep us from the commission of it, but also cause us to flee from the appearance of evil, is a sure proof that we enjoy the Spirit's influence. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot commit sin, because he is born of God," 1 John iii. 9.

2. Another evidence of these heavenly influences on the mind is, a spirit of humble, unfeigned, and animated devotion.

There is a disgusting self-sufficiency, or imaginary independence of mind, which will not stoop even at the footstool of the Almighty, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts,"[2] Psal. x. 4. The Christian is sensible of his utter unworthiness, jealous over himself with godly jealousy, alive to his own wants and necessities. He is also made acquainted with the source from which he may be supplied. The desires of his soul often break out into such language as this: "Great God, behold I, who am but dust and ashes, have taken upon me to speak unto thee. O take away all iniquity, and receive me graciously. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Lo! I fall at thy feet, and surrender myself absolutely to thee. Hast thou not given thy dear Son for lost sinners? And wilt thou not with him freely give us all things according to thy promise? Look down with an eye of pity on a polluted worm, a vile apostate, a condemned rebel! Without thy grace I must perish! I have destroyed myself, but in thee is my help found. O snatch me as a brand from the burning, and save me with an everlasting salvation! Remember me with the favour thou bearest to thy people, and number me at last with the saints in the new Jerusalem!" It is one evident mark of a mind renewed and sanctified from above, to be thus humble and earnest in prayer. On the other hand, that heart which is a stranger to devotions, is yet in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. There is something very cheering in that ancient promise recorded in Zachariah xii. 10: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications." Do you feel in your best hours a thirst for spiritual blessings? Do you pant after God, and pour out your soul before him? Had he not touched your heart with his love, not a spark of desire would have ascended toward heaven. Had he not poured out his Spirit on you, you would not have poured out your prayer to him. Do you, reader, complain that you find a difficulty in presenting your requests, through ignorance, embarrassment, and distraction? There may be saving grace where there are not shining gifts. Will a father refuse to hear the petitions of a beloved child, because it cannot speak plainly? By no means. And though you feel but little liberty, and often great difficulty in prayer, be not discouraged. Ask what you think best, and leave God to bestow what he knows is best. If sincere and fervent desires after heavenly blessings are but breathed out in broken sighs, they ascend like the incense of a morning sacrifice to heaven. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh

intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered," Rom. viii. 26.

3. Another evidence of the Holy Spirit's influence, is a supreme regard to the word of God as our rule, the glory of God as our end, and the immediate presence of God as our ultimate and complete happiness.

Where such a regard prevails, the yoke of legal bondage is exchanged for evangelical liberty, and selfish aims are absorbed in higher and nobler motives. If ye are led by the Spirit of God, "ye are not under the law," Gal. v. 18. Convinced of its insufficiency, you can give up all self-righteous dependence, to trust solely in the merit and grace of Jesus. The promises, which are great as to their objects, will be precious in the hand of faith, and in the taste of experience. The psalmist could say, "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage," Psal. cxix. 111. And may it not be truly said, this goodly heritage every believer has a good title to take, and will find equal privileges in the possession? It has springs of consolation, which never dry; mines of truth, more valuable than thousands of gold and silver; and fruits of love and goodness that are ever fresh and sweet, and can neither perish by wintry storms, nor ravaging foes. The rules and customs of the world are always changing; even the boasted laws of the Medes and Persians are long ago forgotten; but the authority of God's word is a fixed, invariable standard, to which we must constantly refer.

As the Christian feels a supreme regard to the word of God as his rule, so he has his chief aim directed to the glory of God as his end. To seek happiness without fixing a right end, is like setting out on a journey to dwell in some pleasant part of the country, without either knowing or inquiring where it lies, or the way that leads to it. One who is under the gracious influence of the Spirit, keeps constantly in view the divine glory, as the pole-star to direct his course. It is not his first morning wish, his last evening prayer, and his study all the day, to gain the applause of men, or add a few more grains to his gathered heap of glittering dust. No; his aim is to promote the glory of Him who hath called him out of darkness into marvellous light. This motive gives both energy and dignity to his conduct. He feels himself bound, whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, to do all to the glory of God, 1 Cor. x. 31.

In addition to what has been said, it may be remarked that it is an evidence of the Spirit's influence on the mind, where there is a supreme desire for the immediate presence of God, as the perfection of blessedness. As a taper is forgotten when the sun appears, so every creature sinks almost to nothing before

God. The psalmist bursts into the language of rapture, but does not in the least pass the boundaries of reason or truth, when he exclaims, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever," Psal. lxxiii. 25, 26.

4. Another evidence of the Spirit's influence is a sweet persuasion of our acceptance with God, and adoption into the household of faith. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. He that believeth hath the witness in himself," Gal. iv. 6, 1 John v. 10. This, as Edwards, in his Treatise on the Affections, observes, does not denote a sort of inward voice, or secret suggestion. "When the Scriptures speak of the seal of the Spirit, it is an expression which properly denotes, not an immediate voice or suggestion, but some work or effect of the Spirit, that is left as a Divine mark upon the soul, to be an evidence by which God's children might be known. The seals of princes were the peculiar marks of princes, and thus God's seal is spoken of as God's mark, Rev. vii. 3. Ezek. ix. 4. When God sets his seal on a man's heart by his Spirit, there is some holy stamp, or impressed image left upon the heart, as by the seal upon the wax. And this holy stamp, or impressed image, exhibiting clear evidence to the conscience, that the subject of it is a child of God, is the very thing which in Scripture is called the seal of the Spirit, and the witness or evidence of the Spirit, Eph. i. 13; iv. 30. Rom. viii. 16." Examine, reader, whether you have this satisfactory evidence of your adoption. "The Spirit itself," says Paul, "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Have you this testimony to cheer your heart? Do you know that you have experienced a Divine change? Beware of deception. "It is," says bishop Hopkins, "but an airy assurance, a void evidence, an insignificant charter for heaven, which hath not on it the print of the Spirit's seal. Now, the impress of this seal is the very image and superscription of God, which when the heart is, like wax, made soft and pliable, is, in a man's regeneration, enstamped upon it."

V. I shall now answer some objections which are usually urged against this doctrine.

1. It has been boldly asserted, that none were ever endowed with the Holy Spirit but prophets, apostles, and evangelists. We grant, indeed, that such messengers of God, and no other persons, were ever capable of speaking and writing by infallible inspiration. They were enabled to heal inveterate diseases without medicine; to speak divers languages without the common labour of

learning them; and to confirm the authority of their Divine mission by many other mighty signs and wonders. It would be the highest arrogance and presumption in us to make any pretensions to the same extraordinary influence, without supporting them with similar attestations: and similar attestations in our times there are none, whatever boast some may have made of possessing extraordinary gifts and powers. But shall we then deny that gracious though ordinary influence, which renovates the mind, and which was evidently bestowed upon common believers as well as apostles? I shall here introduce the words of the excellent Maclaurin, who for clear statement, closely connected reasoning, and ardent piety, has been equalled by few, and exceeded by none. "It is evident that the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost is not spoken of in the Scriptures as a blessing peculiar to a few, whom God dealt with after an extraordinary manner, but as a blessing belonging to all real Christians, though in different degrees. Thus we read, 'There is one body, and one Spirit,' as well as 'one Lord and one baptism. He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,' Eph. iv. 4, 5. 1 Cor. vi. 17. Rom. viii. 9. There is no imaginable pretence for restricting the promises concerning inward sanctifying grace, to Christians of the first age, except that to them the apostolic writings were first directed. For the same reason, men might restrict to the same age the other promises, precepts, and various instructions, contained in those writings. They do not always annex to every instruction a particular declaration concerning its universal and perpetual use in the church. This is, for the most part, understood; and there are good plain rules for distinguishing between a few things which were extraordinary and temporary, and things in which all ages of the church are equally interested."

2. It is said, that the influence of the Spirit on the mind is too mysterious to be comprehended, and therefore the doctrine which teaches it is unworthy to be believed.

This feeble objection needs to be propped up with many pleas and pretensions, otherwise it would fall by its own weakness. It is asserted by sceptics, that the notion of the Spirit's influence has opened a door for the most wild and extravagant opinions, and given rise to a thousand visionary flights and fanatic absurdities. Loud declamation and sarcastic ridicule are here used instead of argument.

That the mode in which the Divine Spirit enlightens, sanctifies, comforts, and animates the mind, is beyond our feeble power of comprehension, must be

admitted. But it is difficult to conceive how this can be justly urged as an objection to the reality of the thing. We know very little of the connexion between the human soul and the body, or of the manner in which they mutually influence each other. Nay, more; the greatest philosophers confess themselves at a loss to account for many of the most common appearances in nature, or even to explain how matter operates upon matter. Who then will dare, in the fulness of his self-conceit, to deny a doctrine of Divine revelation, which has been the comfort of good men in every age, because it surpasses his comprehension?

Mr. Locke, who will not be called an enthusiast, speaking of the advantages of Christianity over other systems, names, as one, the promise of Divine assistance. "It would be idle," says he, "for us, who know not how our own spirits move and act us, to ask in what manner the Spirit of God shall work upon us. Christ has promised it, who is faithful and just, and we cannot doubt of the performance."

Addison, speaking of the superior manner in which the spirits of the blessed enjoy the Divine presence, compared with the measure of it allotted to good men on earth, says, "We who have this veil of flesh standing between us and the world of spirits, must be content to know that the Spirit of God is present with us, by the effects which he produceth in us—by those virtuous thoughts which he awakens; by those secret comforts and refreshments which he conveys into our souls; and by those ravishing joys and inward satisfactions which are perpetually springing up and diffusing themselves among all the thoughts of good men. He is lodged in our very essence, and is as a soul within the soul, to irradiate its understanding, rectify its will, purify its passions, and enliven all the powers of man. How happy, therefore, is an intelligent being, who opens this communication between God and his own soul!" It would be easy to quote the testimonies of many other distinguished writers, whose sentiments correspond with those just repeated.[3]

The Holy Spirit is compared to fire, which warms and purifies, Matt. iii. 11; to water, which bedews and refreshes, Isa. xlv. 3. A man may, by happy experience, enjoy these benefits, without being able to explain, or even to conceive, how they are communicated. It cannot be denied, that some have mistaken the heats of imagination for the influence of the Spirit; and others have deceived the simple and credulous with mere hypocritical pretences. But was there ever any thing truly great or good that was not counterfeited? While the spirit of prophecy continued in the church, there were false prophets. When the

glorious Redeemer appeared in the flesh, there were false Messiahs. After his ascension to heaven, there were deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And, with respect to the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, no reason can be given why similar instances of delusion and imposture may not arise.

3. It is objected, that the doctrine of the Spirit's influence has a bad tendency, opening a door to licentiousness, opposing the liberty of the human will, and discouraging our honest endeavours.

The whole of this objection is founded on a mistake. The same Scriptures which authorize us to expect the Divine influence, require us to honour God in the use of his own appointed means. The eloquent Chrysostom observes, that, "in the time of the Old Testament, the great promise was the gift of Christ; in the times of the New Testament, the great promise is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now, when Christ, the great promise, came, he did not destroy the law, but fulfilled it; so when the Spirit comes into the heart, it is not to destroy the gospel, nor set aside its ordinances, but to fulfil them. Christ is the fulfilling of the law: the Spirit is the fulfilling of the gospel."

This doctrine does not destroy free agency, or in the least tend to lessen the accountableness of man. As I have above quoted an observation from one of the most eminent of the ancient fathers, I shall here introduce the words of one of the brightest ornaments of the reformation. Luther says, "A man who has not the Spirit of God acts willingly and spontaneously." Again: "When the Holy Spirit is pleased to change the will of a bad man, the new man still acts spontaneously: he is not compelled by the Spirit to act contrary to his will; his will itself is changed, and he cannot now do otherwise than love the good, as before he loved the evil."

The influence of the Spirit does not discourage our endeavours, but, on the contrary, animates them. "Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but God gives the increase," 1 Cor. iii. 6. What! shall we neglect planting, or watering, because we depend for all our success on the blessing of heaven? God forbid! This would be not only perverting the Scriptures, but also opposing the dictates of common sense! "O welcome," says the judicious Charnock, "the motions of the Spirit. As it is our happiness, as well as duty, to stifle evil motions, so it is our misery, as well as our sin, to extinguish heavenly. Strange fire should be presently quenched; but that which descends from heaven upon the altar of a holy soul,

should be kept alive by quickening meditation. When a holy thought lights suddenly upon you, receive it as a messenger from heaven; and the rather because it is a stranger. You know not but you may entertain an angel, nay even the Holy Spirit. Open all the powers of your soul, like so many organ pipes, to receive the breath of the Spirit, when he blows upon you. It is a sign of an agreeableness between the heart and heaven, when we close with and preserve spiritual motions. We need not stand long to examine them; they are evident by their fulness, sweetness, and spirituality. The thoughts instilled by the Spirit are not violent, tumultuous, and full of perturbation; but gentle and dove-like solicitings, warm and holy impulses, which leave the soul in a more humble, heavenly, pure, believing frame than they found it. It is a high aggravation of sin to resist the Holy Ghost, Acts vii. 51. Yet we may quench his motions, both by neglect and opposition, and so lose both the pleasure and the profit that would have attended the entertainment of them. A choice graft, though kept very carefully by us, yet if not presently set, will wither, and so disappoint our expectations of the desired fruit."

The quotations above recited from Luther and Charnock, two divines of acknowledged talents and orthodox principles, may be considered as a fair specimen of the sentiments which serious and sensible Christians entertain concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. If there are persons who represent man as a mere machine, mechanically impelled by Divine power, in such a manner as destroys the obligation of duty, it is to be deeply regretted. But every important doctrine is liable to abuse. Some, through weakness, misapprehend, and others, through wickedness, pervert the word of God. But while we are careful to remove the heaps of rubbish which error accumulates in the temple of God, let us beware that we do not lose one precious grain of Divine truth. If the possession of pure, unsullied, eternal glory, be the chief object of hope, how desirable is it to have the Holy Spirit, who is expressly called "the earnest of our inheritance," Eph. i. 14. It is not a few sceptical quibbles and objections that will induce us to part with this precious pledge. If we live in the Spirit, let us continue to walk in the Spirit, and labour to promote his praise who hath called us to his kingdom and glory, Gal. v. 25. 1 Thess. ii. 12.

CHAPTER II.

ON HOLY LOVE.

THERE can scarcely be a more gross abuse of language, than to call that rational religion, in which the affections have no share. Cold, systematic notions, which reside in the head, but never touch or engage the heart, may make a curious speculatist, or a subtle disputant, but cannot make a true Christian. To suppose that the richest store of knowledge, unaccompanied with the warmth of holy love, is sufficient to constitute the character of a Christian is an error almost equal to that of taking a statue for a man. The sculptor may, indeed, give to a rude block the form and proportion of the human body; but, wanting life and motion, it can only be mistaken for it when viewed from a distance, or in the dusk of twilight. Yet, have we not great reason to fear, that many deceive themselves by having only a form of godliness, while destitute of its power? They come forth from the mould of education with a creditable stamp of character, and a certain train of decent habits, but are without spiritual life and energy. They are like artificial flowers, which wear a glossy bloom, but have neither growth nor fragrance. It is clear, from the Scriptures, that the heart is the seat of true religion. The sincere Christian is animated and distinguished by the grace of holy love.[4] To this I shall now particularly direct your attention. I shall show the objects, properties, and origin of this love.

I. I shall show the objects of this love.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," Matt. xxii. 37–40. God, as the source of all being, and the centre of all perfection and excellency, claims the chief place in our affection. Now, to deny his claim, or prefer another, is to pervert the law of universal order, and to open a door for the entrance of confusion and every evil work. If a Being of infinite majesty, unspotted holiness, and unbounded goodness, is not to be devoutly adored and supremely beloved, there is not a single principle in religion or morals on which

we can rely, but all is involved in darkness and uncertainty. But there are few to be found who will not readily own, at least in words, that God ought to be loved above all things. The footsteps of his wisdom and power, goodness and glory, may be traced in the works of creation. Every thing lovely and useful, from the creeping hyssop on the wall, to the stately cedar of Lebanon; every creature in which is life, sense, or understanding, from the insects on a particle of dust, to the angels before the throne, exhibits the perfection of its glorious Maker. But though the earth is full of his riches, and the heavens sparkle with his glory, it is in the Scriptures chiefly that the Divine attributes appear in the most attractive and delightful manifestations. Here we have marvellous light, to give us those spiritual discoveries which are adapted to fill our hearts with seraphic love. Here we behold God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Here mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other, Psalm lxxxv. 10. In the only begotten Son, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, we find every thing great and good, to interest and engage the heart. Heb. i. 3.

The affections of worldly men are not deficient in strength, but they have a wrong direction, even to improper objects. Paul describes them accurately in a few words; they "mind earthly things," Phil. iii. 19. The current of their thoughts, muddy and turbulent, may have many windings, but always flows in the same channel. The fire of their passions, covered with a mass of gross fuel, may burn with different degrees of heat, but never rises heavenward in a pure and holy flame. The Christian, being renewed in the spirit of his mind, feels his heart pant after God; he views the Lord as his portion, and sets his affections on things above, Col. iii. 2.

As God is the supreme object on which holy love fixes, so creatures ought to have a subordinate measure of love, according to the degree in which they bear his image. A Christian cannot but regard those who show the humble, holy, forgiving temper of Jesus. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," 1 John iii. 14. This is the mark of Heaven, the royal signature of Immanuel. It was a common observation of heathens, in the first age of the gospel, "See how these Christians love one another!" Tender, cordial, and mutual affection, springing from the grace of Christ, was a new thing in the earth, which could scarcely fail to excite wonder. Hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, and such like works of the flesh, had so long filled and deformed the world, that men gazed with astonishment on the salutary fruits of the Spirit, growing out of love as their root.

Gentile philosophy had never produced a single cluster of such fruit as every vineyard of the Lord's planting, every separate church of Christ, yielded in abundance.

There is a clear distinction between a love of complacency and a love of benevolence. By the former, we delight in God and that which resembles him; by the latter, we show a regard for the welfare of bad men, though we detest their ways. In this sense, the worst enemies must not be shut out of our affections. The benevolent love of a Christian should reach beyond the narrow circle of his personal acquaintance, or the bounds of his native land, expanding itself so as to encompass the whole globe, and include every nation and tribe.

II. I shall point out the leading properties of this love.

It is a principle that never lies dormant and inactive. It warms the heart, invigorates the soul, and impels the man in whom it reigns to perform every duty with cheerfulness, and endure every trial with firmness. Bishop Taylor justly observes, that "if religion is the life of the soul, charity is the life of religion." This is the purest, strongest, and most permanent principle of obedience.

1. Love is the purest principle of obedience.

Many seem to be influenced in all their religious duties by terror. Startled with the thunder of Divine threatenings, and the gloom of impending judgments, they resemble the children of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, who promised to do all God's commands, but forgot their word when the alarm was over. Slavish terror drives its rotaries to labours which they sustain as an intolerable task; but love draws its subjects to willing obedience with the strongest and softest bands. The yoke which superstition wreathes is heavy with care, and sharp with thorns; but the yoke that love wears is light and easy. Slavish fear overclouds the mind with melancholy, and sours the temper with acrimony; but love is the sunshine of the soul, and the efficacious ingredient which sweetens the wormwood and the gall.

It is manifest, that many are influenced in their obedience by mean selfishness. They are willing to take pains when they have a prospect of mercenary gains. They act as if heaven were the reward, not of grace, but of debt. Putting their virtues into a deceitful balance, they are foolish enough to imagine a seat in paradise may be purchased by them. But the principle of

Christian charity has in it something so refined, so noble, and so disinterested, that it rises as far above every motive of base selfishness, as gold is superior to dross.

"One action which from genuine love proceeds,
Excels ten thousand mercenary deeds."

How many appear actuated in all they do by the hateful principle of pride! No set of men ever seemed more mortified to the world, and more attached to religion, than the ancient Pharisees. Their devotion was very exactly cut into parcels, some for the temple, some for the synagogue, and some for the streets, but not a particle was left for the closet. Their aims were not confined to the next door neighbours; but a trumpet was sounded on the day of giving, that the whole town might know it, and no poor needy creature have to complain that he was neglected. Their zeal carried them over mountains of difficulty, and deeps of danger; for they were willing to compass land and sea to make a single proselyte. But all their ceremonies, alms, and labours, were nothing more than a showy, ostentatious display. Their vices were concealed, and their virtues blazoned and magnified. Their whole religion was a machine, constructed on the model of Satanic devices, in which pride was the main spring, and policy the great wheel. They could do nothing without the eyes of men to behold them, the tongues of men to applaud them, and the chief seats at feasts as their well-merited distinction.

How heavy was the woe denounced against them by the great Searcher of hearts! But is not the same self-righteous spirit as odious in a nominal Christian, as it was under a Pharisee's cloak? Is there such a change introduced by the gospel, that pride and hypocrisy, which were then abominable, can be now acceptable? Is a fair exterior sufficient, whatever uncleanness there is within? Surely it is plain, without bringing arguments to establish the point, that no works can be acceptable in the sight of God, but such as spring from a principle of love, and are directed to promote his glory. Wherever this noble motive habitually prevails, it will, in a good degree, harmonize the passions, bring the scattered thoughts and purposes into subserviency to one grand end, and produce

a simplicity of intention, and uniformity of character, which peculiarly distinguish the consistent Christian. "For our rejoicing is this, 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 in the world," 2 Cor. i. 12. To substitute any low, carnal principle for Divine love, is to commit sacrilege, as offensive to God as that of the Jews, who filled the temple with merchandize, and stained the holy of holies with slaughter and blood. To suppose that God will permit vile, selfish motives to be joined with holy love, is as absurd as to imagine that the poisonous waters of the dead sea may mingle with the pure water of life; or the black fumes which ascend from the lake of brimstone and fire may blend with the incense that burns before the eternal throne.

2. Holy love is the strongest principle of obedience.

If the path to heaven were a smooth level, without foes, snares, or obstacles; if a faint preference of will were sufficient to win the unfading crown; in a word, if the whole progress of the Christian were as easy a matter as some are pleased to represent it—then, to insist on the necessity of any powerful motive of action would be as unreasonable as to erect an engine to perform what might be done by a touch of the finger. But, if there is any truth or meaning in the Scriptures, which call us to strive to enter in at the strait gate, to run with patience the race set before us, and to fight the good fight of faith; the mind must be animated with a degree of ardour proportioned to the cause in which it is engaged. "If ye love me," says Christ, "keep my commandments," John xiv. 15: and let it be remembered, that his commands comprehend the whole range of personal and relative duties. He enjoins us to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and to lay up treasure in heaven, Matt. v. 44. He commands us to deny ourselves, to take up the cross daily, and follow him. He requires us to occupy our talents, honour and serve God, love our enemies, and do good to all, Matt. vi. 20, 24, 33. A few faint wishes, or languid purposes, will no more fulfil these commands, than tracing the roads of a map will carry a man through a long and laborious journey. It is not by sitting at his ease, and exactly pointing out the track, marking every mountain to be climbed, and every forest and river to be passed; but by boldly facing all weathers, and enduring all necessary toils, that he must arrive at the place of destination. The Christian has set before him the work of faith and the labour of love; but the work of faith cannot be done by unbelief, nor the labour of love by a heart at enmity with God. Where the true principle of obedience is wanting, the consequence is weariness in well doing. It

is Divine love which shakes off indolence, and puts the soul in motion. It is love to God, love to Christ, and love to heavenly things, which inspires in the believer holy courage, and gives an edge to his zeal while he is pressing towards the mark for the prize of his high calling, Phil. iii. 14. "Hope will be cheerful," saith one, "under great trials, and smiling say, Better days may come. Faith will reply, Come they will, at the destined hour. But it is the delight of love to make present days better, and to derive advantage from the past. Her language will be, 'I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work,' John ix. 4. When faith and hope take the path of duty by themselves, there is always a lion in the way; but if love be their companion, the lion must either flee or be slain." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," Mark xii. 30. If holy affection, to the full extent which this precept requires, absolutely possessed and swayed all the faculties and powers of the Christian, it would be as impossible that enemies and troubles should distress and embarrass him in his progress, as that a handful of dust thrown upwards should darken the light, or stop the course of the sun. Through the remaining depravity of our nature, this is never found to be the case: yet such a measure of love has often been actually experienced, as hath prepared the Christian to defy scourges, racks, and flames, rather than relinquish or dishonour the profession of the gospel. Love invigorates and animates the soul. Many obstacles cannot destroy its force; many waters cannot quench its fire. When Paul foresaw that he should have to face dangers in the most terrible forms, he did not shrink or tremble; but heroically said, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Acts xx. 24.

3. Holy love is the most permanent principle of obedience.

All kinds of religious affection are not lasting. The fire on God's altar was kept alive by being constantly fed; but the strange fire of Nadab and Abihu was but for a moment. Many have been filled with high transports and raptures from an imaginary interest in Christ and heavenly bliss, who were never grounded in the knowledge of God, or duly sensible of their fallen, guilty condition. A mind possessed of a weak judgment, and of a strong fancy, may, by instruments and means suited for the purpose, have its feelings so excited and raised, that visionary ideas shall overpower both the dictates of reason and the testimonies of Scripture. But it should ever be remembered, that if knowledge without love is Antinomianism, love without knowledge is enthusiasm. We need not wonder,

when persons influenced by this wild fire, make a flaming profession of religion for a short time, and then sink again into their former indifference. Cold chills not unfrequently follow feverish heats. But the love which the true Christian feels to his God, and all that bears the stamp of his authority or likeness, is not a vapour in the brain, or a vision in the fancy, but a deep-rooted principle in the heart. He knows the solid excellency of the Divine realities. "His faith is not grounded on slippery deductions of reason, or slender conjectures of fancy, or on musty traditions, or popular stories; but on the sure testimonies of God." I am far, indeed, from saying, that the love of the sincere Christian is always alike in its exercise: it is subject to many changes, declensions, and revivals. Who is there that may not often take the solemn remonstrance of Christ addressed to the church of Ephesus, as applicable to himself? "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love," Rev. ii. 4. Yet it is true, as the apostle saith, "that charity never faileth," 1 Cor. xiii. 8. When tongues and prophecies cease, love shall shine and sing in the kingdom of heaven. Faith will accompany us to the gates of paradise, and there bid us farewell; but white-robed charity will enter the gates, and never leave us. Knowledge may fade away; but love shall flourish in immortal bloom. Reader! contemplate the excellences of this heavenly principle. Without it there is no harmony, no unity, no happiness. Music has a powerful charm to heaven-born souls; but if the harp of love be removed, the charm is gone. The sounding brass grates on the ear with harsh discords; the tinkling cymbal wearies with its tiresome monotony. "Perhaps no grace ever sat to the hand of a more consummate master than charity. Her incomparable painter, St. Paul, has drawn her at full length, in all her fair proportions. Every attitude is full of grace, every lineament of beauty. The whole delineation is perfect and entire, wanting nothing." [5] As holy affection is the source of harmony, and the essence of beauty, so it is the cement of unity. "Love," says Mason, "is the master-principle of all good society. It is the holy bond which connects man with man, and angel with angel, and angels with men, and all with God. It is itself an emanation from his own purity; for 'God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him,' 1 John iv. 16. Divine love diffuses itself over the whole life of a Christian. There is no duty or privilege, possession or connexion, placed beyond its reach. Its influence animates industry, exalts learning, refines friendship, soothes affliction, sanctifies prosperity, and seasons every comfort with the best relish."

III. I shall proceed now to show the origin of this love, and the way in which it may be increased.

Is the mind of man naturally disposed to set its affections on things above, rather than on things below? Is that love which is essential to real religion an innate principle, that grows spontaneously in the soil of the depraved heart? Far otherwise. Man, through sin, is naturally alienated and estranged from God. He has a revolting and a rebellious heart. How strongly, yet justly, is this expressed by the apostle Paul; "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be!" Rom. viii. 7. While men are in this unhappy state, they, in effect, say unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job. xxi. 14. The consequence is, that some are to be found as absolutely devoid of all religion, as if they were professed atheists; and others, who still wear a form of piety, adopt errors which rob God of his honour and praise, to offer a more costly sacrifice to the great idol, self. Divine love in us, is not therefore a native, but a heaven-implanted principle, the fruit of the Spirit. It is not a spark of our own kindling, but a flame brought from above. When the sword of the Spirit cuts away that thick veil which covers the carnal heart, love enters and dwells, where before enmity rankled. From the lips which once distilled the poison of asps, the milk of charity now flows. This representation agrees with the ancient promise, recorded in Deut. xxx. 6: "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." That the above passage describes that inward, spiritual renovation which is the effect of free grace, is beyond a doubt. It is easy to see the precious truth, under every form of figurative words. As the uncircumcised ear cannot hear, so the uncircumcised heart cannot feel. No sooner, however, does the hand of God remove all obstructions, than the ear receives the joyful sound of the gospel, and the heart melts by the touch of Divine love. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee," Jer. xxxi. 3. To this sweet and gracious attraction the stubborn will bends, and the perverse, untoward passions yield.—Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us," Rom. v. 5. This remarkable passage deserves particular attention. It is the sole prerogative of Him who hath the key of David to open the heart, as appears from what is spoken of Lydia, Acts xvi. 14. When he hath opened the heart, he empties and cleanses it, casting out the idols and abominations, as he once cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple, Matt. xxi. 12. And that grace may reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, he plentifully pours his love into the heart, where it is diffused, through the whole course and conduct of the saint. Yet, as God, in the dispensation of heavenly mercy, works in a way at once correspondent with his own perfections and counsels, and consistent with our

faculties and circumstances as dependent, accountable creatures, it may be necessary to show by what means this effect is produced.

1. It is by the eyes of the understanding being enlightened to see the perfections of God, the excellences of Christ, and the unspeakable value of eternal realities, that Divine love is kindled in the soul.

The most beautiful objects and interesting scenes have no charms for a blind man. The verdant earth and starry sky to him are a mere blank. Thus, a man spiritually blind can feel no regard for those things, the excellency of which he knows not. This is the true reason why so many are busily engaged and amused with frivolous trifles, in a manner which renders the words of the apostle most strictly applicable to them: "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," 2 Tim. iii. 4. Nor will that sort of study which we call speculation, produce a change for the better. "The gospel," says Dr. Cudworth. "is not merely a letter without us, but a quickening spirit within us. Cold theories and maxims, dry and jejune disputes, lean syllogistical reasonings, could never yet beget the least glimpse of saving knowledge in any heart. All this is but the groping of the poor, dark spirit of man after truth, to find it out by his own endeavours, and feel it with his own cold and benumbed hands." But when the gospel, attended with the unction of the Holy Spirit, removes the films of blindness, then those grand, interesting discoveries are unveiled to the mind, which excite a train of new feelings in the heart. Divine light and love together, entering the newborn soul, direct its views in ascertaining, and animate its motives in pursuing, solid and unfading bliss. Not that I would be understood as meaning to assert, that a flood of spiritual knowledge and pure affection is instantaneously poured into the mind. On the contrary, the path of the just is like a shining light, and there is a gradual increase from the dawn to the perfect day, Prov. iv. 18. He who possesses, though but in a small measure, spiritual wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of God's will, with reference to the glorious scheme of human redemption, cannot remain insensible and unaffected. What he sees of the justice, goodness, mercy, holiness, and faithfulness of Jehovah, touches all the movements of the soul, and imparts an exquisite and indescribable delight. His affections, disencumbered from the clogs and chains with which they were held, soar above. He knows the truth, and the truth makes him free, John viii. 32. The more the glory and grace of God in Christ are discovered, the more is the mind filled with holy admiration and gratitude. What a pleasant journey had the two disciples from Jerusalem to Emmaus, while Jesus expounded the prophecies, and communicated that knowledge which dispelled the clouds of error and doubt,

and animated their drooping spirits. Well might they exclaim, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Luke xxiv. 13–32. And when the same great and glorious doctrines are unfolded, by whatever means so as to be spiritually discerned, similar effects will not fail to follow. The torch of truth, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, has lost neither its enlightening, nor its enlivening power.

2. It is by the exercise of living faith that the flame of holy love is enkindled and preserved in the heart.

The objects which most men love are such as strike the senses, or in some way relate to their present interests. Invisible and future things have but a feeble influence on the heart. The affections, which ought to be regulated according to the intrinsic worth and amiableness of the objects presented to them, are often more swayed by their nearness and appearance. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. If we heartily believe the Scripture testimony concerning the gift of Christ for a lost world; if we take fast hold of the everlasting covenant, so as to appropriate the sure mercies of David; if we commit ourselves absolutely into the hands of Jesus, persuaded that he will keep us till the great day, we cannot but feel strong emotions of gratitude and love. We are but little affected with that good, which is either distant from us, or foreign to us. On the contrary, faith sees God as ever present, and hears the voice that saith, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," Matt. xxii. 37. How can we enjoy this new-covenant privilege? How can we view God as our Father, Christ as our Redeemer, the Spirit as our Guide and Comforter, without feeling the warmest affection? "Faith," as one observes, "is a grace which gives strength and efficacy to all other graces: it is like a silver thread that runs through a chain of pearls: it hath an influence on all other graces in the soul. Faith is as a spring in a watch, which moves the wheels. For we love as we believe; we hope as we believe; we rejoice as we believe; and we repent as we believe; all other graces keep time with this." Strong faith supplies the want of sight, and forms a lasting attachment to that which is heavenly and Divine. Peter, speaking to Christians concerning the Lord Jesus, says, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. "Fallen man," says Mr. Booth, "cannot love God, but as he is revealed in a Mediator. He must behold his Maker's glory in the face of Jesus Christ, before he can love him, or have the least desire to promote his glory. Now, as there is no revelation of the glory of God in Christ but by the gospel, and as we cannot behold it but by faith, it necessarily follows,

that no man can love God, or desire to glorify him, while ignorant of the truth. But as there is the brightest display of all the Divine perfections in Jesus Christ; and as the gospel reveals him in his glory and beauty; so, through the sacred influence of the Holy Spirit, sinners behold the infinite amiableness and transcendent glory of God in the person and work of Immanuel." It is sufficiently evident, that nothing short of living faith can excite and cherish that mild, tender, heartwarming charity, which seeks and finds so many ways of showing goodwill to men. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently," 1 Pet. i. 22.

3. It is by communion with God, and one another, that holy love is promoted and increased.

Does it seem incredible that so high a privilege as communion with the great Father of spirits should be granted to those who dwell in dust and ashes? However wonderful it may appear, "such honour have all the saints," Psal. cxlix. 9. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 3. Believers are not only called the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, but they have also every thing answerable to such an endearing and exalted relation. They are invited to draw near to his throne, to make known their wants and requests, to receive bounties from his liberal hand, and smiles from his reconciled countenance. Now, does not experience evince, that according to the intimacy of our communion with God, will be the ardour of our affection to God? Does not the sweetness of his grace infuse a relish which renders the best earthly things insipid? We cannot, like Enoch, walk with God, Gen. v. 24, but we shall feel our hearts drawn towards him, as the source of all we have, and the summit of all our desire. In like manner, fellowship with each other is found to have a happy tendency to feed and fan the flame of brotherly love. "Blessed be the name of Jesus, the Son of God, and my Saviour, that has descended from heaven to dwell with dust and ashes, that he might bring such worthless wretches as we are within the attractive force of Divine love. Our sins stood between God and man like a dreadful wall of separation; but by his glorious atonement, he has removed the bar, and made the way of access to God free and open, that God and man might be united in the bond of perpetual love. He called sinners by his own voice, and he still calls them by his gospel, to partake of this privilege. O blessed Messenger of Divine love! And he sends down his own Spirit, from heaven where he dwells, to make us willing to partake of this felicity, and to draw our hearts near to God. Come, O Divine Spirit, come dwell in this heart of mine, as

an unchangeable principle of holy love. Guard my heart from all meaner allurements and influences, while I am travelling through the dangerous region of this world, till I am arrived beyond the reach of danger, till I rest for ever in the bosom of God, my supreme love, my everlasting all!"[6]

The ordinances of the Lord's house are channels through which spiritual influences flow into the souls of the saints. That worthy minister, John Howe, was once so affected with the grace of Jesus, while dispensing the Lord's Supper, that the people feared he would have expired, while discoursing to them on the infinite greatness of redeeming love. And if, in our day, the love of many has waxed cold, it is because they live far from the God of love. Let us draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to us. I shall close this subject with two reflections.

Reflection 1. How awful is the state of those who are destitute of this love! Nothing can be conceived more solemn and impressive than the words which our Lord once addressed to some, who thought they stood high in the favour of God. "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you," John v. 42. And remember, reader, that the same heart-searching Judge is well acquainted with your state. Let me entreat you to examine yourself. Have you been deeply affected with the evil of sin, and powerfully impressed with redeeming love? Have you fully and seriously surrendered your soul into the hands of Christ? Have you willingly made every sacrifice which the gospel requires? Has the flesh been crucified; the world forsaken; the devil resisted? Do you love, comfort, and assist the sincere followers of Christ? Do you pity and pray for your enemies? Perhaps you are condemned by the word of God, and convicted by your own conscience. The reign of sin still continues, but you are a stranger to the power of grace. You are swayed by the love of the world, but have not the love of God in you. Awful state! My soul shudders at the thought of your doom. And let me ask, Do you resolve to trample under foot the Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest gift of God, and to wade through redeeming brood to the pit of perdition? Do you resolve, with the infernal shield of unbelief, to repel all the pointed darts of Divine truth? Do you determine to try what will be the result of a fearful contest with the Almighty? The fatal trial has been too often made, and its painful consequences too often felt. "Who hath hardened himself against God, and prospered?" Job ix. 4. "Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth, but woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" Isa. xlv. 9. Yet still you are within the reach of mercy. The joyful message of salvation sounds in your ears. O, cry to God for pardon and life, Seek his Holy Spirit, to enlighten and sanctify you. But, should you reject the counsel of God, and make light of the

gospel; should you, after all, continue to live without God, and without Christ, in the world, you must die without hope. Then, instead of rising to inherit the fair realms of light, to breathe the pure element of seraphic love, and drink the pleasures which flow at God's right hand, you will be plunged into outer darkness, amidst the hatred and rage of devils, and the dismal horrors of everlasting despair.

Reflection 2. How happy is their state, who live under the habitual and powerful influence of Divine love! Love in the heart, melts the stubborn will to sweet submission, consumes the dross of sin, and fits the believer as a vessel of honour for the Master's use. O Christian! should thy Saviour address thee in thy happiest moments, as he once addressed Peter, "Lovest thou me?" John xxi. 15–17, wouldest thou not reply, "Dear Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Thou canst read the inmost sentiments of my mind, and the exalted ideas I entertain concerning thee. Thou canst look into this heart, and see the desires that pant after thee, and long for a participation of thy glory?" "Lovest thou me more than these earthly comforts and connexions?" "Yes, Lord; the sweetest joys, and the dearest kindred and friends, have no claim on my affection equal to thine. Thou hast bought me with thy blood, called me by thy grace, given me the earnest of the Spirit, and the hope of eternal glory. Behold, I am wholly and for ever thine." "Lovest thou me? then keep my commandments." "With Divine help, so I will. Thy commands, blessed Jesus, are not grievous. May they be ever engraven on my heart, and interwoven in the conduct of my life. Gracious Redeemer! I love thee, and desire to be with thee, to behold thy glory. I love thy ordinances, and, through them, draw from thee my richest consolation. I love thy people for the truth's sake, and for the Divine image which they bear. Wherever I meet them, I would give them the right hand of fellowship, spread over them the soft mantle of charity, and breathe out the warmest wishes and prayers for their welfare." But is this, Christian, always your happy experience? I have no doubt you have frequent cause to complain, that such heavenly frames and holy feelings are of short continuance. You lament that your love too often resembles a fire in embers, rather than a fire rising into a clear and fervent flame. This complaint proves the sincerity, though not the intenseness, of your affection.

Suffer the word of exhortation. Labour to get a more fixed and settled habit of meditating on the Divine perfections. Come under the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, that you may imbibe genial warmth. Avoid those cares which damp the ardour of devout affections. Pray constantly for an increase of faith, that you may live upon the promises. Above all, walk closely with God, and

keep up intimate communion with him. It is well known how much frequent intercourse endears earthly friends to each other. By freely pouring out the undisguised sentiments of the heart, their mutual affection is both discovered and increased. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God," Phil. i. 9–11.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY.

"THE Voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous," Psal. cxviii. 15. The truth contained in these words is by some denied and ridiculed, and by others formally acknowledged and forgotten. But those who will not believe that piety and pleasure can dwell together, seldom take the trouble of carefully examining this matter. It was said ages since, "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," Prov. iii. 17. This maxim, for its truth, weight and worth, deserves universal currency; yet it is treated by many as though it were a base metal counterfeit, artfully contrived to put a cheat upon mankind. Those, however, who have travelled in the ways of wisdom, will bear testimony in their favour; and those who never set a foot in them, are certainly unqualified to judge. A right to the tree of life was forfeited by the first Adam, and restored by the second Adam. The flaming sword is removed. This tree cannot wither by the decays of time; its fruit has a sweetness which never cloy, and even its leaves are for the healing of nations. The kingdom of God is said to be "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Rom. xiv. 17. It is not possible that the nature of this kingdom can be ever changed.

I. I shall proceed to state the grounds and reasons of the Christian's joy, and the way in which it springs from the influence of the Holy Spirit.

A Christian has a free access to all the blessings included in the great salvation procured by Christ, and a warrant to claim God as his portion.

1. He has access to all the blessings of the great salvation procured by Christ. The gospel fully answers to its name; for it is indeed "good tidings of great joy," Luke ii. 10. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. i. 3. It is through faith in the atoning blood of the Lamb, that we obtain forgiveness of sin. This important blessing is absolutely necessary, as the first step towards real happiness. For how can that man rejoice who has nothing before his eyes but a gloomy prospect of wrath to come? What are music to the ear, pomp to the eye, or delicious food to the palate, while the conscience is pierced with a thousand stings? Will it gladden the criminal to strew with flowers the way which leads him from prison to the place of execution? But the removal of guilt imparts solid joy. "Be of good cheer," said Jesus, "thy sins are forgiven thee," Matt. ix. 2. Christ is not, indeed, personally with us now, to give us assurance that the precious blessing is ours, by the same kind of direct and immediate address. But is it not the office of the Holy Spirit to apply the benefits of redemption to the soul? Is it not sufficient to have the grant of forgiveness in the promise sanctioned and sealed by Divine influence? Is it not possible to distinguish the mysterious whisper of the Spirit's voice from every delusion? Who can condemn when this witness acquits in the court of conscience? "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement," Psal. xxxii. 1. Rom. v. 11. The pardon of sin, through the blood of the cross, is, to true penitents, a source of the most lively pleasure. Rising out of the horrible pit, their feet are set upon a rock, their goings are established, and a new song is put into their mouths, even praise unto our God, Psal. xl. 2, 3.

It is in Jesus that the Christian finds full acceptance with God. Forsaking self-righteousness, and all its delusive hopes, he trusts wholly in the righteousness which is of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Yet so close is the adherence of the carnal mind to the covenant of works, that it requires no small force to dissolve the attachment. Nothing short of supernatural influence can dispose any one to cast away the filthy rags of his own righteousness, and to wear the perfect righteousness of Christ. It is by grace that we are justified freely, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; and it is by grace that we are made willing to be so justified. "We, through the Spirit," said Paul, "wait for the hope of righteousness by faith," Gal. v. 5. Here the believer not only rests his hope, but also raises his triumph. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness," Isa. lxi. 10. It is through faith in Christ that the believer obtains pure and never ending happiness. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. This is the record, that God hath

given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," John iii. 16. 1 John v. 11. Well then may we rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, Phil. iii. 3. In the experience of such blessings, we have good reason to be fully satisfied.

2. The Christian has cause to rejoice in the warrant he possesses of claiming God as his portion.

Is it said, where is this warrant to be found; let it be produced? The warrant to this claim is found in those records of the King of Zion, the Holy Scriptures. The language of the everlasting covenant runs in these words: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people," Jer. xxx. 22. The greatness of this privilege might almost stagger our faith, had we not the most clear and abundant evidence of it in the Bible. It is by the influence of the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to claim God as our God. It is the very nature of Divine grace to inspire a humble and holy confidence. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father," Gal. iv. 6. Happy is that man who can lift up his eyes to Jesus, and, without a faltering tongue, or a misgiving heart, address him in the language of Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" John xx. 28. Unassisted nature will, indeed, never rise to such a pitch of faith and devout assurance. No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Though nothing is more easy than to utter the Saviour's name, it requires Divine teaching to give him the honour which is due to him. Yet every one who has the Spirit of God, has a covenant interest in Immanuel. He can say, "The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him," Lam. iii. 24. "For me to live is Christ, and to die as gain," Phil. i. 21.

The consideration that God is our portion, renders us doubly joyful in the day of prosperity. As a small gift from a dear and distant friend, is highly valued for the sake of the giver; so the least good which Providence bestows is esteemed and gratefully enjoyed by the Christian, as coming directly from God. Health, friendship, riches, and all the comforts and endearments of life, affect us in the most agreeable manner, when we look upon them as bounties from that Being who is our Father. The children of Israel were commanded to serve the Lord with gladness, for the abundance of all things, Deut. xxviii. 47. The consideration that God is our portion, is sufficient to excite joy even in the day of adversity. The streams may be cut off, but nothing can deprive us of the fountain. However strange it may appear, it is possible to glory in tribulation. He who is a joint heir with Christ of the heavenly kingdom, may lose a little dross,

but his treasure is safe. Privations and disappointments, which break a worldling's heart, ought not to break a Christian's sleep. They have quite different views and opposite rules to estimate profit and loss, joy and grief. "The natural sun discovers the beauties of the earth, but conceals the stars, and all the wonders of the sky; the Sun of Righteousness eclipses the twinkling, diminutive lustres of the world, and discovers the attractive and unspeakable glories of heaven." The words of the prophet deserve particular attention. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," Hab. iii. 17, 18. Spiritual joy is a plant which blooms not only in the sun, but also in the shade, and continues to grow, though the earth be as iron, and the heavens as brass. No storms can blight, no fire can scorch, no frost can wither it. Paul and Silas, at the midnight hour, made the prison at Philippi resound with the sacred melody of praise, Acts xvi. 25. John Huss, the martyr, sung hymns of triumph in the flames.

II. I shall now point out the qualities of that joy which is the fruit of the Spirit.

1. This joy is sincere and refined.

Much of what is called joy in the world, is little better than an illusive show. Pleasure is the profligate's great Diana. To this gay goddess he sacrifices his health, property, time, talents, comfort, credit, present peace, and future happiness. Those who are surrounded with wealth, pomp, and mirth, may, to an inexperienced spectator, appear happy; but he who has himself moved in the enchanted circle, knows how much deception there is in the best worldly delights. Few, however, of the devotees of pleasure can avoid at times betraying the secret of that dissatisfaction which reigns within.

"Oft aching bosoms wear a visage gay,

And stifled sighs frequent the ball and play."

When dissimulation by accident drops her mask, we behold, under studied

airs of triumph, weariness, languor, and disgust. But the joy of the Christian is sincere and unaffected. Instead of seeming greater than it is, it is always greater than it seems. It wears no gilding; it wants no witness; but fixing its seat within, sheds a soft, delicious satisfaction over all the powers of the soul. As Christ had meat to eat which others know not of, so his true followers have a joy with which strangers to religion never intermeddle. Though it may light up the countenance in cheerful smiles, and move the tongue to strains of praise, yet the half of it can neither be seen nor told. Peter thus addresses Christians: "Believing" in Jesus, "ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. Worldly joy is full of sin, full of shame, full of fear, full of latent remorse; but spiritual joy is full of sweetness, and full of glory. The qualities of every passion are ascertained by the objects on which it fixes. The effect cannot differ essentially from the cause, nor the stream rise above the fountain.

The joy of the sordid worldling is mean and contemptible. Though trade may bring him in tides of wealth through a thousand channels; though he may join house to house, and lay field to field; and, finding success attend his favourite schemes, may boast of the multitude of his riches, yet his heart must be a stranger to true satisfaction. As well might we suppose, that the body which is eaten up with a cancer can have health and ease, as that the soul which is a prey to avarice, can possess any thing that deserves the name of happiness.

The joy of the sensualist is vicious and debasing; the fumes and heats of wine darken the light of reason, and fire the brain almost to phrenzy; the indulgence of wanton passions dissolves every sacred tie, and too often allures the innocent to guilt and infamy; the tumults of midnight revelry open the floodgates of wickedness, and sweep away every thing good as with an overwhelming torrent. The stream of such men's pleasure rises from the blackest fountain of corruption, and always runs into the dead sea.

The joy of the conqueror is inhuman and cruel. His renown is purchased with the price of blood; and the shouts of his triumph drown the sighs of helpless widows and orphans. What language can brand with sufficient marks of abhorrence, joys so base, so brutish, and so detestable, as those which have just been described!

The joy of the believer, issuing from the purest springs, is suited to the noble faculties and sublime hopes of the heaven-born soul: it is what the understanding approves, and the conscience allows. Behold the believer,

rejoicing in the unsearchable riches of Christ, in the treasure laid up for him in heaven, which time cannot corrupt, nor violence take away. Behold him, rejoicing in the provisions of everlasting mercy, and cheerfully feeding on the fruits of redeeming love! Behold him, triumphing in Christ, and extolling the victories by which sin was crushed, death disarmed, and the powers of darkness prostrated and spoiled! These are the joys that leave no bitter sediment, that neither infix the stains of guilt, nor the stings of remorse. Men talk of pleasures; but it is not by their number, but by their nature, that happiness is to be calculated. One diamond is worth more than a thousand bits of shining glass. "The Christian," says M'Ewen, "has pleasures which are true in their fruition, fully answering the most sanguine expectations. Pleasures, whose repetition does not cloy, and their continuance is not clogged with satiety. Pleasures, whose review fills not the cheek with blushing, being honourable and glorious as the immortal soul, and pure as the joys of angels. Pleasures, whose consequences are not dangerous to the body, by wasting its beauty or preying on its health; to the reputation, by fixing on it an indelible stain; to the estate, by making shipwreck of it, in the abhorred gulf of prodigality; to the soul, by darkening the understanding, hardening the heart, searing the conscience, and exposing to eternal vengeance. Pleasures, whose duration is not short; but that can live in the winter of adversity, illuminate the valley of death, and pass into eternity."

2. That joy which is the fruit of the Spirit, is refreshing and invigorating.

We are passing through a wilderness, to seek "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," Heb. xi. 10. As sojourners, we are therefore subject to many toils, dangers, and trials. "Without are fightings, within are fears," 2 Cor. vii. 5. Yet we are not left destitute and comfortless. God has prepared both a kingdom for those that love him, and many rich blessings to cheer us while we are in the way to it. What precious promises and invitations are scattered throughout the Scriptures! "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation," Isa. iv. 2; xii. 3. The figurative language of these passages may be easily understood. As a well of pure water is refreshing to a thirsty fainting pilgrim; and as wholesome food is welcome and pleasant to a hungry man, so the blessings of the gospel are sweet and reviving to the soul made sensible of its danger and urgent wants. All believers do eat of the same spiritual meat, and drink of the same spiritual drink, 1 Cor. x. 4. The hidden manna is sent from

above, and the stream which flows from the smitten rock follows them through the desert, as a never-failing supply of rich consolation. Indeed every particular privilege and duty is a separate spring of delight to a spiritual mind. We are commanded to search the Scriptures. "Thy words," says the prophet, "were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart," Jer. xv. 16. We are commanded to honour and serve God in secret. David could say "When I meditate on thee in the night-watches, in the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul," Psal. lxxiii. 6; xciv. 19. We are commanded to worship the Lord in public, with the promise of being made joyful in the house of prayer, Isa. lvi. 7.

There are some kinds of joy which have a tendency to dissipate the mind, to relax and enervate the soul, and to produce a sickly and effeminate weakness, that unfits and indisposes for all the manly exertions of active benevolence, and all the arduous trials of the Christian life. On the contrary, "spiritual joy can neither be out of season, nor out of measure." It gives to the man who possesses it a tone of rigour. It concentrates the thoughts, raises and animates the spirits, and supplies fresh energy to all the powers. When the venerable Ignatius, who had been a disciple of St. John, was looking forward to the near approach of his martyrdom, he possessed so much of that joy which is the fruit of the Spirit, that not only his enemies, but his friends were astonished at his holy boldness and magnanimity. Speaking of his sufferings and death, he says, "Now I begin to be a disciple; nor shall any thing visible or invisible move me, so that I may but attain unto Christ Jesus. Let fire and the cross; let the companies of wild beasts; let breaking of bones and tearing of limbs; let the grinding to pieces of the whole frame, and all the cruel torments of the devil come upon me; only let me enjoy Jesus Christ."

When the Jews were returned from the Babylonish captivity, they were justly reprov'd for their excessive weeping, while the foundation of the second temple was laid before their eyes; and it was said unto them, "The joy of the Lord is your strength," Neh. viii. 10. With a cordial composed of ingredients brought from the celestial country, and mingled with consummate wisdom, the languid, drooping spirit is quickened, and filled with holy resolution and ardour. The Christian traveller never makes so much progress as when he goes on his way rejoicing. The Christian soldier never fights so manfully against all his enemies, as when he anticipates the crown of glory, and feels confident that he shall come off conqueror through Jesus Christ.

3. That joy, which is the fruit of the Spirit, is solid and lasting.

Whatever is light, precarious, and vanishing, is of little value. Nothing, surely, deserves to be held in high estimation, that is not substantial and permanent. "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment," Job. xx. 5. It is a true saying, *Res severa est verum gaudium*. True joy is a serious thing. It is not so light and frothy, as to float over the surface of the face. It lies deeply hid in the centre of the soul. Worldly joy is a sunflower, which shuts when the gleam of prosperity is over: spiritual joy is an evergreen; an unfading plant. "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice," Phil. iv. 4. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God" Isa. xl. 1. Prophets and apostles have it in charge to repeat their pleasing message, that they may gladden the hearts of the saints. Carnal joy, like a landflood, is muddy and furious, and soon gone, leaving nothing behind but pollution and marks of ruin. Spiritual joy resembles a pure, perennial stream, which adorns and enriches the grounds through which it flows. Though happiness is the desire of all, few know what it is, or where it may be found. False notions raise vain hopes, and vain hopes issue in disappointment and disgust. Nothing can be conceived more empty, delusive, and transitory, than the worldling's joy. It is but as the dream of a hungry man eating, Isa. xxix. 8. When conscience wakes, the visions of imagination are chased away. "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, saith the Lord, ye shall lie down in sorrow," Isa. l. 11. Ought not such language to alarm those who continually add fuel to the fire of their lusts, rush amidst the sparks of temptation and danger, and flutter on the silken wings of levity through all the walks of vice and folly? Is that joy worth having, that blazes so near the magazines of Divine wrath, as to blast the soul, and ruin it for ever? Dion Pruseus tells us, that when the Persians had got a victory, they would pick out the noblest slave, make him a king for three days, clothe him with royal robes, and feast him with all kinds of dainties, and at last put him to death as a sacrifice to folly. Such is the fate of the gay profligate. He has, at most, but a short season of mirth and mock majesty, accompanied with the terrors of a guilty conscience, anticipating his final doom.

But the Christian has joy in review, joy in possession, and still brighter joy in prospect. When he looks back and beholds all the instances of Divine goodness, his language is, "Lord, thou hast done great things for me, wherefore I am glad. When thou didst take away the cup of trembling, and put into my hand the cup of salvation; when thou leddest me through seas of trouble, and hosts of

enemies, unhurt; how greatly did I rejoice! How often hast thou made darkness light before me, and turned my desert into a blooming paradise! How often, when my feet have slipped, thy mercy hath held me up! How graciously hast thou pitied my infirmities, pardoned my sins, and supplied my wants! What shall I render to thee for all thy benefits? Behold, I bow at thy footstool, and bring my freewill offering of praise. While I gaze on all thy wonders, my soul admires and adores. While I meditate on all thy favours, my heart burns with gratitude, and my eyes overflow with tears of joy. Nor is it for the present only; for thou hast spoken to thy servant of better things to come. Thou hast prepared a glorious city, an eternal kingdom, for all who love thee. When shall I come unto thee, O God, my exceeding joy! When shall I behold thy face in righteousness, and be satisfied with thy likeness! When shall I drink of the pleasures which are at thy right hand. Welcome death, to wing my spirit to the skies. Welcome great day of resurrection, that I may enter into the joy of my Lord. Then shall I see him as he is, and be like him. Then shall my joy be full, unchangeable, and everlasting."

III. I shall endeavour to remove some objections.

Nathaniel exclaimed, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" John i. 46. And too many seem to think, neither profit nor pleasure can come from the religion of the despised Nazarene. They suppose, the moment they become serious, that they must bid farewell to all the comforts and endearments of life. Let the reader be on his guard against misapprehensions and misrepresentations of religion. Gross ignorance and slavish fear produce many false notions and absurd practices. "See superstition, wearing a form as shocking as imagination can conceive. She is dressed in black, her skin contracted into a thousand wrinkles, her eyes deep sunk in her head, and her complexion pale and livid as the countenance of death. Her looks are filled with terror and unrelenting severity, and her hands armed with whips and scorpions. Wherever she passes, the fading verdure withers beneath her steps; her pestilential breath infects the air with malignant vapours, obscures the lustre of the sun, and involves the face of heaven in universal gloom." [7] Yet this ghastly monster often assumes the name of religion. No wonder that those who mistake or confound them should startle and be alarmed.

But, perhaps, the objector may ask, Do not the Scriptures require us to take up the cross daily, to run the arduous race set before us, and boldly fight the numerous and powerful foes that rise up against us? Can the deeps of humiliation, the tears of penitence, and the toils of zealous, unabated exertion, be

consistent with comfort and joy? Certainly they are. For consider both the end to be answered by all these exercises of self-denial and labour, and the strength which the God of grace bestows to sustain them. The design of those precepts which call us to subdue pride, restrain corrupt passions, and root out evil habits, is to conform us to the Divine will, and fit us for the kingdom of heaven. It is as absurd to attribute the distress thus occasioned to religion, as to charge a disease on the physician, who only prescribes sharp medicines to remove it. Nor must we forget the strength imparted from above, to qualify us both for doing and suffering the will of God. When Christ said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness," he replied, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake," 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

Some persons, from a natural debility, have their trembling nerves exceedingly shaken, and their spirits greatly depressed, by the slightest accidents. When symptoms of this unhappy weakness appear in pious people, many cry out, "These are the fruits of religion. Their prayers have brought them into a sad state of moping melancholy. They have already lost their old friends: and by going on in the same ways, they will lose their senses." Such language is often uttered with an air of triumph, which seems to say, "How much are we superior to such weak and miserable wretches!" But the truth is, many of the depressions and fears which are imputed to religion as the cause, have no connexion with it. They have their seat in the body, rather than in the soul. To cast an odium upon piety, on account of the natural infirmities of the pious, is just as unreasonable as to blame the musician who does not produce harmony from an instrument that is ill-toned or unstrung. Paley expresses himself so sensibly on this subject, that I cannot forbear quoting his words. "There is," says he, "a prejudice against religious seriousness, arising from a notion very commonly entertained, that religion leads to gloom and melancholy. This, I am convinced, is a mistake. Some persons are constitutionally subject to melancholy, which is as much a disease in them, as the ague is a disease; and it may be, that such men's melancholy may fall upon religious ideas, as it may upon any other subject which seizes their distempered imagination; but this is not religion leading to melancholy. On the contrary, godly men have that within them, which cheers and comforts them in their saddest hours: ungodly men have that which strikes their heart like a dagger in their gayest moments." But some people are determined to misrepresent religion. They "will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely," Psalm lviii. 5. Though David,

with his harp, had sometimes power to soothe the gloomy humours of Saul, neither the soft tones of his music, nor the sweet tempers and dispositions of his mind could cure his malignity, or remove his envy and prejudice.

I shall conclude this chapter with an exhortation addressed to three classes of persons.

1. I shall address those who neither possess, nor desire that joy which is the fruit of the Spirit.

There are too many who turn away with disgust from all the rich provisions of the gospel. Puffed up with pride, they rejoice in their boastings. They are wholly engaged in the pursuit of earthly things. The language of their hearts is, "Oh, how happy should we be, were our schemes and undertakings crowned with success! How happy should we be in such a place of profit, or at such a post of power! How happy should we be, did fortune plentifully shower upon us her golden favours!"

O, ye deluded lovers and followers of the world! how empty and worthless are your gains, how tasteless and transitory are your delights! You lay up riches, and find anxieties and heart-eating cares increase with your growing stores. You seek gratification in the indulgence of appetite, and meet satiety and disgust. You listen to the drunkard's song and the fool's laughter, and run the giddy round of ever-varying amusements; and yet find nothing but wild distraction, that ends in stupefying dulness, or keen remorse.

"Pleasures are few, and fewer you enjoy;

Pleasure, like quicksilver, is bright and coy:

You strive to grasp it with your utmost skill;

Still it eludes you, and it glitters still."

As one who labours to carry water in a sieve, and to catch the wind in a net, so is he who attempts to gain satisfaction by seeking it in the things of this

world. Have you not been too long mocked and cheated with airy phantoms? And do you resolve to pursue the same course? Will you for a few toys and trifling pleasures sacrifice your best interests, and sell your immortal souls? Then, your conduct is more absurd than the wild extravagance of profane Esau, who exchanged his birth-right for a morsel of bread, and afterwards wept over his irrecoverable loss. You act a more stupid and ungrateful part than those Israelites who longed for the flesh-pots, and loathed the heavenly manna, and preferred the leeks and onions of Egypt to the milk and honey of Canaan. Wherefore do ye labour, and bereave your souls of good? "The best happiness of a worldly man," as Bishop Hall says, "is like a short calm between two storms; or, a good day between two days of shivering ague." O, then, seek the solid and enduring pleasures of true religion.

2. I shall address those who possess not, but desire that joy which is the fruit of the Spirit.

Are you troubled, confounded, and cast down; and ready to conclude that your case is singular, and your state desperate? Go to the Father of mercies, the God of all consolation, and he will turn your mourning into joy. Though you be burdened and pained with the weight of your guilt, with Him there is mercy and plenteous redemption. Go not to empty cisterns, but to the great Fountain of living waters. Go not to Mount Sinai, covered with blackness and storms; but to the foot of Mount Calvary, that you may behold the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. The blood of Jesus has still power to cleanse the vilest rebel. Are your minds full of doubts and dark clouds? Look to the Sun of Righteousness, that you may have the clear light of life. Do you feel your debility and weakness? Lean on the undecaying and almighty arm of Jehovah, as your strength. Hearken not to the lying enemy, who would drive you to despair: this is one of the devices by which he too often gets an advantage over the fearful soul. His infernal quiver is full of fiery darts, and they are discharged on that side which is uncovered with the shield of faith. When Satan attempts to inject hard thoughts of God, to keep you back from the blood of sprinkling, or the means of grace, do not give place to him for an hour, nor for a moment. Perhaps you say, "But I am utterly unworthy of the least favour; and, therefore, to hope for acceptance would be presumption." Do you see your danger, feel your wants, lament and confess your sins, and long and pray for spiritual blessings? What, then, hinders you from obtaining the joy of the Lord? Have the promises lost their authority and force, like a deed out of date? "Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there?" Jer. viii. 22. Do you think every grain of

the precious remedy is consumed, or that the Physician is weary of performing cures? What! are the wells of salvation at length become wells without water? Has the river, which once made glad the city of God, ceased to send forth its refreshing stream? Is there no longer any passage open from the vale of sorrow to the mount of holy transport? Has time worn out the charter of Christian liberty? Has God shut and barred the door of mercy? Impossible! Lo! Jesus is waiting to receive you. Go, broken-hearted sinner, and say unto him, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved," Jer. xvii. 14. He will not refuse to ease thy pains, and bind up all thy wounds. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. Come then, fainting, longing soul, and drink abundantly, that thou mayest be refreshed. The new and living way to the mercy seat is still open. Delay not to ascend the holy mount, and hold communion with God; and thou wilt exclaim, "It is good to be here." Let thy supplications be urgent and persevering. Present the prayer of Moses; "O Lord, I beseech thee, show me thy glory!" Exod. xxxiii. 18. The discovery, though it be but a glimpse, will kindle an inward rapture, and communicate a heavenly lustre. Use the prayer of the Psalmist; "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people. O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance," Psal. cvi. 4, 5. Such a visit, by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, will prove more reviving and animating, than the kindest visits of the dearest and best friends.

3. I shall address those who possess that joy which is the fruit of the Spirit, but have to lament that it is so much deadened and interrupted.

That you may have this blessing in a richer measure, let me exhort you to,

(1.) Exercise yourselves daily, to keep a conscience void of offence, both towards God and man.

By careless and irregular walking, many good men have received the most painful falls and bruises. You are especially admonished not to grieve the Holy Spirit, by whom you are sealed unto the day of redemption, Eph. iv. 30. There would not be reason for such a warning, were it not possible to offend him: as it is said, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit," Gal. v. 25; we may conclude that all disorderly and inconsistent conduct is calculated to deprive us of the Comforter's presence. If you provoke the Divine Spirit to withdraw his

gracious influences, who or what can cheer your dark mind, and sustain your drooping soul? When David had grievously offended God, he tasted the bitterness of sin, and lost the relish of the Divine favour, and therefore prayed, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit," Psal. li. 11, 12. Be watchful to avoid the first approach of temptation; beware of the world's snares and the devil's wiles. The short, but needful precept of the apostle, is never unseasonable. "Quench not the Spirit," 1 Thess. v. 19. Do not, by a load of earthly cares, extinguish his sacred motions. If you quench the Spirit, you necessarily deprive yourselves of that joy which his cheering influences impart. Is it not a truth, which daily experience confirms? When you mix much with the world, does it not take off the edge of your desires for spiritual blessings? Does not vain conversation throw cold water on your warmest feelings and happiest frames? God will not utterly take away his Spirit from his saints; (for where he has begun a good work he will complete it;) yet they may be left for a long time in darkness and distress. The Lord has promised to make the believing soul as a watered garden; Isa. lviii. 11; but it must be watched and guarded. Perhaps you perceive your graces to be in a feeble, fading, and drooping state; you cry, "O that it were with me as in months that are past! Now, indeed, I have the early dew of the Divine blessing, which is soon gone; but then I enjoyed copious and continued showers, the early and the latter rain. Now, I feel something of the Spirit's influences; but it is like the gathering of wind with a fan, compared with the heavenly gale which then blew upon my soul." Examine yourselves; the withdrawal of Divine comfort is not without a cause. If you neglect any known duty, or indulge any secret sin, it will rob you of your joy. If you glory in your gifts more than in your God, you may well complain of barrenness; you must humble yourselves, that you may be exalted. Unless you are emptied of self, you cannot be filled with the Spirit. There are many mysteries in the experience of real Christians. They are poor, and yet rich; weak, and yet strong; sorrowful, and yet always rejoicing, 2 Cor. vi. 10.[8] It is only while loving righteousness, and hating iniquity, that we can expect to be anointed with the oil of gladness, Psal. xlv. 7.

(2.) Employ all your time, your talents and privileges in zealous endeavours to do good, and promote the Divine glory.

Some persons are continually fretting amidst trivial vexations, and pining under imaginary wants. They groan beneath a burden of time, which they know neither how to get rid of, nor employ. Hence, so many ways are contrived to

waste those precious hours, which are of infinitely more value than Indian gems. But surely, Christians may always find a remedy for listlessness. When your spirits sink, and you begin to languish without assignable cause, do not sit still amidst vapours and glooms. The watchword of the Christian soldier is, "Be diligent." Summon all your thoughts, and bend all your efforts to the attainment of some great and worthy object. What makes the peasant sing at his work, while the pampered lordling sighs on his downy bed? *Activity*. Activity in well-doing is the grand secret of cheerfulness. Not that you are required to be always in a bustle or hurry: much may be done, as in the building of Solomon's temple, without the noise of axes and hammers. Let your head be employed to contrive, and your hands to execute some scheme of benevolence. It is when engaged in the Lord's work, that we may expect his grace. The most active and zealous Christians are, in general, the most happy. Brainerd, that excellent missionary, whose labours were so arduous, and so successful, in converting the American Indians, could say, "I as sincerely desire to serve and glorify God, as any angel in heaven. I see nothing else in the world that can yield any satisfaction besides living to God, pleasing him, and doing his will. My greatest joy and comfort have been to do something for promoting the interests of religion and the souls of men."

(3.) Be often renewing your covenant-engagements with God.

Recollect how you have surrendered yourselves into the hands of that Almighty and All-gracious Being, who has given you the strongest proofs of his love and faithfulness. Draw nigh to him, pleading the privilege of your adoption. David exclaimed, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord!" Psal. xvi. 2. The following are the words of the pious Mrs. Rowe, accompanying her covenant with God. "Thus have I subscribed to thy gracious proposals, and engaged myself to be the Lord's. And now, let the malice of men and the rage of devils combine against me, I can defy all their stratagems; for God himself has become my Friend, Jesus is my all-sufficient Saviour, and the Spirit of God, I trust, will be my Sanctifier and Comforter. O happy day! transporting moment! the brightest period of my life! Heaven, with all its light, smiles on me. What glorious mortal can now excite my envy! What scene, to tempt my ambition, could the whole creation display! Let glory call me with her exalted voice; let pleasure, with a softer eloquence, allure me: the world, with all its splendour, appears but a trifle, while the infinite God is my portion. He is mine by as sure a title as eternal veracity can confer. The right is unquestionable; the conveyance unalterable. The mountains shall be removed, and the hills be dissolved, before

the everlasting obligation shall be cancelled."[9]

By keeping up a frame of mind enlivened with spiritual joy, you will both honour God, and reflect lustre on the cause of religion in the world. A kind master loves to see his servants happy; the Lord taketh pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. He commands us to be glad and rejoice in him. Though he sometimes chastens, it is not for his own pleasure, but for our profit. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," Psal. xxx. 5. Besides, the good effects of a cheerful temper, in the social circle where it is your lot to move, are more easily conceived than described. It will often scatter the dark thoughts and raise the drooping spirits of those around you. It will infuse a rich savour and a peculiar sweetness into conversation. It will sometimes disarm prejudice, and silence calunmy. Calvin, speaking of the joy which is the fruit of the Spirit, says, "It is that cheerfulness towards our neighbour, which is the opposite of moroseness."[10]

Go then; let your comforts and joys recommend the gospel you profess. Eat your meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Acts ii. 46. Instead of heaviness and the signs of woe, put on the garments of praise: offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and glory ye in his holy name. If you find so much pleasure in the way to heaven, what transports will you have when you shall come with all the ransomed of the Lord to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon your heads, when you shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away! Isaiah xxxv. 10.

CHAPTER IV.

ON SPIRITUAL PEACE.

THE birth of Christ was celebrated by a multitude of the heavenly host, whose song on that memorable occasion was, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," Luke ii. 14. The interesting message which God has sent us by his commissioned servants the apostles, is justly termed the gospel of peace, Rom. x. 15. Jesus Christ, whose authority and power in the church are absolute and unchangeable, is styled the Prince of Peace, Isaiah ix. 6. And one effect, or fruit, of the Holy Spirit's influence, is said to be peace. Ever since the first entrance of sin, the world has exhibited a scene of disorder and confusion, a field of blood and carnage. But those who cordially receive the gospel, who become the subjects of the King of Zion, who are habitually led by the Spirit, are made partakers of true peace.

I. I shall show wherein spiritual peace consists. It includes that sweet and sacred serenity in the conscience, which arises from a well-grounded persuasion of reconciliation to God; and that amiable frame of mind which disposes a believer to live in harmony and quietness with his fellow men.

1. Spiritual peace consists in that sweet and calm serenity of conscience, which arises from a well-grounded persuasion of our reconciliation to God.

How awful is the condition of man in a state of depravity and guilt! "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. "The law," observes Hervey, "insists upon obedience perfect in all its parts; perfect in every degree; and, in each of these respects, perpetual." While, therefore, any one continues under the law, a stranger to himself, and an enemy to God by wicked works, he must be destitute of true peace. The terrors of Divine justice are set in array against him, and a condemning sentence is prepared to fix his eternal doom. In this state, no creature can afford deliverance. But when we were yet without strength, in due

time Christ died for the ungodly," Rom. v. 6. We must look to Calvary for the first glimpse of hope. There we see the moral law in the highest degree honoured, and all its demands fully answered. There we see the most striking display of inflexible justice and eternal mercy. There we behold the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world! There our peace was made and ratified by the blood of the everlasting covenant. Paul says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself," Col. i. 19, 20. Peter declares, that "Christ hath suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," 1 Pet. iii. 18. These, and many other Scriptures, clearly show the divinely appointed method of reconciliation for guilty, apostate man. Glorious, and ever to be admired, is the grand scheme of human redemption. As Ezekiel saw in the prophetic vision, wheels within wheels, wings above wings, and eyes round about, so do we here behold mysteries within mysteries, wonders connected with still higher wonders, and blessings thick clustering on every side. Angels could not have found out a way of restoring lost man, without injury to the Divine perfections; but now that the plan is revealed, they eagerly bend from their loftiest seats to look into it.

But the most valuable blessings avail us little, while they are unknown and unenjoyed. Peace was not only procured, but also conferred by Christ. When a nation is on the point of sinking to utter ruin, under the scourge of war, nothing can be more welcome than the return of peace. The very messengers who publish it from town to town, are received with shouts of joy. And did not Christ come into the world for this end, to preach peace to those that were afar off, and to those that were nigh? Are not his ministers and messengers sent out in every direction, to publish the good news throughout the earth? "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound!" Psalm lxxxix. 15. Indeed, spiritual peace is one of the chief blessings of the people of God. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that said unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" Isa. lvi. 7. Had we only an uncertain rumour of peace with God, our hearts might dance at the sound.[11] But we have the delightful message abundantly confirmed. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation," 2 Cor. v. 19. Yet such is the folly, depravity, and presumption of men, that they cannot be brought to seek this peace, except the Holy Spirit shine into their minds, and soften their hearts. By his sacred unction we are taught our

distance from God, our danger through the guilt of sin, and the absolute necessity of an interest in Christ. By his renewing influence, the stubborn will is subdued, and sweetly conformed to the Divine will. By his attractive and animating power, the affections are detached from the poor toys and contemptible trifles of time, and elevated to the momentous and glorious realities of eternity. Such a change necessarily infuses into the conscience a settled composure, a serene tranquillity. "To be carnally minded," says Paul, "is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 6, 7. Men in a state of nature, unenlightened and unrenewed, have no taste for what is spiritual and heavenly. To think that those who walk after the flesh, fulfilling its lusts, may obtain genuine peace, is as idle as to imagine that the east and west may meet, or fire and water agree; for these are not more contrary to each other, than love and enmity, sin and holiness. And that none are spiritually minded, but by the special influence of the Holy Spirit, is evident from the passage above quoted in its whole connexion. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you," verse 11. The mind renewed, and possessed of a taste for what is holy and agreeable to the will of God, cannot fail to enjoy peace of conscience.

2. Spiritual peace consists in that amiable frame of mind which disposes a believer to live in harmony, concord, and quietness, with his fellow men.

This is called the fruit of the Spirit, in opposition to hatred, variance, emulations, wraths, and strifes, which are reckoned among the works of the flesh. The amiable temper which religion inspires, sheds its tranquillizing influence over all the relations of life. It has a tendency to produce harmony in the family, unity in the church, and quietness in society at large.

(1.) Harmony in the family. "Thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin," Job v. 24. It is peculiarly pleasing to see the Christian happy in the bosom of his family. What order, unity, mutual affection, and mild forbearance! How are the blessings of Providence sweetened by the soul-refreshing fruit of the Spirit! How are the tender bonds of nature strengthened by the sacred obligations of the gospel! Domestic peace never appears so much to advantage, as when contrasted with family discord and strife. Why do those who dwell under the same roof, eat at the same table, and stand in the nearest connexion with each other, stir up

animosities and bickerings among themselves? Why do they turn every trivial matter into an occasion of offence, and by exchanging cold and forbidding looks, or burning and bitter words, continually banish comfort and peace? The first family had a Cain, who filled it with strife, and stained it with blood. And has not every age verified the proverb? A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle, which will not yield, and are with the utmost difficulty removed. But as far as pure religion prevails, it tames and softens the furious passions, and expels the poison of malice from the heart. It sweetly harmonizes the jarring tempers, and disposes parents and children, masters and servants, to live in peace. What a pleasing example of this is recorded in Ruth ii. 4: "And Boaz said to the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee." "Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" It is like the precious ointment on the head of Aaron, which diffused an agreeable fragrance; or like the dew of Hermon, adorning and enriching the land on which it fell, Psalm cxxxiii. 1, 2.

(2.) Unity in the church. If God had prepared for each individual believer a separate heaven, walled off and partitioned from the rest, there would be some pretence for standing at a distance, and refusing communion with each other on earth. But since all at last will join in one general assembly; and all while here enjoy the same great privileges, have similar duties to perform, and similar trials to endure, what can be more reasonable than that they should, with united hands and hearts, strive together for the faith of the gospel, and for the promotion of each other's welfare? Our Lord thus addresses his disciples: "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another," Mark ix. 50. Paul exhorts us to live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with us, 2 Cor. xiii. 11. But is this temper to be found in those professors of religion who, under the pretence of maintaining sound doctrine, make a man an offender for a word, and use every imaginable method to keep up the senseless noise of jangling? Surely the school of Christ is not a school for debate and cavil, but for the meekness of wisdom. Do they discover any thing of this peace, who are constantly going about to blow the flames of animosity, to scatter the seeds of contention, to put wormwood in every cup, and a crook in every lot? Such persons make every place a Meribah, Exod. xvii. 7. And can we expect to find the fruit of the Spirit by the waters of strife? Can this peace have any place in those who, like Diotrophes, continually grieve the pious, and open the mouths of the impious to blaspheme, by their prating impertinence, or pushing forwardness for pre-eminence? No; these are wolves in sheep's clothing, that creep in among the

flock of Christ to devour and destroy.

Those who are in covenant with God, ought to be ever in harmony with each other. This is beautifully represented by the two staves, Zech. xi. 7–14. The staff, "beauty," is a token of the covenant with God; "bands," a pledge of brotherly union. While the staff beauty is firm and unbroken, why should bands be cut asunder? We have a striking exhibition of peace and unity in the first Christians. It is said in Acts iv. 32, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul."

(3.) Quietness in society at large. Never was there a more unjust charge than that which has been often urged, that religion is the enemy of civil government, and Christians are the ringleaders of sedition. The gospel expressly requires us to render to all their dues, and study to live quietly, giving no offence to Jew or Gentile. Now, the fruit of the Spirit in the heart is a disposition to act according to these mild and excellent precepts. We are not indeed to conclude, that a pious man is always able to keep on good terms with worldly men. He must not sacrifice truth in a single instance, nor yield to any sinful compliances for this end. Peace is purchased at too high a price when a good conscience is given up for it. The Scripture doctrine is, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men," Rom. xii. 18. When our circumstances, or the dispositions of those with whom we stand connected in any way, are such as to render it impossible for us to live at peace, we may feel grief, but do not incur blame. Such was the situation of the Psalmist, when he cried, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war," Psalm cxx. 5–7.

II. I shall point out the means by which peace is enjoyed and preserved.

Whatever blessings flow from the influence of the Holy Spirit, we cannot reasonably expect them, but in the order and use of appointed means. This should be not only admitted in words, but also kept constantly in view, to guard us against those notions which seem nearly akin to heathenish fate, and lead to conclusions the most presumptuous and dangerous.

1. Let us show by what means peace is enjoyed and preserved in the conscience.

(1.) To enjoy and preserve peace in the conscience, it is necessary to have an extensive and intimate acquaintance with the revealed will of God. None but the paths of wisdom are the paths of peace; and the blind cannot pursue, because they cannot discern them. We have a suitable exhortation in Job xxii. 21, 22, "Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart." Take this plain and encouraging direction to guide you. Seize every opportunity of withdrawing from the busy, interrupting cares of the world, to peruse, with a patient and teachable spirit, the sacred pages of the inspired volume. O determine to "hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly," Psalm lxxxv. 8. Too many, by giving heed to the doctrines and commandments of men, rather than to the lively oracles of God, are warped into dangerous errors, and kept in a state of blindness, till death hurry them into eternity. The very design of the Holy Scriptures was to guide our feet into the paths of peace. How pathetic was our Lord's exclamation over Jerusalem! "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix. 41.

(2.) To enjoy and preserve peace in the conscience, it is necessary to put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. God hath sent forth his Son "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii. 25, 26. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed," Isa. liii. 5. It is in vain to look to any other for salvation and comfort. Let the sinner, saith God, "take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me," Isa. xxvii. 5. And can any one take hold of his strength without embracing those promises which are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus? Can any one reasonably expect ease to the burdened conscience and the wounded spirit, without a believing application to that precious blood which cleanseth from all sin? We have no Scripture warrant to encourage such expectation. The apostle says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 1. Now, to have peace with God, and to enjoy communion with the Father and the Son, is the direct way to have peace in our own bosoms. But it is impossible to experience this blessing without the exercise of a living faith, and the influence of the Divine Spirit. Hence Paul prayed on the behalf of the

Romans, that God would fill them with all joy and peace in believing; that they might abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost, Rom. xv. 13. It was foretold, that under the reign of Christ, the King of Zion, there should be abundance of peace for ever. Yes, blessed be God; there is enough to fill the whole capacity of the soul, and satisfy all its desires. But yet faith (to use a figure) is necessary as the bucket by which we draw it from the fountain, and taste its sweetness. On the other hand, unbelieving doubts, fears, and misgivings, are the sluices that drain away our joy and peace, leaving us empty, barren, and uncomfortable.

Would you then possess a sweet, unruffled tranquillity in your own breast? Seek an increase of faith; keep a steady fixed eye on the cross; contemplate daily the excellences and offices of Jesus. His very names and titles are replete with encouragement. He is our great Melchizidec; at once King of Righteousness, and King of Peace. When the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt, he spared every house whose doorposts were sprinkled with the blood of the paschal lamb. When the dove brought an olive branch to Noah, he knew that the waters were abated. And, as the blood of Christ speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, does it not procure a far greater deliverance than Israel obtained in Egypt? Does not the heavenly Dove, the Holy Spirit, give to the humble Christian a pledge of peace, and an assurance that the flood of wrath hath subsided? If you, reader, do but know that the blood of Christ, sprinkled before the throne, speaks peace for you, and feel that the Spirit of God applying the promises, speaks peace in you, the worst enemy will have little power to disturb or alarm you. Faith is the strong citadel, the impregnable guard, that repels the assaults of the devil, and maintains inward peace. Let but your dependence be firmly fixed on the unfailing promises which centre in Christ Jesus; and then, though there should be pointed against you all the artillery of earth and hell, you shall not be greatly moved. The prophet says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee," Isa. xxvi. 3.

(3.) To enjoy and preserve peace in the conscience, there must be obedience to the Divine commands. Any neglect of known duties, or indulgence of secret sins, will as certainly distress the mind, as Achan with his accursed thing troubled the camp of the Israelites. It is said, "Great peace have they which love God's law: and nothing shall offend them," Psal. cxix. 165. We have, indeed, nothing to do with the law as a covenant, nor can we expect justification by it without making void the whole work of Christ. But it will always remain a rule of conduct to believers. Those who treat it with contempt, or cast it behind

them, make to themselves crooked paths, and cannot know peace; but as many as walk according to this rule, peace shall be upon them. Those who are reconciled to God must be employed in his service. Our time and talents, the means of grace and the gifts of the Spirit, are bestowed on us that we may glorify God. When therefore, they are misapplied or abused, the Lord will have a controversy with us, and plead against us with sharp judgments and corrections. Every instance of backsliding, every step of deliberate transgression, is attended with the most painful consequences. This appears from the account given of David, Solomon, and Peter. How often hath God exclaimed, "O that thou hadst harkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, flowing in a gentle uninterrupted stream." When the children of God yield to any thing criminal or inconsistent with their holy calling, though they are not smitten with the sword of justice, their transgressions are visited with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes. Disobedience never fails to bring shame, confusion and remorse; "but glory, honour, and peace, to every one that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile," Rom. ii. 10. The practice of iniquity yields no produce, except vanity and vexation of spirit; but "the work of righteousness is peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever," Isa. xxxii. 17. Would you enjoy this fruit of the Holy Spirit? follow steadily the path marked out by the steps of your great leader. You will meet with difficulties and oppositions; but you are furnished with arms to fight against sin, Satan, and the world. Though it may appear a paradox, you can no longer possess true peace than while you carry on the holy war to which you are called by the Captain of salvation. If you grant a truce to the enemies of the soul, or even hold a parley with them, you are betrayed and injured. You need to be armed at all points, both for defence and assault. In particular, forget not to take the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, Eph. vi. 16, 17. Those who drop their shield are wounded by the fiery darts of the enemy, and long feel the smarting anguish they produce. Too many never unsheath the sword of the Spirit, or use it at all. Others employ it merely as a weapon of controversy to wound their opponents or win the praise of victory. But do you use it to cut off evil habits, to destroy the body of sin, and to maintain, at the post of duty, the cause of truth and the honour of your Lord.

2. I shall now show by what means we may promote peace among our fellow men, and Christian brethren.

(1.) While we are in the world, we must have dealings with some who are strangers, and others who are enemies to religion. You may, perhaps, say, What

peace can there be with such persons? Concord or unity of spirit is not to be expected. But we are required to act in such a manner, as to give no real cause of offence, and endeavour to conciliate their good will, rather than provoke their displeasure. Let discretion guard your conduct from every thing rash and irritating. Give no occasion of stumbling to the weak, of boasting to the vain, or of cavilling to the contentious. Be not a tool to the crafty, who would employ you in dangerous work, to save their own fingers from the fire. An impetuous, precipitate man, is always in confusion and perplexity. His violent, ill-directed measures, destroy both the calm of peace and the plans of prudence. The moment we step out of the path of duty, we are in the region of danger, within the reach of the enemy's fire. God has engaged to keep us while we are keeping his commands. Let us "follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14.

A likely way of attaining this end, is to keep in the sphere where Providence has placed us. He who values ease, will not turn out of his path, and venture, without cause, among thorns and briars, lest he should be entangled and wounded by them. A lover of peace will not officiously intermeddle with the concerns of other men. This sort of prudence ought to preserve us from every thing that has the appearance of malignant prejudice against the characters of rulers, or the measures of government. I do not say that the person who becomes a Christian ceases to be a man, and must feel indifferent to the events which nearly affect society at large, or deem it unlawful to speak a syllable on such subjects. But many professors of religion have eagerly plunged into politics, gone quite out of their depth, and after losing both their time and temper, and making many enemies, have neither gained nor done the least good. Fierce disputes and mutual reproaches are not the fruits of the Christian spirit. Those who will rush into the fire, must not complain if they are sometimes burnt. It is well when a pious man can lay his hand on his heart, and use the language of the psalmist, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. My soul is even as a weaned child," Psal. cxxxix. 1, 2.

Another means which we should use to live at peace with all men is an unwearied endeavour to do them all the good we can. By proper methods, even wild beasts may be restrained from mischief, and sometimes so far tamed, as to be rendered mild and manageable. The world is not so bad, but we may hope, in some instances, with well doing, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Julian, the pagan emperor, acknowledged, that the main reason why Christianity

was so much propagated was, "because Christians were a people who did good to all, and hurt to none."

Should, however, all these means fail to soften and conciliate the enemies of religion, there is one thing yet left for us to do, which ought never to be neglected; I mean, to pray for them. When the Jews were captives in Babylon, they were commanded to pray for the peace of that city, Jer. xxix. 7. Nor is the language of the New Testament less explicit. "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty," 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

(2.) It will have a useful tendency to promote peace among Christian brethren, if we seriously consider the unhappy consequences that attend the want of it. "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth," Jam. iii. 5, 16. "We have," as one says, "no more house-burnings on account of religion, but a great many heart-burnings yet remain." What hard speeches! what evil surmisings! what violent provocations among some professors of religion! Ungodly men are glad to hear of such things, that they may have ground on which to fasten their reproach. "Those are the best Christians," says bishop Wilkins, "who are of a peaceable and reconciling disposition; and neither call for fires from heaven, nor kindle fire on earth, to destroy all who do not follow them, as well knowing that truth cannot be engraven on the hearts of men by the points of swords, nor can their understandings be illuminated with flaming fagots." "The beginning of strife," saith Solomon, "is as when one letteth out water," Proof. xvii. 14. If the bank be broken down, the torrent sweeps away all before it, and marks its course with mischief wherever it rolls.

To promote and preserve peace among Christian brethren, it will be useful frequently to weigh the arguments to unity proposed in the Scriptures. Many and weighty reasons might be here produced, but I shall glance only at that striking text in Eph. iv. 3–6; "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Unity of party may be preserved by the mean bond of interest, or the rigid bond of bigotry; but unity of Spirit can be maintained only in the soft bond of peace, and by the strong cement of love. Are not all believers living members of one body? The foot is as needful as the hand

or the eye. Are not all called and baptized by the same Spirit? Are not all children of one Father, servants of one Master? Surely these are arguments to promote unity and love.

To promote peace among Christian brethren, cultivate a charitable and forbearing temper. Never conclude that all must be fatally wrong, who do not think just as you think. Why should any smaller differences, which do not affect the foundation of our common faith, interrupt the fellowship, or spoil the harmony of Christians? Why do those who profess to be followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, provoke or injure one another? It has been well observed, that "though it is no way surprising for wolves to fight with wolves, it is unnatural for lambs to worry lambs." Our Lord has said, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God," Matt. v. 9. Honourable distinction! Would to God it were more valued and sought! But, alas! there are many that may be justly called peace-breakers, who leave no means untried to cause divisions and disturbances; meddling intruders, who will have an oar in every man's boat, a hand in every man's business; tattlers, who keep tales ready made, or stuff from which to make them, fit for all characters and occasions: wranglers, whose element is controversy and stormy debate; incendiaries, who carry the torch of animosity, and spread on all sides destructive flames. Now, if peacemakers are the sons of God, whose children are these? It is not a matter difficult to decide. Every feature in their character declares plainly who is their father. The devil in the heat of his dispute, contended about the body of Moses; perhaps he grudged it the undisturbed rest of the peaceful grave: but the persons whom I have just mentioned, go further; and, rather than be without a topic of debate, will contend about the souls of God's people, who are safely gathered to heaven, and daringly pronounce their doom. It is, indeed, impossible for them to rob the saints above of their rest; but they too often succeed in troubling the church below.

If you really love and pursue peace, you must judge favourably, and speak candidly, of others. When a breach is made, you must try to close, rather than widen it. Some offences and misunderstandings will inevitably arise. A forgiving and forbearing spirit removes many, and prevents more. You had better suffer wrong, than raise contention. We have a fine example of this amiable spirit in Abraham, "And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren," Gen. xiii. 8, 9. By this manner of acting, how often should we quench the first sparks of contention, and nip the first buds of strife! And whenever you bend

your knees, and lift up your hearts to God, pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Let your tenderest affection and warmest zeal be thus expressed for Zion: "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within they palaces: for my brethren and companions' sake I will now say, Peace be within thee," Psal. cxxii. 7, 8.

There are some who have no peace. Is it said, This is a harsh and unfounded assertion? Is it asked, Where shall such wretches be found? The melancholy fact is grounded upon the best and surest authority. It is not the word of a weak, fallible man to which I refer you. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," Isa. lvii. 21. Dare you question the truth of his testimony? How justly and strikingly does the prophet draw the character of such men! "But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt," Isa. lvii. 20. Their turbulent and ungoverned passions are perpetually working and stirring up from the bottom of the heart the vilest corruptions, and foaming out their own shame. What peace can there be to the miser, whose fruitful imagination is always teeming with fears and anxieties, lest some direful disaster should deprive him of his hoarded treasures? What peace can there be to the gamester, who stakes his last shilling on the turn of a card, curses his bad fortune with the blackest oaths forged in hell, and seeks a remedy for his losses from the loaded pistol or drawn dagger? What peace can there be to the abandoned debauchee, whose bones are rotting with loathsome disease, and whose delicious sweets are all turned to bitterness? What peace is there to the tyrant, whose bosom boils with projects of ambition and paroxysms of rage and envy? What peace is there to the painted hypocrite, or almost infidel?

"Ah me! the laurell'd wreath that murder rears,
Blood-nurs'd, and water'd with the widow's tears,
Seems not so foul, so tainted, and so dread,
As waves the night-shade round the sceptic's head."

Conscious guilt unites with violent passions to rob the wicked of peace. They cannot shut out every ray of light. Sudden convictions sometimes dart across the mind, like flashes of lightning from the gloomy clouds of a gathering

tempest. A dreadful sound is in their ears, and indescribable pangs strike through their hearts. Hence they so eagerly pursue amusements and diversions, to drown reflection and stifle conscience. If this be your case, let me ask, do you expect by new contrivances and sensual delights, to gain that peace to which you are now a stranger? In your present course it is impossible. As well might you hope to cure a fever with that which inflames the blood, or find ease by casting your naked body on a bed of thorns and thistles. Before you can enjoy peace, a mighty change must be effected. The guilt of sin must be removed by the efficacy of atoning blood, and the dominion of sin subdued by the power of reigning grace. Instead of banishing all serious reflection, and concealing your crimes, you must consider your ways, and loathe yourself for all your abominations. Instead of walking after your own lusts, you must deliberately forsake them, and through Divine influence, live a new life of holiness. Nor are you yet gone beyond the reach of mercy. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God for he will abundantly pardon," Isa. lv. 7, 8.

There are many who have a false peace. Wrapped up in a vain security, they can sin on without remorse, and feast themselves without fear. Such a false peace often arises from sensual excesses, joined with brutish ignorance and hardened infidelity. A long and an unbridled indulgence of the appetites and passions, naturally tends to stupefy the soul. Such a case is supposed possible, and a suitable warning provided, in Deut. xxix. 18–20. "Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven." But notwithstanding the loud thunder of the threatenings, and the kindling fires of Divine wrath, and the swift-winged, descending curses of a broken law, how many continue to sing the syren song of peace, and give themselves up to work all uncleanness with greediness till they are past feeling! In such a state their language, in effect, is, "The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye brutish among the people; and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" Psal. xciv. 7–10.

This false peace is sometimes procured by the ingenious arts and refinements of wicked men. The nauseous pill is gilded, and the deadly poison sugared, that they may go down sweetly. A thousand schemes are adopted to keep up an appearance of decency. They give to the foul monster, vice, a fine name and a fair dress, and then no longer blush to own and follow it. They call "good evil, and evil good; put darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter," Isa. v. 20. Thus, faith and patience, love and zeal, in a course of piety, are termed credulity and weakness, rant and enthusiasm; on the contrary, impious infidel notions are free thinking; wine and wantonness, free living; hot-headed contests and hard-hearted cruelties, are magnanimity, honour, and a noble spirit. From these vain refinements they gain a little peace, something like the sleep obtained by opium, or the slumber of Samson on the lap of Delilah.

Sometimes a false peace is procured by a professed regard and zeal for religion. How many, alas! think if they avoid the grosser vices of the world, and maintain a respectable decorum of manners, with a little sabbath-day duty, and sacramental gravity on particular occasions, all is well. They build up a wall, daub it with untempered mortar, and vainly hope it will stand, without calculating on the approaching tempest. And there are too many blind watchmen, who cry, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," Ezek. xiii. 10. Now, whether it arise from brutish excesses, from specious refinements, or from soul-flattering errors, there is no state on earth more dangerous than a state of false security. The leaky, unsound ship, may sink in the calm sea, as well as be dashed on the rocks by a hurricane. Are you, reader, in possession of nothing better than a false peace? Have you never yet seen your own character in the glass of truth, and starting with horror at the sight exclaimed, "Behold, I am vile!" Job xl. 4. Have you never yet heard the voice of the Almighty, saying, "Prepare to meet thy God?" Amos iv. 12. Have you never felt the powerful operations of the Divine Spirit, bringing sin to your remembrance, and opening a prospect of eternity before you? Have you had no searchings of conscience, no meltings of heart, no salutary fears, no strivings against sin? Then you have but a false peace. It is a dead sleep, a fatal stupor over the senses of the inner man, a strong and dangerous delusion of soul. Woe to you, while you are at ease in Zion! Any terrors, short of the ravings of absolute despair, are better than your peace. The devils believe and tremble, but you disbelieve the solemn testimonies of God, and yet triumph in your security. Oh that you were awakened and undeceived! The kindest thing that can be done for you, is to break your present peace. But perhaps you are given up to a reprobate mind. Ah, if this be the case, should you

hear the shrieks and howlings of hell, and see the glare of those fires that shall never be quenched; nay, should one rise from his prison, and with his burning tongue preach to you the eternal torments of the wicked, you would still remain hardened and unmoved. If this thought strike horror into the mind, I would hope better things of you. The peace of a good man arises from God's everlasting covenant; the peace of the ungodly arises from that covenant with death, which shall not stand, but be disannulled in the last awful moment of extremity. The believer's peace is the fruit of the Holy Spirit: the unbeliever's peace is the effect of the infernal spirit's guile, still whispering in the carnal ear the falsehood that deceived our parents, "You shall not die," Gen. iii. 4. This strong man armed for a while keeps the palace of the heart, and all his goods are in peace; but when a stronger comes, his armour is seized and the peace destroyed. O, may you beware of the danger of carnal security! Think not death at a distance. The advanced guards of the king of terrors are upon you. His gloomy shadowy already darkens your brightest days. Listen not to the lulling and soul-soothing flatteries of the world. Believe not the lying enemy, who would allure you to destruction; but seek peace while it may be found. The servants of God, after warning, proceed to invite you, and beseech you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God, 2 Cor. v. 20.

There are some who possess true peace. All hail, ye happy souls, ye highly favoured of the Lord! The storm that gathered black and heavy above you, is blown over; and while the heavens brighten into clear serenity, behold the rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. Fair emblem of reconciliation! cheering token of peace! The flood of wrath shall no more return. Believers, you shall go forth with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. The messengers of peace, whose office it is to expound the doctrines, and display the promises, of the glorious gospel, are sent to you with words of sweet comfort and encouragement. While you sojourn in the wilderness, the hovering angels of peace attend you, to watch your path and ward off impending evils. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Heb. i. 14. If, with some celestial touch, your eyes were opened like those of Elisha's servant, you would perceive yourselves surrounded by a shining host, as your guard. The God of peace is your God, and he will be your guide even unto death. Though the earth quakes, and the heavens tremble at his rebuke, and his wrath burns like a devouring flame, yet he is a strong hold in the day of trouble, and knoweth such as trust in him. The Prince of Peace, whose waving banner is love, is your

Saviour and Redeemer. You have rest in Jesus now, and you shall rest with him soon. For you he put on a body of flesh, endured the sharpness of death, and conquered the powers of hell. To you he bequeathed peace as his last and best gift. Nor can the precious legacy be lost, for he is the executor of his own will. He both bequeaths and actually bestows it. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you," John xiv. 27. The Spirit of grace is your Comforter. His influences shall calm your fears, and animate your hopes, through all the gloomy vale of life. And when you end your mortal race, while the summons of death calls you hence, and while feeble nature sinks in the last struggle, you shall be able to say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." "May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ," Luke ii. 29, 30; Phil. iv. 7.

CHAPTER V.

ON PATIENCE.[12]

It displays true greatness of mind to suffer with cheerful resignation and unshaken fortitude, not less than to act with promptitude and rigour. We are compassed with infirmities, and exposed to multiplied calamities. In every station, and through every stage of life, we are involved in troubles. If, in our first outset, we are sanguine enough to expect an uninterrupted calm of tranquillity, and an unclouded sunshine of prosperity, we are soon waked from the pleasing dream of fancy by experience; and as our present state is a state of trial, we are forewarned to prepare for difficulties, sorrows, and conflicts. The precept of our great Teacher is always seasonable: "In your patience possess ye your souls," Luke xxi. 19. So necessary is self-possession, that a man without it resembles a ship without a rudder, left to the mercy of the winds, over which the pilot has no command. Yet we cannot possess or govern our own minds in times of trouble, except we possess patience. Now, wherever the truth, as it is in Jesus, is cordially received and mixed with faith, it will not fail to produce a full dependence on the Divine promises, and an unreserved submission to the Divine will. Hence, patience is mentioned as the fruit of the Spirit.

I. Let me attempt to show you what Christian patience is.

That patience which is the fruit of the Spirit stands opposed to irritability of temper, undue eagerness of expectation, fretfulness under sufferings, and weariness in well-doing.

Patience is opposed to irritability of temper. A temper that is soured by every drop of acid, or inflamed by every spark of anger which falls upon it, will effectually banish peace from the breast where it dwells. A thousand little crossing accidents daily arise, which are too light and trivial to be called afflictions. Yet these petty and passing disagreeables excite in some minds such resentments, as keep whole families in a continual ferment. In a Christian

possessed of patience, there will be a disposition to put the most favourable interpretation on a hasty word, or a doubtful action; to forgive what cannot be excused, and to forget what repeated would aggravate rather than remedy. When the mind is suitably engaged with great things, trifles will have little power to agitate and ruffle it.

Patience is opposed to undue eagerness of expectation. Man naturally pants for something unpossessed. Now, imagination gives so vivid and sparkling a lustre to the good we desire, that it often seems much nearer than it is: and every obstacle appears a mountain, every hour of delay an age, that keeps us from the possession of it. There is a striking contrast between the eagerness of expectation and the patience of hope. Eager hope starts forward with hurrying steps, and, fainting, breathless, falls short of the mark; patient hope presses on with sober and steady pace, till the prize is won. Eager hope weakens and confounds the mind; patient hope collects and braces all its powers. Eagerness chides the lingering, slow-paced moments, and often cries, "O Lord! how long, how long?" patience sedately watches the wheels of Providence, and says, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come," Job xiv. 14. The Christian has set before him bright views of his heavenly inheritance; and he is commanded to be patient till the coming of the Lord, James v. 7, 8. The ancient Jews, in their allegorical style, called patience a herb of matchless virtues. The botanist may search through all the fields of nature, but he will never find a plant able to remove that vexation of spirit, which arises from the vanity of the creature. Patience being derived from a heavenly stock engrafted by the Spirit, has the wondrous property of abating those fevers of the soul that are produced by the tumult of sanguine and disappointed passions.

Patience is opposed to fretfulness under sufferings. In the dark hours and sharp conflicts of sorrow, nothing is more common than a repining disposition. Hence arise murmurs, complaints, and backslidings. A peevish man struggles in the yoke, and increases the pain which he feels; patience lines the yoke, and makes it easy to be borne. Peevishness drives more deeply, and fixes more firmly, the arrows of calamity; but patience lies still, while the lenient hand of mercy extracts them, and closes up the wounds. The fretful man cries, "I do well to be angry, even unto death," Jonah iv. 9; the patient man says, "It is good for me both to hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God," Lam. iii. 26.

Patience is opposed to being weary in well-doing. All the duties of religion are important and arduous. The Christian has to swim against the stream, to toil

up the steep of difficulty, and to fight his way through hosts of enemies: an indolent mind is apt to draw back from danger, or turn aside for repose; but the Christian is required to run the race set before him, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith, Heb. xii. 1, 2. Clogs and hinderances may trouble, but must not discourage him. A steady persevering progress in religion is called patient continuance in well-doing. Mr. Whitefield preached the day before his death; and, being very weak and faint, said, "Lord, thou knowest, though I am tired in thy work, I am not tired of it"

Christian patience must be distinguished from constitutional fortitude and stoical apathy. Some, as if formed of tougher materials, are much more capable of enduring sufferings than others. But there is nothing to be commended in that sort of hardihood which is the effect of callousness or insensibility: for where there is no feeling, there is no patience. We see some who appear quite unmoved amidst the most violent shocks of calamity: and yet it would be almost as improper to commend them for patience, as to ascribe that virtue to a rock, because it shrinks not from the dashing sea; or to the trunk of an oak, because it complains not of the axe or the saw. Nothing was ever more absurd than the apathy of the ancient stoics. They affected to rise superior to pain, and to meet the greatest disasters with perfect indifference. The spirit they showed bore no resemblance to the resignation of the Christian. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord; nor faint when thou art rebuked of him," Heb. xii. 5. "Affliction," says an old divine, "is God's messenger; and therefore must not be despised. If you send a child only with a message, you are hurt to find it slighted. There are, indeed, two extremes in affliction, against which we are warned at once. We must neither stoically and carelessly make light of it, nor unbelievably sink under it. We may feel, but must not faint; and ought patiently to bear, but not presumptuously brave afflictions." Dr. Barrow ingeniously calls Christianity the special academy of patience; wherein we are informed, are inured, are trained up, and tried to bear all things. In this academy, the Holy Spirit is the great Teacher, by whose gracious influence we become conformed to the will of God. How poor and contemptible were the best lessons of the school of Zeno, compared with those taught in the school of Christ! How empty and vapid were the choicest products of pagan philosophy, contrasted with the rich fruit of the Spirit.[13]

II. Let me now point out the happy effects of patience.

A celebrated modern writer asserts, that "philosophy overcomes past and

future ills; but present ills easily overcome philosophy." If it be so, philosophy itself is not worth pursuing. Who would seek such a miserable comforter? It is when the wound smart, that we need the healing balm; when the fainting fit comes on, that we want the reviving cordial. Religion does not merely follow our path, or come forth to meet us; but goes with us to lighten our burdens, to relieve our wants, and redress our griefs. Patience is profitable to ourselves and to others, and gives glory to God.

1. Patience in affliction is profitable to ourselves. We are naturally impetuous and self-willed. We wish to wear the crown without bearing the cross; and to find some shorter and smoother road to the heavenly kingdom, than that which leads us through the perilous and tedious wilderness. It is not without repeated trials, sanctified by Divine grace, that we are brought to a more submissive spirit. There are lessons to be learned, and duties to be performed, for which patience is an indispensable preparation. David could say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes," Psal. cxix. 71. James intimates, that this estimable grace is requisite to give a finish to all the other excellences of the Christian character: "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing," Jam. i. 4.

Do you complain that your affliction is tedious? remember that the long frosty winter is as necessary to mellow the soil and make it productive, as the showers and sunshine of spring. Do you exclaim, "My cross is so heavy, and presses me on a part so tender, that I cannot bear it! if it had been any other trial, I could have endured it with cheerfulness?" But stop, and let not vain words go out of your mouth. It is the wounded member, in danger of mortifying, and not the sound part of the body, that must be probed and burned with caustics. Perhaps you reply, "But I have gained no good from my losses and afflictions, as others do? It might be more correct to say, you do not see any good. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby," Heb. xii. 11. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy; but they do not sow and reap the same day. We must wait for the precious fruits of affliction. Jacob was never more mistaken than when he passionately cried out, "All these things are against me!" Gen. xlii. 36. The benefit of sanctified affliction is not a dubious point, but a certain fact. "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope," Rom. v. 3, 4. The Father of our spirits chastises us not for his own pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness, Heb. xii. 10.

2. Patience in affliction is advantageous to others; it excites mutual sympathy, and imparts much encouragement. We are commanded to weep with them that weep, as well as rejoice with them that do rejoice. Nothing can so well qualify us to enter with a lively interest into the difficulties, wants, and feelings of the afflicted, as experience. "Blessed be God who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God," 2 Cor. i. 4. And the very sight of a saint enduring trials with uncomplaining patience, is calculated, in no small degree to embolden the timid, to strengthen the weak, and confirm the wavering. "Many of the brethren," said Paul, "waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear," Phil. i. 14. And as patience in sufferings excites brotherly sympathy among Christians, so it sometimes silences the clamour and softens the prejudice of those who are enemies to religion. Can there be exhibited to us a more interesting object, than a Christian taking joyfully the spoiling of his goods for the sake of Christ; or bearing the most painful dispensations of Providence with a dignified fortitude, equally remote from presumption and despondency? Men talk of heroism; but where is it so conspicuously seen, or its effects so happily felt, as in the sufferings of the righteous? In the first ages, Christianity gained more by persecution than it lost. Violent and successful strokes made the little leaven more rapidly spread. The same storm, which swept away a few withered and worthless leaves, and unsound branches, only rooted and strengthened the trees of righteousness, of the Lord's planting. The followers of Jesus bore the bitterest reproaches and the most agonizing tortures with such patience and resolution, as often astonished and confounded their enemies. While the cruel edicts of Nero and Trajan were executing, thousands were stripped of their property, driven into banishment, chained in dungeons, or thrown among hungry wild beasts, for no other crime than that of worshipping the true God in opposition to idols. But they endured all these things with an invincible patience, that led many to think there must be some peculiar excellency in the religion for which they suffered, or some special assistance derived from the God whom they served. Nor were they mistaken. The death of the martyrs made more converts to Christianity, than the ablest arguments and apologies.

3. Patience in suffering gives honour to God.

Whatever defeats the designs, or crosses the wishes of an impious man, stirs up his rebellious passions. His foolishness perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord. But the Christian, in the darkest times and the deepest

sorrows, unceasingly gives glory to God. Patience acquiesces in his will, bows to his sovereignty, acknowledges his justice, confesses his faithfulness, admires his wisdom, and adores his love.

Patience acquiesces in the will of God. Its language is, Lord, I desire to be entirely resigned to thee, and passive in thy hand. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done," Matt. xxvi. 39. Should even a wish enter my heart, which opposes thy will, it is an intruder that I dare not entertain, an enemy with which I must hold no parley, but instantly repel. Thy good pleasure, Lord, is the centre that shall attract and fix all my thoughts, desires and purposes.

Patience bows to the sovereignty of God. Sitting on his glorious throne, and ruling the hosts of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth, all creatures before him are but as the drop of a bucket, or the small dust of the balance. The patient saint, with deep submission, exclaims, "O God, thou canst do what thou wilt with thine own; for who shall stay thine hand, or say unto thee, What doest thou. And shall I indulge hard thoughts of thee, or utter hard speeches against thee? No; thou hast made me what I am; thou hast given me what I have: thou hast marked out the duties I must do, and measured out the sufferings I must endure. When I am stripped of the dearest earthly comforts, I will say, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord,'" Job. i. 21.

Patience acknowledges the justice of God. When wicked men are plunged in distress, they complain as though they were by some malignant power, or fatal destiny, involved in miseries which they do not deserve. Such was the spirit of the ancient Israelites, who uttered that foul falsehood, and repeated it till it became a proverb, "The way of the Lord is not equal." How just was the reply, "Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal saith the Lord?" Ezek. xviii. 25. It was the same proud, peevish spirit, that instigated the wicked king of Samaria to vent those presumptuous and blasphemous words, "This evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" 2 Kings vi. 33. In these instances, impatience assumed the boldest tone, and issued forth in the blackest form. But where it does not prevail so far as to hurl open defiance against Heaven, and boil over into torrents of profane and shocking language, it often swells in the heart, and frets and growls out in evil surmisings. But the language of patience is, "Lord, I have sinned, and thou hast exacted of me less than my iniquities deserve. Thou art a God of truth, and all thy ways are judgment. When

I consider my ingratitude and disobedience, my vain thoughts, my wandering affections, and all my evil ways, I have great reason to adore thy long-suffering and forbearance. Had I been cast into an ocean of trouble, there would not have been a drop of injustice. What are these losses, these pains, these small waves and billows of grief, compared with the irretrievable loss of the soul, eternal banishment from thy presence, and the floods of that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone? 'Why should a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his sins?' I will therefore quietly bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him."

Patience confesses the faithfulness of God. We have no warrant to indulge a hope of being exempt from afflictions. God has declared, that if even his own people break his statutes, and keep not his commandments, he will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes, Psalm lxxxix. 31, 32. "Hath he said it, and shall he not do it?" Numb. xxiii. 19. The believer finds the same Divine faithfulness in the appointment of his crosses, and the supply of his comforts. The promises are illustrated in the course of our experience. David said, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me," Psal. cxix. 75.

Patience admires the wisdom of God. After all that we have learned, or can learn of the purposes, counsels, operations, and appointments of Jehovah, it is but very little that we know. How presumptuously then do they act, who charge that God foolishly who is infinite in wisdom! Patience leads the saint both to admire and magnify his wonderful and mysterious ways. With an eye of hope fixed on heaven, with a hand of faith placed on the promises, and with a heart full of devout resignation, he cries, "Lord, thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory," Psal. lxxiii. 24. I know not what a day may bring forth; but my times are in thy hand. Here changes and sorrows attend me; but they do not rise out of the ground, or come on the fluttering wings of chance. All my troubles in their nature, their number, their duration, and their use, are settled by thy unerring wisdom. And shall I complain because I cannot fathom all thy purposes, and trace all thy designs to their first spring, or last end? Shall I censure those passages in the book of providence which I am unable to comprehend? God forbid! Let me rather wait till the wonders which now surpass my knowledge shall be unfolded in the full light of eternity; and then shall my lips exclaim, "Thou hast done all things well!" Matt. vii. 37.

Patience adores the love and mercy of God. Mercy is the fairest letter in

Jehovah's name, Exod. xxxiv. 6. Love is the noblest attribute of his nature. Take away mercy, and his name would more effectually stun us than harsh-sounding thunder: remove love, and his nature would fill us with dismay and horror. Our dispositions may change, but the Divine perfections are unchangeable. "God is love," 1 John iv. 16. This brief and beautiful aphorism contains the essence of our holy religion. But the sublime sentiment wrapt up in this simple language, is more expanded in the following passage. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. But at first sight, it seems contrary to this love that we should be called to sustain various calamities and encounter violent temptations. When, however, patience is exercised, it gives glory to God: it hears him say, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten," Rev. iii. 19, and replies, "Yes, Lord! thou hast shown me thy loving-kindness in a thousand ways. In all thy dispensations it is made manifest. The love of creatures is fickle and transitory; thine is fixed and unchangeable. Thou dost not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. In the darkest clouds, the thickest dangers, and the keenest pains, thou art still nigh unto them that fear thee, and hope in thy mercy."

III. I shall endeavour to show how the grace of patience may be cultivated.

1. Let us seek a larger measure of the Holy Spirit, and take heed that we do not provoke him to withdraw his influences from us.

It is of importance that we should daily feel our absolute dependence. We can neither act consistently, nor suffer calmly without Divine assistance. Patience is the fruit of the Spirit. When troubles come upon us from many quarters at once; when we are pressed out of measure, above strength, so as to despair even of life, we are thus taught our own insufficiency, that we may put our trust in God. Faith assists patience; as the blood, which is a natural balsam, flows to the wounded part to heal and consolidate it. We cannot endure manifold tribulations without seeing Him who is invisible; we cannot see him without faith, nor have any true faith without the Holy Spirit. The apostle speaks of being "strengthened with all might, according to God's glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness," Col. i. 11. And how are we thus strengthened in the inward man, but by the Spirit? Eph. iii. 16. The grace of patience, like every other grace, must be maintained by the same influence which first produced it. Our sorrows come from the flesh, our succours from the Spirit. If our sufferings abound for Christ, let us pray that our consolations may abound by Christ.

And that we may have patience in affliction, let us take heed that we do not provoke the Holy Spirit to withdraw his influences. The ancient Israelites vexed the Holy Spirit, so that he was turned to be their enemy. Surely we ought to take warning from them! By looking to the creatures, or by leaning upon an arm of flesh, we cause the Comforter to depart from us. And what then can sustain us, or soothe our minds amidst the vexations of an evil world? When once the Divine Spirit is gone, legions of infernal spirits will rush around us, to pour in fiery darts, and excite discontent and impatience. All within is then distraction and confusion. How wretched is the state of one thus left to be the sport of every gust of passion, or the prey of every watchful foe. Saul said, "I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me," 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. Unhappy state! when trouble comes, and God departs. We have hosts of Philistines within, which soon overcome us, if the Divine Spirit be withdrawn. Let us then daily pray for an abundant measure of his gracious influence. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," Isa. xl. 31. But we must, as one says, distinguish between waiting and loitering. Let us hasten to the mercy-seat of our faithful covenant-keeping God, and without ceasing urge our request for a large supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. With his fresh communications flowing down in answer to prayer, we cannot finally fail, or be vanquished. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him," Isa. lix. 19. I have read of some heathens who sustained great losses, and preserved their firmness and composure. And shall their twilight excel our noon-day brightness? If common cordials raised such courage in them, shall not the waters of life, the strong consolations of the gospel, fortify us to bear all trials with calm resignation! If the spirit of a man, by natural principles, can sustain his infirmities, cannot the Spirit of God, the great Comforter, support us under all our troubles.

2. To cultivate the grace of patience, let us seriously consider our afflictions, in their short continuance and glorious issue.

Our afflictions are short in their continuance. When a man ardently longs for some promised good, or groans under some pressing evil, time seems to drag on very heavily. As he tosses on his bed in the midnight hours, he exclaims, "Would God it were morning!" Again, wearied with the anguish of the day, he cries out, "Would God it were evening!" Now, as hope deferred maketh the heart sick, and protracted pain is a weariness to the flesh, an assurance that the end of our trials is at hand, is well calculated to revive our hope, and nourish our patience! Were we doomed for thousands, or even hundreds of years, to dwell in

a body of death, and a world of danger, the melancholy prospect would sink us into despondency. But, blessed be God! it is otherwise determined. If need be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations, for a season, and the season is but a short one. The language of the Scriptures on this subject is remarkable, and adapted to encourage us. They do not speak of the saint's sufferings by using the words ages, years, or even months, lest such terms should cast a damp upon our spirits. You read of a day of adversity, a night of affliction, an hour of temptation, a moment, a small moment of desertion, Isa. liv. 7. "Be patient, brethren; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh," Jam. v. 8. The wished for hour of release from bondage, and dismissal from toil and care will soon arrive.

Would it not be strange for a peasant to murmur at the inconveniences of a poor and ill built cottage, if he were about to quit it for a mansion? "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened;" but we must shortly put it off, and enter "a house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. v. 1,4. We are travelling through the wilderness, and our souls are often discouraged because of the way: but a few more stages and the journey ends. Every step we take diminishes the distance between us and the heavenly land. We are placed on our watch tower, to look for the Lord's return. "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed," Rom. xiii. 11, 12. And shall we sit down in negligence, or yield to timidity and solicitude? No: let us "gird up the loins of our mind, be sober, and hope to the end." Let us be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," 1 Pet. i. 13. Heb. vi. 12.

Our present afflictions will be glorious in their issue. Those who are beforehand assured of the victory, more cheerfully undergo the hardships of the conflict. It is said, " We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God," Acts xiv. 22. Well, if we do at last enter into that kingdom, its blessedness will banish the remembrance of all the difficulties and troubles we met in the way towards it. The very prospect of heaven, though it be through clouds that hide more than half its splendour, has a happy tendency to compose the mind and fortify the heart. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for. But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it," Rom. viii. 24, 25. Are you then troubled on every side? Is your spirit ready to be overwhelmed; and is your patience nearly exhausted? Perhaps it is possible to furnish you with an admirable rule, and a wonderful balance, by the use of which you may be

assisted to recover your confidence and peace, and turn your complaint to praise. The disease that is painful may not be incurable; nor the danger that is near, inevitable. David was envious at the foolish, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. His discontent began to break out into murmurs; but when he went into the sanctuary and saw their end, he no longer envied their way. Do you anxiously ask, Where is that admirable rule by which I may settle my troubled thoughts, and raise my drooping spirits. The rule of calculation I would recommend is not to be found in any table of numbers, or book of science taught in the schools. Look for it in Rom. viii. 18. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." No skill in arithmetic, no attainments in mathematics, can qualify you to cast up this spiritual account. If you reckon wrong, there will be an error in the conclusion. To perform this operation aright, and work this problem well, you need the teaching of that wisdom which cometh from above. Do you now want that wonderful balance which I mentioned? It is not to be purchased in the tradesman's shop, nor found among the curious stores of the foreign merchant. It cannot be made by the hands of the cunning workman; nor could human genius or art have drawn a model of it. Search, and you will find it prepared for your use, in 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Take heed that the scales are not, through mismanagement, inverted. Let faith hold this balance of the sanctuary with a steady hand, and look to the result with a steady eye, while you weigh your loss against your gain, your sorrow against your expected joy. Oh what a vast disparity! "Your affliction is as a feather against lead, a grain of sand against the universe, a moment against eternity!"

3. To cultivate the grace of patience, it will be useful to have a special regard to the promises which belong to a state of trial.

That God with whom we have to do, knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. Lest we should be overwhelmed with sorrow, he has given unto us exceeding great and precious promises. By these promises he has engaged, in all our sufferings and dangers, to be with us, to grant us sufficient support and seasonable deliverance; and could you wish for more?

What though your way may be rough and thorny; though your passage

over the sea of life be dark and stormy: though your foes be many, and your fears still more—hear, O trembling saints, the voice of Jehovah: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.—Fear not, worm Jacob; I will help thee," Isa. xliii. 2; xli. 14. The laws of nature and the passions of men, the instinct of beasts, and the counsels of devils, are all subject to his control. Waters cannot drown, nor fires burn, nor lions devour, nor tyrants and fiends destroy, without his permission. No wonder that Moses could say, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence," Exod. xxxiii. 15. Your friends may prove treacherous and desert you; but God hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. And do you not believe the promise? Though you are put in the furnace, he sits by as a refiner. It is the property of all metals to melt, but of gold only to lose nothing of its worth.

God has nowhere promised us a freedom from trouble in this life; but he has engaged to grant us sufficient support. Daily experience proves, that we have no inherent strength to bear even the common burden of frailties and griefs which belong to our present state; much less to withstand the sudden shocks, the extraordinary calamities, or confederate foes we have to meet. Under a consciousness of such weakness, how suitable and animating are the Divine promises! "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," Deut. xxxiii. 25. Here patience has a pillow on which to rest; here, faith has a stay, on which she may lay hold and remain unmoved. In exact proportion to the measure of our services and sufferings, will be the measure of our strength. Paul encouraging the Corinthians, thus addresses them: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13.

And if God has promised us support in affliction, he has also engaged, in due season, to grant us deliverance from it. When a bad man is brought into embarrassment and distress, he struggles like a wild bull in a net: he is eager to free himself from trouble by any means. A Christian, indeed, must look for no methods of deliverance that are inconsistent with a good conscience. "Patience," says bishop Hopkins, "will not suffer a man to break through an entangling providence, by breaking one of God's commands." This patience made the holy martyrs, spoken of in Heb. xi., generously scorn deliverance, when it was tendered to them upon unworthy and unwarrantable terms. Some of the first

Christians might have burned but a few grains of incense to the false gods, which they resolutely refused to do. Marcus Arethusus, an heroic servant of Jesus, in the days of the emperor Julian, endured the severest anguish for refusing to assist in building a temple for idols. They pierced his naked body with lancets and knives: and then anointed it with honey, that it might become a prey to wasps and flies. They at last offered him his life, if he would give a single half penny towards the expense of the idol temple: but he would not consent. We ought to choose the greatest suffering before the least sin. Here, then, is the province of patience: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," Rom. viii. 28. It is difficult heartily to believe this. We see but few things at a time. Some things are working secretly, because their movements are too subtle to be perceived; some are working painfully, because they grate and irritate our flesh; and all appear to be working confusedly, because we do not understand their wonderful order and connexion. God says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," Psal. 1. 15. Do you reply, "I have often prayed, and received no answer." Be it so; you must not turn away discontented and discouraged. His ear is not heavy, nor his hand shortened. He is not slack concerning his promise, nor hath he forgotten to be gracious; but you must watch and wait, as well as pray. Do you cry, "Lord bring my soul out of prison?" He has the key, and can as easily liberate you as he did Peter. Do you exclaim, "Heal me, O Lord; for my bones are vexed!" Psal. vi. 2. He has a remedy which can effectually cure. And remember, deliverance is always too soon, when gained by unlawful means; and never too late, when it comes in God's own way and time. A good man put this among his daily prayers: "Lord, teach me the art of patience while I am well, and the use of it when I am sick. In that day either lighten my burden, or give me strength to bear it."

4. To cultivate patience, set before you the brightest examples of his grace.

When you are exhorted to commit yourselves into the hands of God, as to a faithful Creator; to infuse patience into the bitter cup, and then drink it; to lie still under smarting strokes of the correcting rod; do not reply, "These are hard precepts, impracticable requirements!" [14] You might as well command men to change their nature, and become angels." Read the pages of history, and you will have cause to cry, "Here is the patience of the saints?" Rev. xiii. 10. Could you enter within the vail, and see the multitude clothed in white, who stand before the throne, and ask, "Who are these? and whence came they?" the answer would be, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their

robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," Rev. vii. 13, 14. "Take, then, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience," James v. 10. Abraham travelled three days to Mount Moriah, that he might offer his beloved son Isaac. All the feelings of nature had they been indulged, would have murmured and mutinied against the Divine command; but, though the journey was long and the duty difficult, he neither staggered through unbelief, started aside with timidity, nor recoiled with impatience. Eli, the priest, received a message from God, threatening to overturn his whole household and leave him neither root nor branch—a message that made every ear that heard it to tingle, and pierced the good old man to the heart; yet he meekly replied, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good," 1 Sam. iii. 18. When David was driven from his throne by the unnatural rebellion of Absalom, and the people wept around him as he went up Mount Olivet, how amiable was the resignation he displayed! "And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it, and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him," 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. You have heard of the patience of Job, and of its happy issue. His property was seized by robbers, or blasted by the fire of heaven; his children, that bloomed around him in the day of prosperity, were all cut off with a stroke; his body was filled with loathsome disease, and his soul with the arrows of the Almighty: yet "in all this, he sinned not, nor charged God foolishly," Job. i. His language was "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold," Job. xxiii. 10. But no example of patience can be found equal to that of Jesus, our adorable Saviour. Job, though remarkable for his long suffering, was sometimes so overpowered as to utter hasty expressions; but Jesus was at all times possessed of full command over his own spirit. No murmur dropped from his lips; no sign of impatience appeared in his conduct. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously," 1 Pet. ii. 23.

Such examples may aid you in cultivating the grace of patience: but think not they are rather to be admired than imitated. The Holy Spirit has produced illustrious instances of patience since the days of the prophets and the apostles. It would be easy to mention many. Luther has justly remarked, that "the Christian life consists of three parts; faith, love, and the cross." These will be always necessary while the world stands, and they must go together. Faith takes up the cross, love binds it to the soul, and patience bears it to the end. Be ye, then,

followers of Jesus; and be patient till he come to receive you to his kingdom.

CHAPTER VI.

ON GENTLENESS.

"THERE are too many," observes a good writer, "whose religion has very little to do with their dispositions. They think it necessary for the judgment to be informed, and the practice to be moral; but from one of these to the other, religion is to pass, without touching the temper which lies between. If they are converted, it seems to be from that which is human to that which is diabolical: they are accusers of the brethren, proud, self-willed, fierce, revengeful. Saints in the house of God, they are demons at home. How the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus can live with them, it is impossible to determine; for nothing else can." That sweet and amiable temper which the Redeemer discovered while he sojourned on earth, ought invariably to distinguish all his genuine followers. It is the very essence of personal piety. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 9. Rare gifts, and splendid abilities, which attract the eyes of curious admirers; vast and varied attainments, with unabating exertions, which astonish the multitude, are all vain, where this essential requisite is wanting. Many things at once dazzle and deceive; but the graces of pure religion will bear the strictest scrutiny, and are valued in proportion as they are known. Christian gentleness sheds a sacred lustre over the whole character. Natural sensibility, accompanied with refined manners, may assume the same appearance; but, being devoid of religious principle, is necessarily destitute of the same pleasing charm. True gentleness is the effect of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying influence on the heart. Every good gift, and every Divine grace, cometh from above. By human art and labour, the pool and the parched ground may be turned into fruitful fields, and the howling desert into an image of paradise; but there is a species of moral culture which requires the operations of a far higher agent. Under the dispensation of the gospel and the grace of the Divine Spirit, the language of prophecy is fulfilled: "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it

shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off," Isa. lv. 13.

I. Let me describe the nature of that gentleness which is the fruit of the Spirit.

It has its seat in the heart, and pervades all the faculties and powers of the man. It consists in humility, candour, sweetness of temper, and tenderness of feeling.

Humility is an essential part of Christian gentleness. Pride raises more gay illusions than the enchanter's wand ever raised. It makes a man think he is the centre of attraction, drawing every eye, and moving every tongue, even when nobody has leisure to observe, or inclination to applaud him. Pride was the first sin that entered the heart of man, and it is the last that is driven out. Pride is the parent of envy, jealousy, ill-humour, disdain, and insolence. Where this family, with all their malignant kindred dwell, it is in vain to expect either gentleness or peace. He who is swelled with conceit, and wrapt up in self-importance, demanding the full payment of obsequious and universal homage, will certainly meet keen disappointments. Every one will not range in the circle of his fond admirers and mean flatterers. Fired with indignation at the appearance of neglect, and cut through the heart by the edge of his own resentment, he mutters sullen complaints, and meditates deep revenge. The justice of this representation is strikingly evinced in the case of Haman. He was chief favourite of the greatest monarch in the world; yet because Mordecai would not bend the knee to him, Haman was completely miserable. He could neither find pleasure in the banquet at court, nor repose on his bed at home. When once malignant passions are let loose to prey on the mind, wealth and luxury, power and splendour can impart no satisfaction.

There is a kind of knowledge which puffeth up, and clothes its possessor with arrogance. "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace," James iii. 15–18. Humility forms the very basis of gentleness. Pride perverts the understanding and inflames the heart: humility seeks truth, and feels the soothing satisfaction it imparts. "Learn of me," said Jesus; "for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls," Matt. xi. 29.

"There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up!" Prov. xxx. 13. And is gentleness found in any of this race? We might as reasonably expect it in Lucifer. But surely we may hope to find this grace in those who have received the doctrine, and imbibed the Spirit of Christ. Can they study under such a master, copy such a pattern, without gaining some advantage? "Be ye clothed with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5. How suitable, how lovely, how necessary is this garment! A conviction of his own insufficiency and unworthiness, ought to make every Christian kind and condescending to others.

Candour is an essential part of Christian gentleness. A man of liberal spirit will examine every thing fully, and report every thing fairly. Some pride themselves on their candour, because they profess to think well of all religious opinions, and almost all characters. Such persons have lost the true names of things: what they call candour is an indifference to religion. But a Christian may be sincerely and strongly attached to the truth, and yet be free from that censoriousness which is always on the watch for something to condemn. Who can describe in adequate language, the mischief done by a narrow spirit of bigotry? From this source have risen some of the most bloody persecutions and horrid massacres that disgrace the records of history. How many absurd attempts have been made to bring whole nations to an uniformity of opinion by force! It is not surprising that Charles V., emperor of Germany, should feel considerable regret at the violent measures he had used to make above twenty millions of people agree in their religious sentiments, when he found, after repeated trials, that he could never make two watches go exactly alike. A candid Christian does not believe all he hears, or form his judgment, either of parties or of principles, from popular clamours and stale second-hand rumours. He knows that all errors are not equally dangerous, and is ready to admit every plea that can fairly be brought forward to palliate what is wrong. He does not colour every object with black, and render every picture he draws a caricature, rather than a just and fair portrait. Candour is that part of charity which thinketh no evil.

Sweetness of temper is an essential part of Christian gentleness. Let it not be thought we are now blending things which ought to be kept distinct from each other. That an equable course of life is owing in no small degree to a mild and sedate temper, is too evident to require proof: and that the temper is favourably affected by the word and the Spirit of God is not less evident, both from observation and experience. Every one who is renewed in heart, has a portion of that sacred and heavenly influence, which acts as a corrective of a bad temper, and gives additional sweetness to a good one. I grant we find in some sincere

believers too much acrimony; but what then might have been expected, had they remained in a state of nature, without the sanctifying power of higher principles? Some bodily constitutions have such a tendency to overflowings of the bile, that symptoms of the disorder may be discovered, whatever precautions and means are used; yet, who will deny the benefit of preventives and remedies? Grace always operates according to its own nature, as far as it operates at all. He whose temper is improved, and daily improving, under the special influence of God's Spirit, can meet and bear, with composure, what throws the waspish man into the wildest distraction. As candour thinketh no evil, so an amiable temper is not easily provoked.

To constitute Christian gentleness, there must be tenderness of feeling. As an amiable temper will render us slow in taking offence, tenderness will render us cautious of giving offence. They are both united in gentleness. It is not easily provoked, nor doth it behave itself unseemly to provoke. It shrinks from the appearance of any thing that looks like busy interference with other men's matters. It avoids giving pain, except when the hope of usefulness prompts, or duty imperiously calls. The high winds of passion inflame the carnal mind, but quench the Spirit; urge on the man of the world, but hinder the advance of the Christian. On the contrary, gentleness, which makes us pause before an important step is taken, while it seems to delay, in reality quickens our progress and ensures our success. How admirably was this spirit displayed by David, on a most trying and memorable occasion! When Saul, unarmed and unprotected, entered the same cave, an opportunity was presented of instantly cutting off his cruel and implacable enemy. His companions, less conscientiously tender, advised him to kill Saul; but he refused to put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, 1 Sam. xxiv. Yet it was by such noble exercises of gentle forbearance, combined with undaunted courage and heroic magnanimity, that he won the hearts of Israel, and paved the way for his advancement to the throne.

The gentleness above described, is a very different thing from that natural softness or pliancy of disposition, which assents to received opinions, whether true or false, and adopts customs generally prevalent, whether right or wrong. There are too many who always smoothly glide with the current, and never attempt to oppose it. Whatever books they read, whatever company they keep, have an absolute control over them. Like the chameleon they change colour with every change of situation and position. They are the mere creatures of circumstances. They resemble wax that receives every impression, or willows that bend before every wind that blows. Men of this cast often receive a sort of

faint and formal commendation, on account of what is called good nature, because they are a kind of passive and manageable material, which every one knows how to turn and fashion for answering his own purpose; but such a disposition is too near akin to childish weakness, to command respect or esteem. We seek in vain for any basis of confidence, where there is no manly firmness, no strength of resolution, no decision of character, no steady uniformity of conduct. A quaint but ingenious author compares such men to osiers, which are unfit to become either pillars in the state, or pillars in the church. True gentleness is founded on solid principle. It does not resemble ivy, creeping round a rotten trunk, or a heap of mouldering ruins, but the vine, spreading its beautiful tendrils and ripening clusters along the wall of a stately and substantial mansion. So far is the candid and decided Christian from confounding truth and error, that he carefully sifts and separates them; and after receiving cordially the grand doctrines of the gospel, he maintains them to the last, whatever abuse and persecution he may incur. This steadfastness, joined with a mild and pleasing condescension, constitutes the strength and beauty of the believer's character. The Christian has a great Master in heaven to serve, and he dares not offend him by truckling to the wayward humours and low passions of men. When this Master calls him to arise and run the race set before him, or to put on his proof-armor and fight the good fight, he does not softly repose on the lap of sensual indulgence. While he is commanded incessantly to watch and pray, he does not give himself to slumber, and become an easy prey to his foes. He knows how to value the truth as it is in Jesus; and in order to maintain it, is willing to resist every enemy, steadfast in the faith.

True gentleness is a very different thing from that outward varnish, that studied smoothness of behaviour, which passes under the general name of politeness. Should a man of honest heart, and plain unaffected manners, be suddenly transported from his obscure abode into certain gay circles, he might, at first sight, think himself placed in a happy region, where there was nothing but generous friendship, melting sympathy, unbounded kindness, and uninterrupted harmony. But, on closer inspection, he would perceive, that vanity, rivalry, jealousy, craft, sordid interest, and insatiable ambition, were the secret springs continually at work to produce all these fair appearances. He would be shocked to learn that the exchange of bows and smiles, high-wrought compliments, and often-repeated expressions of strong regard, are little more than the stated, unmeaning forms of artificial complaisance. He would be disgusted beyond measure, to find that those whose tongues are smoother than butter, whose words are sweeter than honey, can cherish envy and malice in their hearts, and

circulate, through a thousand secret channels, the vilest calumnies and slanders. Many a courtly gentleman, of fascinating manners, if drawn in a faithful picture, according to his real character, would appear a human savage, who ought to be most cautiously shunned. The tiger has a smooth, glossy, and beautiful skin; but woe to those hapless victims that come within the reach of his fatal spring; for whatever he touches he tears to pieces with a yell of horrid pleasure. Such are all those unfeeling oppressors and intriguing deceivers, who, with various artifices, rob the helpless of their rights, and with flattering wiles deprive the innocent of their peace.

True gentleness goes hand in hand with sincerity. It will induce us to be kind and courteous in our manners towards all, as far as it is proper to hold intercourse with them. But it will not suffer us to confound the nature of things, to call black white, to gild base metal and pass it for gold, to feed vain men with flattery, or give vicious men encouragement by any thing which looks like our approbation.

II. Let us specify some cases in which gentleness appears to be particularly necessary.

1. Gentleness is required in the exercise of authority. Power, in the hands of man, too often excites pride; and pride breaks out into a thousand offensive and odious cruelties. Some who, in humble stations appear mild, affable, and unassuming, have no sooner risen to places of dignity and influence, than their dispositions have seemed to undergo a great and unhappy change. The lamb has been turned into a lion, and the gentle stream swelled into an impetuous, pernicious torrent. While Nero remained a subject, he was noted for condescending manners; but after he was made emperor of Rome, he became a monster of cruelty. Now, as there can be nothing more odious and injurious, than authority exerted with fierce unrelenting severity, so there can be nothing more amiable and beneficial, than authority exercised with firmness and lenity. When true religion sways the heart, it teaches kings to sway the sceptre, and rulers to use their power with moderation and justice. This disposition was finely exemplified in Nehemiah. The former governors of Jerusalem had oppressed the people with many heavy extortions; but he, after describing their lawless deeds, adds, "So did not I, because of the fear of God," Neh. v. 15.

Nor is it less necessary, that authority should be exercised with gentleness by the head of a single family, than by the chief of a province or the head of a

nation. Parents and masters have a charge that requires the utmost watchfulness and diligence. They ought, indeed, to keep their children and servants in due subjection. A boundless indulgence or careless laxity, is an inlet to disorder, and an encouragement to vice. The misery brought upon good old Eli, by the unrestrained liberty he gave to his sons, should be a salutary warning to parents. But the opposite extreme, of rugged and irritating severity, if not quite so common, is not less dangerous, and is much more blameable. It produces endless suspicions, whisperings, evasions, and contentions. It drives the timid to have recourse to low cunning, and the bold to violence and desperation. Let those who have any command over others, temper their authority with gentleness, and aim to be loved rather than feared. The very manner in which some people habitually address their inferiors, with a sharp, haughty tone, and a stern, indignant look, proves them to be a kind of petty tyrants. Let masters remember, that they have a Master in heaven, who will make a difference between those who have properly used, and those who have shamefully abused the talents committed to their trust. Let them, in managing the concerns of business, and superintending the conduct of their domestics, make every reasonable allowance for slight deviations, for accidental omissions and mistakes, and study to render the yoke of servitude as easy, and the circumstances of dependents as comfortable as possible.

2. Gentleness is required, in a suitable manner, to give warnings and administer reproofs.

It is the indispensable duty of a Christian to point out what is amiss, that it may be amended; what is wrong, that it may be rectified; and what is criminal, that it may be confessed and forsaken. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him," Lev. xix. 17. Most persons dislike those who tell them of their faults, though it may be intended for their good.

When reproof is administered in blunt language, and in a harsh manner, it generally fails of producing any desirable effect. A festering wound must be probed and searched with a steady but tender hand. Rashness and violence may irritate and inflame, but cannot heal. However good the motives of a reprover may be, if his reproofs are ill-timed and ill-tempered, it is not likely they should be useful. Never, perhaps, were wisdom, lenity, and faithfulness, more admirably displayed by man, than in the method adopted by Nathan to reclaim the guilty king of Israel. He had to carry to him a most sharp and useful message. He fetched a circuit, and by approaching unobserved, gained his point. Little did

David think, while Nathan was speaking of the rich man and his flocks, the poor man and his ewe lamb, what was the purport of the tale. He unintentionally pronounced his own condemnation. When the way was thus properly prepared, then issued forth from the prophet's lips the pointed and piercing application of the parable, "Thou art the man!" and David was softened into penitence, and recovered from his backsliding, 2 Sam. xii.

3. Gentleness is necessary in attempting to allay animosities. In the present world, it would be equally vain and visionary to look for nothing but calm tranquillity, and perpetual harmony. Amidst so many different opinions, so many interfering claims, so many jarring passions and clashing interests, it is impossible but that offences will come. Not in families only, but also in churches, there will be found misunderstandings and contentions. In such cases, gentleness is essentially necessary, to calm the rising storms, and prevent the evils from spreading. Too many, alas! are eager to call down fire from heaven to destroy; and when this cannot be, they easily obtain a coal from the infernal furnace of the great enemy. Now, it requires both prudence and promptitude to extinguish such flames. A Christian of amicable and conciliating disposition, instead of widening the breach, which a rash or hasty word has made, will rather use every suitable means by which it may be closed. Instead of digging up past evils, and reviving old quarrels, he will labour to bury them deep in the grave of forgetfulness. Instead of whetting the weapons of fierce antagonists, and standing by to see and encourage the contest, he will try to reconcile them and re-establish peace. He will not meet fury with fury, or return railing for railing, but be gentle towards all men. When the apostle was vindicating the doctrine he taught, and giving a most full and interesting account of his conversion, Festus, contrary to all rules of decorum, suddenly interrupted him, crying, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad," Acts xxvi. 24. A governor could thus degrade himself by the use of rude, provoking language, too low for the vulgar and clamorous rabble. Did the apostle retort the insult, or with studied refinement of wit throw out any wounding, sarcastic allusions? No; his reply was worthy the cause in which he had engaged; gentle, yet manly and dignified; full of wisdom and suavity, calculated at once to win attention and work conviction: "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness," verse 25.

4. Gentleness is necessary in the treatment of strangers. Some show much civility towards those who form their own immediate circle, but have none to spare for others. Where they are unknown, they throw off the mask, and treat all

with disgusting haughtiness. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares," Heb. xiii. 2. The latter part of this passage contains, most probably, a reference to the conduct of Abraham, recorded Gen. xviii. 2–5. "And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch you a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said." Here we see the gentleness which is the effect of true religion, exhibited in all its native charms. Compared with this interesting picture of primitive purity, and cordial hospitality, what are those expensive and luxurious entertainments, prepared by the rich in our day, and presented to the eye of the public in the most fulsome descriptions? Disgusting scenes of riot and excess. Abraham was not a sour, unsociable, repulsive being, resembling a wild beast, shut up in his solitary den. He was frank and communicative, as well as faithful and sincere. Behold him rising to meet the approaching strangers! He entertains their company as a favour; and, after giving them a hearty welcome, tries, by every kind attention to render them comfortable. And the same amiable spirit will always give peculiar grace and sweetness to the rights of hospitality.

5. Gentleness is necessary to preserve uninterrupted the endearments of friendship.

A man of a bitter and boisterous spirit may be surrounded with slaves; but he can have no friends, nor does he deserve any. The joys of social and agreeable intercourse are incompatible with violence and turbulence. Can you expect the fragrance of opening flowers amidst the chilling frost of winter, or the singing of birds while the storm rages? The advice of Solomon is well worthy of our attention. "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul," Prov. xxii. 24, 25. Dr. Young ventures

To show us friendship delicate, as dear,

Of tender violations apt to die:

Reserve will wound it, and distrust destroy.

And will this plant, which requires a mild climate and mellow soil, flourish where it is exposed to the strong and sudden gusts of passion? Without genuine tenderness there can be no union of hearts. The sympathies of mutual affection must never cease to flow. A thousand gentle offices of kindness, which language has not words to describe, are requisite to maintain, unimpaired, the endearments of friendship. A man that hath friends must show himself friendly, or he will soon alienate and lose them. We need only to refer to David and Jonathan, as examples to illustrate the subject. In them, all beheld the strictest fidelity, the softest tenderness, and the warmest and strongest attachment. When Saul, through malice, hunted David to destroy him, Jonathan followed him, into the most obscure retreat, to comfort him. When David's cup of calamity was full, this generous friend never refused to share or to sweeten it. When David, from a swelling and desponding heart, uttered that touching cry, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death," Jonathan answered, "Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee," 1 Sam. xx. 3, 4.

III. I shall endeavour to point out some causes which impair Christian gentleness, and recommend the means adapted to promote it.

1. Nothing more directly tends to impair gentleness, than eagerly grasping at the things of the world. Though Christians are in the world, they ought not to be of the world. It is remarked of some insects, that they resemble the colour of the plants on which they live and feed. Those who wholly mind earthly things, are of a low, grovelling spirit. By plunging into the cares of this life, they are continually ruffled and distracted. "They are linked so closely to the world; by so many sides they touch every object and every person around them, that they are perpetually hurt and hurting others. The spirit of true religion removes us to a proper distance from the grating objects of worldly contention." They that will be rich, pierce themselves through with many sorrows, and become so sore and irritable, that every crossing even and pressing difficulty makes them wince and murmur. How often, in the Scriptures, are we warned against a worldly spirit. "The love of money," says Paul, "is the root of all evil," 1 Tim. vi. 10; a root which strikes so deep, and spreads so wide, that it is with the greatest difficulty destroyed; a root, every branch from which is more bitter than wormwood, and

deadly than hemlock. We have a striking display of the sordid meanness and low insolence engendered by the love of the world in Nabal. When David sent ten of his young men, at the time of sheep-shearing, requesting in the most respectful terms to share in his hospitality, he treated them with insult and contempt. "Who is David?" said he, "and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and water, and my flesh which I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?" 1 Sam. xxv. 1–11. That surly, ill-tempered, crossgrained churl, was a trouble to his own house, and probably a terror to the neighbourhood. His own servants declared him to be such a man of Belial, that a man could not speak to him, ver. 17. Abigail was a woman of an excellent spirit; and the prompt discretion and soothing gentleness of her deportment, rendered her a perfect contrast to her husband. He certainly did not deserve such a wife; and we may wonder how such a treasure happened to fall into his hands, which he neither knew how to prize nor to profit by.

2. Taking an eager part in political disputes, tends to impair the gentleness of the Christian.

I do not say that we ought to contract those habits which would render us callous and indifferent to the events that most nearly affect the welfare of mankind. But when Christians, in the middle and lower ranks of society, begin to give up a large portion of their time to politics; to enlist under the banner of a party, which they labour incessantly to support; to set themselves to decide on matters of which, from their very situation, they can have but a scanty knowledge, they evidently turn out of their own path. Many among us have, of late years, been so warmly engaged in the rage of political discussion, that the duties of religion have been half neglected, and thrust into a corner, to make room for the news of the day. "When a man's thoughts and affections are filled with such things as these, the Scriptures become a kind of dead letter, while the speeches and writings of politicians become the lively oracles; spiritual conversation is unheard, or if introduced by others, considered as a flat uninteresting topic; and leisure hours, whether sitting in the house, or walking by the way, instead of being employed in talking and meditating on Divine subjects are engrossed by subjects which do not profit." Is it at all strange, that those who breathe the dusty air of controversy, or plunge into the whirlpool of political contention, should sully the lustre, or diminish the gentleness of the Christian character? Whoever rises to high places, or abuses entrusted power, let nothing tempt us to forsake the place in which we are fixed, or misapply the talents

committed to our charge.

3. An immoderate zeal about ceremonies, and the smaller shades of difference among Christians, has a direct tendency to impair and injure gentleness.

No sooner were churches planted under the first preaching of the gospel, than the most unhappy contests began to arise. The minutest circumstances of difference were made rallying points to the several parties. Some were intent on blending a few Jewish ceremonies with the new dispensation; and others set themselves as resolutely against it. Hence rose violent controversies respecting the continuance of circumcision; the abstaining from certain meats and drinks; and the keeping of holidays. While they were heating their spirits in contention about the appendages and regulations of the outer court, the fire on the altar within the temple was left to languish for want of fresh fuel. While the rival parties were maintaining their several opinions, unwilling to give up an inch of contested ground, they almost lost the spirit of Jesus Christ. Paul, both by his earnest exhortations and example, laboured to promote charity and mutual forbearance. "The kingdom of God," said he, "is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Rom. xiv. 17. Oh how much mischief has been done to the church in every age, by perverse disputes and contentions! One man thinks a written form assists him in devotion; another finds that it encumbers and shackles him: let them both worship God in spirit and truth, according to the dictates of conscience; but why should they feel a cold indifference, or discover a manifest hostility towards each other? One man thinks children have a right to baptism, and that the proper mode of administering it is by sprinkling; another confines the same ordinance to believing adults, and prefers plunging: let them severally adhere to their own sentiments; but why should such a difference set up a bar to communion? Were there more persons of the mild benevolence of Fenelon, the angelic meekness of Archbishop Leighton, and the conciliating gentleness of Dr. Bates, who has not been unaptly likened to the mild and pacific Melancthon, infidels would not have such cause to glory in the divisions and disputes of Christians. "God," said Luther, "dwells not in Babylon, which signifies confusion; but in Salem, which signifies peace." There he has recorded his name; there he has fixed his mercy-seat; there he has commanded prayer and praise to be offered, vows to be paid, peace to be preserved, and unity maintained. And shall we lose sight of the great promises and privileges of the gospel, or neglect its important duties, to pry into obscure subjects, or settle dubious ceremonies? Baxter was so hurt with the

fierce disputes of Christians, on trivial points, that he used to say, "I could as freely die a martyr for love, as for any article of the creed."

I shall now recommend some means adapted to promote gentleness.

1. Retire often into the calm, undisturbed region of solitude. Amidst the varying scenes of the world, you meet a thousand temptations. The ancients called solitude the mansion of virtue. Your safety and peace must be secured by retreat. Such a measure is not cowardice, but caution. Take the counsel of a good adviser: "Cheerfully leave the irreligious to scramble for the prizes, and jostle for the places, which the world temptingly holds out, but which you must not purchase at the world's price." Do you sometimes find your mind unhinged and harassed by the perplexities of business? Are you hurt by the base returns of ingratitude, wounded by the shafts of ridicule, or vexed with the filthy conversation of the world? Do you daily sigh at new discoveries of fraud, falsehood, and dissimulation, so as to be almost tempted to cry out, "All men are liars?" Psalm cxvi. 11. Withdraw, as far as circumstances will allow, from the tumults and distractions of the throng; enter the closet and shut your door, and leave the busy cares of the world behind you: there by conversing with the Father of spirits, you may recover your tranquillity and comfort. The celebrated Boerhaave was very much distinguished by his humility, gentleness and modesty. A friend asked him, how he preserved his temper so calm and equable, amidst the inevitable vexations of life. He replied, that he was naturally very warm and irritable, but had been enabled, by daily meditation and prayer, to subdue the heat of his temper. I believe many examples could be easily adduced to recommend the same efficacious means. Quit then the world's deafening noise and dazzling glare, for the stillness and serenity of retirement, summon your roving thoughts, and employ them on things of infinite importance, settle it in your mind that secret prayer is quite as necessary as public duties. You cannot want subjects for meditation, or matter for prayer and praise. Think frequently, think seriously on the vanity and insufficiency of all earthly things; they will then appear to you in their true colours. You will see those objects which are apt to discompose your spirits to be mere trifles, that scarcely deserve your notice. They may thus be held at a proper distance, and will have less power to agitate or disturb you. Muse on the great concern, the one thing needful, the good part that cannot be taken away. Compared with the salvation of the immortal soul, what are all other objects, pursuits and attainments? Let the work of redemption, in all its wonders, pass daily before your admiring eyes. This, if any thing can do it, will fix your attention, and fire your best affections. Successive trains of holy

meditation on a theme so truly sublime, so deeply interesting, will cause inferior things, in your view, to sink into insignificance and littleness. Think on the glory and bliss of heaven. Here, jarring passions and vexing cares trouble us; but there, serenity and concord dwell. Here we must wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but also with principalities and powers; within the veil there remaineth a rest for the people of God. The full assurance of such an inheritance has a happy tendency to calm the mind, and fortify it against perturbation and dismay. Oh how desirable is such a placid, happy temper! "The gentle mind," says one, "is like a stream, that reflects every object in its just proportion, and its fairest colours. The violent spirit, like troubled waters, renders back the images of things distorted and broken, and communicates to them all that disordered motion which arises from its own agitation."

2. Set constantly before you the perfect example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Scipio declared that he was inflamed with a virtuous and heroic spirit, by viewing the statues of his ancestors. And for what end have we exhibited before us the matchless excellence of Jesus Christ? Is it not that we may imitate it? The fairest characters we can find, have some blots and stains. Here we have a pure unblemished pattern. He was meek and lowly in heart; amiable and unassuming in conduct. How condescendingly did he instruct his disciples! How faithfully, yet gently, did he reprove their faults! They were dull of apprehension, and slow of heart to believe the weighty truths which dropped from his lips; yet he did not dismiss them as unworthy of his care, but continued to impart his knowledge as they were able to bear it. How patiently did he bear the reproaches, insults, and buffetings of his enemies! Though his power could have crushed them in a moment, or his word doomed them to eternal torments, he neither inflicted, nor threatened such punishments, but offered up for them a most compassionate prayer. When Shimei cursed David with a grievous curse, it was an eminent instance of forbearance, that he should forbid his servants to kill him: but in none do we behold such forbearance as in Jesus. All the miracles of his mighty power were less astonishing than his humiliation and gentleness. It has been justly remarked, that the Apostle, entreating the Corinthians to obey his counsels, does not refer to the dignity and authority of his Master, but says, "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 1. And can any argument or motive, prayer or plea, be better suited to affect the heart of a believer? Let the meekness and gentleness of Christ be perpetually before our eyes. He would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax: and shall we not imitate his conduct, and imbibe his spirit? If we bear not his image,

we are not worthy to be called his disciples.

3. Pray for more abundant communications of the Holy Spirit.

Every other means must derive efficacy from the Divine Spirit, or we shall gain no real profit. Reading, prayer, retirement, and reflection are all in vain, unless his gracious influence open the mind, and animate the heart. Ought we not, then, earnestly and constantly to pray for abundant measures of the Holy Spirit? How pleasant is it to learn lessons of wisdom under such a Teacher! How easy to cultivate amiable tempers, with the aid of such a Sanctifier!

"Unspeakably benign and equally salubrious is the agency of the Divine Spirit on our depraved, polluted, and sensual minds! How signal the recovery, and how welcome the change, when that unhappy creature, so wildly agitated by a mischievous demon, was reinstated in the peaceful possession of himself and his faculties! When, instead of unnaturally cutting his own flesh, or committing barbarous outrages on innocent travellers, he sat composed and contented at the feet of Jesus; receiving heavenly instruction from his lips, and learning the meekness of wisdom from his example? So salutary and beneficial is the transforming power of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter; softening the rugged, sweetening the morose, and calming the passionate temper. It is, undoubtedly, the utmost improvement, and the highest happiness of our nature, to have the image of the blessed God re-enchanted upon our hearts. This is an earnest, and an anticipation also, of endless felicity. A bud, that will bloom in heaven, and open into immortal glory; a dawn, that will shine more and more, till the Sun of righteousness arises, and brightens it into eternal day. This bud, the sanctifying Spirit ingrafts; this dawn, the grace of our Lord diffuses in the barren and benighted soul!" [15] Let it not be forgotten that you are commanded to be courteous. This precept cannot be exemplified unless the temper is influenced by that love which the Spirit diffuses in the heart. "The complaisance of the world," said one, "is only a mask, under which is concealed the deformity of vice; the courteousness of the Christian is a mirror in which the graceful charms of piety are seen." Would you maintain the honour of the gospel, and the cause of your great Master in the world? let your zeal be accompanied with gentleness. That such a temper may be cultivated, offer up your earnest prayers daily for the gracious influences of God's Spirit. "O Lord, keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer!" Psalm xix. 13, 14. May I be always kindly affectionate towards my brethren. Teach me to regulate my behaviour towards

thy people, in such a way as shall endear our mutual fellowship. I would not knowingly offend one of those for whom Christ died. If I meet with harsh and ill treatment in the world, let me not be overcome of evil. Suffer not the enemy to get an advantage over me. May I be preserved from haughtiness, insolence, severity, and sullenness. O hide pride from me. Come, thou Spirit of grace, make and keep me humble. Who hath made me to differ? What have I that I have not received? Surely it becomes me to be gentle and unassuming towards all men. O may no trace of disdain ever appear in my countenance; no word of insolence drop from my tongue! Preserve me from severity and moroseness. May I never be eager to cast the first stone, and impatient to censure and condemn my brethren. May no lowering sullenness of deportment cast a gloom over the company with which I associate. Assist me, O God, to walk worthy of my vocation unto all pleasing. May I behave with respect and deference to my superiors, with frankness and affability to my equals, and with condescension and courteousness to my inferiors. In all companies, at all times, may my conversation and conduct be such as shall recommend thy truth and promote thy praise!

CHAPTER VII.

ON BENEVOLENCE.[16]

WE are assured, by an unerring Teacher, that there is none absolutely and essentially good but one; that is, God, Matt. xix. 17. From him, as the fountain of being and of blessedness, are derived all the goodness and felicity found in creatures. Seneca, a pagan philosopher, went so far as to acknowledge, that no man could be virtuous without the assistance of God. Socrates, Plato, Cicero, and others, made use of similar language. But with a few faint acknowledgments of this kind were intermingled expressions full of the most disgusting vanity and self-sufficiency. Some apology, I grant, may be made for men who were covered with that thick vail of ignorance, which for ages was spread over all nations. But can any thing be said in defence of that sort of heathenish Christianity, to which some seem so much attached? How many rake up and turn over a thousand times, the most fabulous and contemptible rubbish of antiquity, as if a secret treasure were yet to be found there, and never once attempt to explore the deep, rich mine of gospel truth. Poets, orators, and historians, are read and relished with intense and rapturous delight; while the Bible is laid aside and neglected. With other subjects they are familiar: with religion they have but a slight acquaintance. When they drop a few words concerning the events of providence, the Author of Christianity, the dictates of conscience, or the doctrine of immortality, they seem as if paying a compliment, which it would not be decent to withhold, rather than offering the homage of the heart. Their expressions are flat, vague, general, and in a manner the most forced and frigid. If they own their dependence on a superior Power, or the need of Divine aid, it is either in so hasty or so reserved a way that they appear as persons treading dangerous ground, or breathing tainted air. If they lift an eye towards heaven, it is rather a glance of curiosity, than a steady and ardent look of devotion.

The Scriptures, in the clearest and fullest manner, ascribe the whole of salvation to Divine grace. According to the covenant, which is well ordered in all things and ratified by the Redeemer's blood, a new heart is given us, and a

new spirit is put within us. Sanctification, which is necessary to prepare us for heaven, is called a good work, which God begins, carries on, and completes. Believers are expressly called "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph. ii. 10. This is not a subject slightly touched upon, but amply unfolded and strikingly displayed in the New Testament. And can a Christian be contented with hints and distant allusions? Does every curious work of art excite attention, and shall the work of God in the soul of man be passed by with indifference? Is it wise to waste our time, and puzzle ourselves with nice and needless distinctions on topics of morality, while the grand and consoling doctrine of Divine grace remains unexplored? Let the world scoff at the idea of the Holy Spirit's influence, and the cold formal professor of the gospel studiously conceal or disguise it; but the sincere and zealous Christian glories in it. It is plain that we are naturally indisposed and disinclined to holiness. Sin has blotted out the fair image of God. Reason is darkened, conscience seared, and passion perverted. "In us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." We are, "by nature, the children of wrath, even as others," Rom. vii. 18. Eph. ii. 3. These humiliating representations of our fallen state are necessary to bring us to an entire dependence on God, as the Author of all spiritual blessings. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast," Eph. ii. 8. He who can cordially subscribe to this great truth is not far from the kingdom of heaven.

When a man is brought, by the Holy Spirit, out of darkness and bondage into the marvellous light and glorious liberty of the gospel, the change is not less beneficial than conspicuous. The new character thus produced, in nothing shines forth with more lustre than in the mild and cheering beams of benevolence, "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth," Eph. v. 9. When God made a covenant with Abraham, he said, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing," Gen. xii. 2. And does not the same language apply to all the spiritual seed of Abraham? Are there not found at this day, men who are actuated by the same vigorous faith and ardent zeal, as the venerable patriarch? Wherever they dwell, they are pillars to the church. By their counsels, prayers and example, they are blessings to society at large. Envy may sicken at the sight of excellence, and search for faults to censure; and impiety may sound the trumpet of scandal; but the lips of truth have declared such men to be "the salt of the earth; the light of the world," Matt. v. 13, 14. They are not only just, but also generous. Disdaining to confine themselves to any stinted and rigid rules, they give "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over," Luke vi. 38.

I. Let us contemplate the excellency of Christian benevolence: it is the most amiable and noble part of charity.

1. It must be acknowledged by all, that there is something peculiarly amiable in that goodness which springs from the influence of the Holy Spirit. It wears a mild and winning aspect. It possesses a powerful and prevailing charm. It brings forth abundant fruit, at once pleasant to the eye and wholesome to the taste. Malignity is odious and detestable. It is the native and prevailing disposition of those spirits who left their first estate, and are the inveterate enemies of God and man. Hence Satan is expressly called the evil one, Matt. vi. 13. Hence too, men of a carnal, reprobate mind, and abandoned life, are declared to be the children of the devil, John viii. 44. And alas! how many devise mischief upon their beds, set their hearts upon iniquity, and even sell themselves to work wickedness. What can be more hateful than a disposition averse to God and every thing that bears the reflected rays of his excellency—a disposition that delights in evil doing, as its own element? Nor let it be said, "This is a mere fancypiece, a picture that may resemble a fiend, but is too black and hideous for any mortal." Such a malignant disposition appeared in Cain, the first-born son of Adam. His pride produced pale envy; envy boiled into rage; and rage burst forth into bloodshed. The apostle John says, "Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous," 1 John iii. 12. Such another character was Barjesus, whom the indignant apostle addressed in this awfully impressive language: "O full of subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" Acts xiii. 10. That goodness which is the fruit of the Spirit, is as opposite to this infernal malignity, as light is to darkness. It shrinks back from sin as from the poison of a serpent, and trembles at the very idea of being infected by it. The ardent cry of a saint is, "O God I pray that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. Whatever I may be called to suffer, let me not be left to sin." Nor does the mind of the Christian only abhor that which is evil, it also cleaves to that which is good. It delights in the law of God, and longs to be more conformed to the Divine image. This grace has something in it peculiarly amiable and attractive. Goodness is a Godlike attribute, that finds pleasure in diffusing happiness. It is the gospel embodied. Can there be a more lovely and interesting sight, than a Christian incessantly employed, like some kind ministering angel, to relieve the needy, comfort the mourner, and animate the feeble and fearful? It was this warm-hearted and active charity which so eminently distinguished the primitive Christians. Paul, who cannot be suspected

of uttering any thing savouring of flattery, says to the Romans, "And I myself am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another," Rom. xv. 14.

2. That goodness which is the fruit of the Spirit, is a most noble and exalted grace. It is genuine, disinterested, cheerful, and unostentatious benevolence.

If the tree must be made good before the fruit can be good, much of what passes for liberality in the world has no fair title to that name. When the motives are mean, the most dazzling deeds have no real value. The chief excellency of Christian charity is its disinterestedness. Selfishness throws a chill upon the warm glow of generous emotions, and withers every tender sentiment in the bud. Selfishness dries up the fountains of sympathy, and hardens the heart. It makes men "look every one for his gain from his quarter." But the Christian, when acting in character, and following his Lord, displays that heart-expanding charity which seeketh not her own. He does not make self-interest the attractive centre to which every thing must tend. "He does not," says Cotton Mather, "employ his good actions as persons use water which they pour into a pump, to draw up something for himself; but, according to the precepts of Christ, lends, hoping for nothing again, and does good to such as will never be able to return it. Some engage in projects and plans of usefulness, and soon relinquish them, because a few difficulties are to be surmounted, or inconveniences suffered. However great or good the objects proposed, they cannot sacrifice their ease, their time, or their treasure to attain them. There have, however, been always some bright examples of charity. What a liberal and noble spirit did the apostle Paul breathe! "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory," 2 Cor. xii. 15. 2 Tim. ii. 10. These were not high sounding words of vanity. He who thus spake could point to the marks of persecution on his person, and to the labours of zeal in his conduct, as vouchers to confirm these testimonies.

The fruit of the Spirit is prompt and cheerful benevolence. We are exhorted to "give, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver," 2 Cor ix. 7. There can be no grace in the bestowing of a benefit, which seems to stick to the fingers that impart it. The mean wretch whose soul is shut up and incrustated with avarice, may sometimes be induced to give a scanty pittance of his property; but then he parts with his money as if it were his heart's blood. We

must be "ready to distribute, and willing to communicate," 1 Tim. vi. 18. It is not the quantity that you bestow, but the motive and manner of bestowing it, which constitute Christian charity. The poor widow who gave but two mites, was more charitable than those who, from their abundance, cast rich gifts into the treasury of the temple. The sacrifices and ceremonies of the law have been long abolished. We have no sheep and oxen to slay, no costly spices to burn. But the gospel too has its altar, its incense, its daily service. Here, nothing ought to be presented but freewill offerings. These, when touched by the heaven-enkindled fire, are an "odour of a sweet smell; a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God," Phil. iv. 18.

The fruit of the Spirit is unostentatious benevolence. Is it not too evident, that many give their alms to be seen of men? Nor let it be said this is judging the heart. Wherever vanity keeps house, she will often show herself, in full dress, at the windows, and sometimes hang speaking signs before the door. How anxious do some appear to be, lest their virtues should be overlooked. Their charity is all by daylight. The withered hand can be stretched out only while the multitude gaze, and is instantly again benumbed, when the potent spell is withdrawn. But the Christian takes no pains to make known his benevolence. If the object requires concurrence and combined efforts, he may attract notice, while he looks not for the praise of men, but for the praise of God. Humbled under a consciousness of his own unworthiness and deficiency, he dares not receive, much less court the flattery of fellow-creatures.

II. Let us point out the field which opens for the exercise of Christian benevolence.

It is indeed so extensive, that nothing more can be given than a mere sketch, or brief outline of it. "Let us," says the apostle, "as we have opportunity, do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," Gal. vi. 10. Here we have a comprehensive direction. It requires us to be as useful as possible, both in the world and in the church.

(1.) We must exert ourselves to do good in the world.

Genuine benevolence will not wear the disgraceful fetters of absurd inveterate prejudice, or confine itself within the walls of a party. If we have even enemies, we must not neglect the means likely to benefit them. This is the very spirit of the gospel. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that

curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you," Matt v. 44. There are various ways of doing good, to some of which I shall direct you.

1. Endeavour to do good by using every proper means to repress and discourage folly, vice, and immorality in the world. Who, that has a single spark of generous love to his country, or regard for the order, peace, and welfare of society, can witness without grief, the torrents of profaneness and profligacy which prevail and spread through all ranks? Whither can we go, without hearing the horrid and shocking sound of blasphemy? Even children are taught to lisp out oaths before they can speak plainly. What disgusting scenes of intemperance and lewdness does every town and village exhibit on that day which ought to be set apart for things sacred? And does the benevolence of a Christian extend no further than to a few unavailing regrets and complaints? Should he not labour to stop, or at any rate to check the aboundings of vice and folly? Yes, he must rise up against evil doers, and make a noble stand against the workers of iniquity. Let every one, according to his rank and circumstances, be actively employed to discountenance those crimes and immoralities which come more immediately under his own observation. Do not imagine that every effort will be fruitless. "Difficulty," says one, "is often the daughter of idleness; and we learn by experience, that it is impossible to determine how much constancy may endure, or perseverance perform." Are you a master? Look well to your own family. Make the firm resolution of the Psalmist: "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight," Psalm ci. 2, 3. 7. Have you any influence over your neighbours? Use that influence with promptitude, prudence, and affection, to show them the danger of living in dissipation and sin, and draw them into a better course of life.

(2.) Endeavour to do good in the world, by relieving the sick and assisting the poor.

And believe me, this advice, though it may appear trite, is neither trifling nor unnecessary. In a world so full of misery, in times so trying and disastrous as the present, we cannot long want objects which require sympathy and assistance; but we often want representations and motives to quicken our benevolent feelings. How many are sinking under the infirmities of age, and drag the load of life more heavily as they draw nearer to the end of their journey! How many are

confined to beds of affliction, pining with slow sickness, or writhing with intolerable agonies! O Christian, are not these partakers of thy nature! Shut not up thy bowels of compassion. Deny them not the aid that sympathy and kindness can afford. Do not rest satisfied with giving money to support a hospital, but go forth and personally visit the habitations of the wretched. When a fellow creature is ready to perish, pass him not by unnoticed and unpitied. Imitate the good Samaritan, rather than the cold Levite, or cruel priest. Are not the poor always with you? Some, by sudden misfortunes, or inevitable disappointments, are reduced from comforts to the most distressing embarrassments and indigence. Many have large families and small incomes, so that it is impossible for them to gain requisite subsistence without the aid of the benevolent. Now "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world," James i. 27. Do you possess the good things of this life? Then hear the apostolic injunction: "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased," Heb. xiii. 16. Remember them who are in adversity. Say not, These poor wretched creatures have brought their miseries upon themselves, and therefore they deserve to suffer. What would be your own lot if you had nothing better than you deserve? Do not plead that your feelings are too tender to bear the sight of squalid poverty and incurable disease. False delicacy is merely a specious veil to cover cruelty. There is a kind of refinement which draws away all the generous feelings of humanity. Do not say, Let the poor go to the poor-house, or to their own relations, whose duty it is to assist them. Many, indeed, neglect those who from nature, or connexion, have very strong claims upon them; but does not this furnish a reason to stimulate rather than suppress your liberality?

(3.) Endeavour to do good in the world, by instructing the ignorant, or contributing to promote their instruction.

Is there any thing so affecting as the thought, that thousands are perishing for lack of knowledge? How can a Christian, who knows the preciousness of spiritual light, be unconcerned about those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death? Here, then, is ample scope for the exercise of genuine benevolence. Think, O believer, how you may become useful to the souls of your fellow creatures. Are you the head of a family? Begin at home. See to the religious instruction of your children. Let their memories be early enriched with the treasures of Divine truth. Let them be daily pruned, watched, and watered as tender but valuable plants. Train them up in the way they should go, and

earnestly pray for the blessing of Heaven to crown your efforts with success. Have you servants? They are probably unacquainted with religion; or what is worse, averse to it. Consider them as a part of the charge committed to you. Labour to disperse their prejudices, and convince them how much you are concerned for their best interests. Is the neighbourhood in which you dwell sunk in ignorance and vice? Use your influence in every way likely to produce a happy change. The institution of Sunday and charity schools has, of late years, been remarkably beneficial to the rising generation. If you cannot take a part in conducting such a school, do all you can to animate others in it. In our country there are now many laudable efforts making to circulate the knowledge of Christ in dark and barbarous lands. Bible societies, Missionary societies, and Tract societies, deserve the warmest encouragement. They have already done much, but much more remains to be done. Who that walks and triumphs in gospel light, can refuse to lend a helping hand in so good a work? If it be thought humane and generous to rescue the body from great danger, how much more so to snatch the soul from impending destruction? A few years ago, a man in North Wales was shut up under a ledge of rocks, by the falling in of a mine, having nothing on which to subsist but half a pound of candles. Those who had escaped, exerting every nerve, wrought incessantly, and on the ninth day from the accident, had the pleasure of delivering the poor man from his gloomy dungeon. And if the life of a single individual excites such generous concern, ought not the spiritual welfare of millions to produce a much more lively interest? We are told by James, that he who converteth a man from the error of his ways, saves a soul from death, and hides a multitude of sins, James v. 20.

2. We must exert ourselves to do good in the church.

Those who are of the household of faith, are, by the noblest relations, very near, and ought to be peculiarly dear to us. And are they not often perplexed, afflicted, persecuted and cast down? Here then is an ample field for the exercise of benevolence. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight," Psal. xvi. 2, 3. You can add nothing to the felicity and glory of God, but you may give some comfort and assistance to his people. Do you wish to show your love to Jesus? then let your bowels yearn with tender compassion over his afflicted and despised followers. When they are embarrassed, and thrown into circumstances so perplexing, that while their path is hid, they know not what step to take, assist them with your counsel. It is possible you may perceive an opening in the intricate ways of Providence, which

escapes their notice. Even a word spoken in season, how good it is! When they struggle with the miseries of poverty, relieve them with your substance. "Some," says bishop Ridley, "pretend to show their love to Christ, by kissing the gaudy pictures, or clothing with purple, damask, and gold, those statues intended to represent him; and suffering his living members to starve and go naked." When you know Christians who are severely tried, whether they are touched with the chastening hand of God, or wounded by the reproaches and injuries of the world, let your counsels, sympathies and prayers be united to lighten their distress, and cheer their minds. It is thus we are called to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," Gal. vi. 2. "Some," says Basil, "give all they bestow in their will; they do all their good with ink and paper: but the poor may thank death, and not them, for their legacies."

III. I shall adduce some considerations as motives to the exercise of benevolence.

1. Consider that the express commands of God require you to be active in doing good.

That Being on whose bounty you live, at whose bar you must stand, has solemnly called you to deal your bread to the hungry, to cover the naked, to comfort the mourner, and confirm the feeble. O Christian, you have mercies, means, and motives peculiar to you. Your time, your strength, your credit, and your property, are talents, for the use of which you are accountable. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good!" Eccl. xi. 6. But take heed that you do not in your acts of charity, make the maxims of the world your rule, and self-applause your end; but let the word of God guide, and the glory of God govern you. If any one could point out and pursue a sure road to wealth, would he long want followers? Doubtless thousands would flock around him, and be ready to flee at the first signal. And has not our Lord commanded us to provide bags which wax not old? Does not the treasury of heaven yield the highest interest? The worldling, with all his care, chooses a bad storehouse; and therefore his gold and silver are cankered, and his garments are moth-eaten. But the Christian, by laying out his substance in charity, lays it up where moths cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

2. As another motive to do good, consider the bright examples of

benevolence set before you.

Cornelius, it is said, gave much alms to the poor, and prayed to God always. Here you behold benevolence and devotion combined, mutually recommending each other. And ought they not ever to meet in the same bosom, and mingle their sacred streams in one channel? The prayers and alms of Cornelius were presented as a memorial before God. The marble towers and brazen statues set up to perpetuate the fame of kings and conquerors, are either destroyed by violence, or worn away by the corroding hand of time; but the monuments of genuine charity will survive the wreck of nature, and the ruin of worlds. A Dorcas, who makes coats and garments for the poor; a Demetrius, who refreshes the saints, who has a good report of all, and even of the truth; a Boyle and a Gouge, who bestow their property to promote the cause of pure religion, are blessings to society while they live, and after death their names are embalmed. "Who espouses the cause of suffering humanity? Who explores the hospital, the dungeon, the darksome retreat of unknown, unpitied anguish? The infidel philosopher? Alas! he amuses himself with dreams of universal benevolence, while the wretch perishes unheeded at his feet; and scruples not to murder the species in detail, that he may promote its happiness in the gross! In his proud list of general benefactors, you will look in vain for the name of a Howard; and in their system of conduct, your search will be equally fruitless for the traces of his spirit. Christianity claims as her own, both the man and his principles. She formed his character, sketched his plans, and inspired his zeal." Set these, and such examples before you, and imitate them. Let your ambition be that of Melancthon, who said, "May I be rich in good works, and let who will take the riches of the world!"

3. As another motive to do good, consider the present pleasure there is in all the exercises of benevolence.

Every generous person knows, from experience, the truth of our Lord's words. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," Acts xx. 35. The consciousness of being made an instrument in the hand of Providence for softening the pains, supplying the wants, preventing the dangers, and multiplying the comforts of our fellow men, affords one of the purest and liveliest joys that can thrill through the human heart. Job possessed this sweet satisfaction, and has described it in the most emphatic language: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none

to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not I searched out," Job xxix. 11–16. Is there any luxury so sweet as the luxury of doing good? Compare, in point of pleasure, Nero in his palace, and Paul, at the same time, in prison. See the former feasting upon dainties, procured by the labours and exhausted lives of ten thousand miserable wretches: behold the latter studying, praying, and writing, for the spiritual instruction and encouragement of millions! Nero, among fawning sycophants, fiddled while Rome was in flames; Paul could say, "who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" 2 Cor. xi. 29. This faithful servant of Jesus, in his poverty made many rich; in his chains, set many free; and from the deeps of sorrow, sent to multitudes the richest cordials of joy.

4. As a motive to do good, consider the amazing love and condescension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Surely, if every other inducement should fail, this ought to be sufficient of itself to open the heart, and draw out its best affections in active benevolence. What can so effectually expand, elevate, and purify the mind, as the love of Christ? Is any thing too valuable to give, too arduous to do, or too grievous to suffer, by which we may show our gratitude towards such a Benefactor? At his incarnation, the angels sung this sublime and noble song; "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men," Luke ii. 14. And shall we not show in our conduct, that benevolence which angels chanted in melodious strains? While the Redeemer was on earth, he went about doing good. He communicated truth from his lips, and healing from his hand. His path was marked with beneficence. And let us often lift up our eyes to the cross, and behold Immanuel dying for us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," 1 John iv. 10. Ought not this love to slay the enmity of our hearts, and make us kind even to the unthankful and the evil? O Christian, you may be sometimes discouraged in prosecuting your plans of benevolence. Difficulties and obstacles must be expected. Some, from narrow views, will misapprehend, and others, through envy, misrepresent your designs. You may meet opposition where you expected assistance, and vile ingratitude among those whom you have made sacrifices to serve. Be not, however, weary in well doing. Remember the love and humiliation of Jesus. It is an honour to be employed by him, but especially to be conformed

to him. When the apostle exhorted the Corinthians to be liberal in communicating, his warmest appeal was in these words, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich," 2 Cor. viii. 9. There should be a feeling in the Christian breast compounded of humility and gratitude in due proportions. Humility would be flat without gratitude, and gratitude flighty and evanescent without humility. Apart they might depress or inflate; together they give both motion and ballast to the mind. Let us meditate on our deserts and obligations, but never forget our mercies and privileges. The condescension and grace of Christ, the provision of the new and everlasting covenant, and the prospect and pledges of immortal glory, may well fill our hearts with hallowed zeal in every good work.

5. As another motive to do good, consider that your continuance on earth is both short and uncertain.

"Work while it is day; for the night cometh, when no man can work," John ix. 4. Good purposes, good wishes, and good words are but the cheap substitutes that many put in the place of those substantial fruits which spring from the root of charity. Opportunity has been called the flower of time; let it not bloom and wither neglected. Be on the watch to seize every occasion that offers for doing good. There are favourable circumstances which ought to be instantly improved. While the soil is soft, let the seed be cast in; while the sun shines, defer not to secure the precious harvest. If you can warn the wicked, or relieve the poor to-day, put it not off till to-morrow. If you perceive in the thoughtless any serious impression, try to deepen and fix it. How keen-eyed is the worldling, in observing and catching every occasion that may increase his gain! How prompt and dexterous is the wanton profligate, in drawing the young and inexperienced into his destructive snares! What! do many watch for iniquity with as much patience and alertness as the wild beast watches for his prey; and will not you watch for favourable opportunities of doing good? How much regret have even some pious men felt, who, when an effectual door of usefulness has opened before them, have hesitated about scruples, and lingered in dilatory preparations, till they have seen it shut for ever. The friend they meant to admonish was, through a false delicacy, permitted to go on, till he suddenly sunk into the silent grave. The riches they intended to bestow as a thank-offering to the Lord, unexpectedly made themselves wings and flew away. The good work they purposed, planned, and perhaps commenced, was interrupted by frequent and frivolous delays, till death cut short their unfinished design. While, then, the

winged hours are hurrying you towards an eternal world, do not lay aside your schemes of benevolence; but put them into immediate execution. Be ready for every good work. "He gives twice who gives quickly." The fair fruit of charity should have time to ripen, but not to rot and perish. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest," Eccl. ix. 10.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON FIDELITY.[17]

"THE wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." Psal. lviii. 3. When the Spirit of God changes the heart, the love of truth becomes a reigning principle. It is impossible to be otherwise; for the effect must correspond with the nature of the cause. God is the God of truth, Christ is the King of truth, and the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth. He who is born of God, becomes a follower of Christ, and is taught of the Spirit, will hate the way of lying, and flee from it.

I. Let us show wherein consists that fidelity which is an effect of the Holy Spirit.

It will be better understood from a view of its relative bearings, than from an abstract definition! We must be faithful both to God and to men. Faithfulness to God includes undisguised sincerity in his service, unreserved devotedness to his will, and inflexible adherence to the public profession of the gospel.

Faithfulness to God includes *undisguised sincerity in his service*. A Christian who is habitually under the influence of the Spirit, is conscious of much imperfection; but his intentions and motives are pure; his heart is right with God. He does not place devotion in a punctual observance of stated times and customary ceremonies, but considers God as a Spirit, who is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. He does not rest satisfied with a dry, empty, lifeless form, and offer to the Lord the blind and the lame; or wear a mask of hypocrisy, and personate a character which belongs not to him; but he draws nigh to the throne of grace with a true heart, and presents himself as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is his reasonable service. There is a holy simplicity in the mind of a real Christian. Divine love is the great governing principle of his heart; and the promotion of the Divine glory the grand aim of his actions. Without such a principle, and such an end, there can be no more

devotion in the strictest attendance on religious duties, than in the motions of a wooden image, or the striking of a clock. When you engage professedly in the service of the Lord, do you give him your heart? While bowing the knee, or prostrating the body, do you feel a profound veneration, a holy solemnity, investing the mind? Do you consider every religious duty as a momentous transaction between God and your own soul? Do you hate vain thoughts? and, without allowing the intermixture of sensual passions, endeavour to serve God with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth? Do you belong to the circumcision who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh? Phil. iii. 3.

Faithfulness to God is *unreserved obedience to his revealed will*. In order to this, we must closely and impartially search the Holy Scriptures. A faithful Christian earnestly wishes to know what the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is. He is ready to receive whatever the Divine authority enjoins without any exceptions. His language is, "Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths: lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day," Psal. xxv. 4, 5. We should not account that man a faithful servant, who only obeyed such of his master's orders as suited his humour, and either boldly opposed, or craftily evaded the rest. Nor can he be called faithful to God, who, through vain excuses and frivolous objections, neglects his commands. Do not, then, cry, "This is a hard saying; that is a difficult and impracticable duty. Why should I be singular, or act in such a way as will prove detrimental to my worldly interests?" Faithfulness requires an unreserved devotedness to the will of God, as your infallible rule of conduct. Let the language of your lips, and the tenor of your life, express the sentiment of the psalmist: "Lord, I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way," Psal. cxix. 128. We have a memorable instance of entire, unlimited devotedness to God in Abraham. When God called him to leave his native country, by whatever strong and tender ties he was attached to it, he suffered not himself to be detained by them; but immediately went out, not knowing whither he went. Who does not admire the heroic conduct of Peter and John, when they were strictly charged not to speak or teach any more in the name of Jesus? They appealed to the consciences of their persecutors, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," Acts ix, 19, 20.

Faithfulness to God includes *an inflexible adherence to the profession of*

the gospel.

"Whosoever," said Jesus, "shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven," Matt. x. 32. Many, who have appeared very pious in moderate circumstances, have given up all pretensions to religion when once surrounded with affluence. Such persons rise, and afterwards spurn away the ladder by which they ascended. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked: then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation," Deut. xxxii. 15. But adversity is a still severer test. How many loose, empty, unfruitful professors are blown away by every storm of persecution, as the sapless leaves of autumn are scattered by the blast! Would you maintain your profession, without wavering, to the end? you must be armed with faith and fortitude against the ridicule, calumny, and violence of an evil world.

Some will try to laugh you out of your religion. They will artfully work into conversation a number of ludicrous stories or sarcastic remarks, concerning saints and enthusiasts. Be not surprised at a sly insinuation, or dismayed at a malignant sneer. Think it but a small matter, if, as you pass along, you sometimes catch a light sprinkling of ridicule, while many good men have been exceedingly filled with contempt, and with the scorning of them that are at ease. Some of those excellent characters, of whom the world was not worthy, had to endure the trial of cruel mockings.

You may, perhaps, be attacked with the poisonous shafts of calumny. There are men who labour to find, or to feign matter for an evil report, with which to blast religious characters—men, who, as the poet says,

Delight to torture truth ten thousand ways,

And spin destruction forth from themes of praise.

But should your name be cast out as evil; should every word in its meaning, and every action in its motive, be grossly misrepresented, yet your Witness is in Heaven, and your record is on high. If they call the Master of the house Beelzebub, what shall they call his servants! Matt. x. 25.

But you may meet with injuries of a still heavier kind. Many of the first followers of Christ lost all they held dear on earth to maintain a good conscience. The hypocrite, as troubles and difficulties arise, first slackens his pace, then halts, and at last turns back and gives up his profession altogether. He who espouses truth without affection, will be easily induced to give her a bill of divorcement, and send her away. But faithfulness emboldens us to hold fast the profession of the gospel, amidst all the frowns and injuries of the world. Such unshaken firmness is equally honourable and advantageous. "Should you," says Gurnall, "see a man in a ship throw himself overboard into the sea, you might at first think him out of his wits; but if, a little while after, you beheld him stand safe on the shore, and the ship swallowed up by the waves, you would then think he took the wisest course. Faith sees the world and all the pleasures of sin sinking: there is a leak in them which all the art of man cannot stop. Now, is it not better to swim through a sea of troubles, and get safe to heaven at last, than to sit in the lap of sinful pleasures till we are drowned in the gulf of hell?" "Be thou faithful unto death," said Jesus, "and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10. How highly is the church at Pergamos commended for a firm attachment to the profession of the gospel! "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth," Rev. ii. 13.

But further: we must be faithful to men. This requires truth in our words; "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour," Eph. iv. 25.

Falsehood rises from various motives, and assumes various shapes and colours. There are in the world many lies made to get gain, to foster pride and make mirth, beside other kinds, which it would not be easy to enumerate. Since the first lie obtained credit in paradise, a plentiful store has been constantly issuing from the same mint. The infernal art of deception has been too successfully taught.

Lies to get gain are made to be used in the shop, carried to the market, and employed as the means of conducting trade. Some go so far as to publish their exploits; and scruple not, in certain companies, unblushingly to boast of their success in defrauding the upright and unsuspecting. They deliberately lay schemes of deception, and, with matchless presumption,

Stamp God's own name upon a lie just made,

To turn a penny in the way of trade.

Nor are they a whit less culpable who use more cautious reserve and profound policy, in coining and passing off falsehoods, to get money.

There are in the world many lies intended to foster pride. How common is it for persons to compliment those whom they do not esteem, that they may be repaid in the same kind! Others speak of connexions, prospects, and possessions, which have no foundation in truth, merely to raise an idea of their own consequence. When a proud man wants to emblazon his own name, he will seldom hesitate to weave a tissue of falsehoods for that purpose.

There are also in the world many lies invented to make mirth. Some people, who would not basely slander a friend, or injure in any matter of great moment, a neighbour, by asserting a palpable falsehood; yet, through mere levity and loquacity, indulge in freedoms of speech not strictly consistent with truth. From a wish to amuse company, they give to the anecdotes or narratives which they relate such additions and new colours, as leave an impression that does not correspond with facts. In describing circumstances, events, or characters, they magnify, diminish, or alter, to suit the turn of conversation or produce a burst of facetious merriment. Many get into a habit of telling lies, merely to save themselves a little trouble. They change their tone to suit the temper of the times:

For 'tis their firm opinion from their youth,

A grain of ease is worth a world of truth.

Such persons make conscience yield to convenience. But a Christian, who lives under the habitual influence of the Holy Spirit, speaks the truth from his heart. No temptation, either from interest or humour, can warp him from it. He

may, indeed, be mistaken, and, therefore, sometimes unintentionally mislead others! but he does not knowingly utter such language, respecting either persons or things, as shall give a false idea of them. He knows that, though God's way is often hid from us, our way is never hid from him; and this makes him cautious and wary in his speech. As he finds it needful to make a covenant with his eyes, to restrain them from wantonness, so he puts a bridle on his tongue, to keep it from verging even on the confines of falsehood.

Faithfulness to men requires *justice in our actions*.

A steady regard to equity in our dealings with our fellow men, is what the Scriptures call, "walking uprightly," or, "working righteousness," Prov. x. 9. Acts x. 35. Persons of an opposite character are said to work iniquity, to use the balances of deceit, and to have no faithfulness in their doings. But there are many ways of doing wrong, besides those daring acts of violence which lead directly to the gallows. A Christian, who lives under the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, makes it a point of conscience to render to all men their due. Nor does he need to pore over volumes of statute law, or puzzle himself with perplexing distinctions, to learn how he may act equitably towards others. He has one short golden rule made by Him who made man, and perfectly knew all our circumstances and relations, to direct his conduct; a rule, which may be understood without deep knowledge; carried without cumbering us with its weight; and applied, in all cases, with ease and safety. Do you ask what is this rule? and, Where is it to be found? It is contained in these words of Jesus: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," Matt. vii. 12. Guided by this infallible precept, a faithful man cannot take advantage of the ignorant and uninformed. He will be as fair and upright in his dealings with a child, as with one whose judgment equals his own. He will not bear hard upon the necessitous, and beat a man down to undersell his articles, because he knows him to be distressed, and unable to return home without money. In all such cases, a principle of integrity, produced by Divine grace, prevents us from doing that to others which we should take ill if we were placed in their situation. Without such a principle, there can be no consistency of character, nor any bond to secure a conduct at once just and honourable.[18]

Fidelity to man requires *steadfastness in our engagements*.

A faithful Christian cannot make promises which he never means to perform, merely to answer a present purpose. He dares not drop a word to raise

hopes which he has scarcely a prospect or probability of realizing: and, when he does enter into an engagement, his word is held as sacred as if he had given a legal bond. I do not say, there are no reasons which can justify a breach of promise. Sickness, or other unforeseen impediments, may arise to prevent performance. "Should a man," says a good author, "rashly promise what is afterwards found to be unlawful, he must not add sin to sin by executing it. Herod ought with repentance to have broken even his oath, rather than have done so cruel and injurious a thing as beheading John the Baptist, if that were really included in his oath. Indeed, he might more justly have given that wicked woman who solicited it, the half of his kingdom, according to the letter of his promise, than the Baptist's head." We ought always to weigh well all our promises, that they may include nothing but what is lawful and expedient. As it is better we should never vow, than vow and not pay, the same may be said with regard to our promises. When we have given our word, it should not, even in a change of circumstances, be lightly broken or forgotten.

Faithfulness to men requires *a bold and conscientious discharge of all the relative duties of life.*

A man who neither speaks falsehood, nor acts extortion, may be unfaithful by leaving unsaid and undone many things which are absolutely necessary. Dastardly timidity causes glaring omissions and inexcusable neglects. If we habitually feel the influence of Divine grace, we shall boldly perform every relative duty, without showing any thing of a partial and time-serving spirit.

A minister of the gospel, for instance, must not only forbear to preach error, but also firmly resolve to declare the whole counsel of God, and keep back nothing that might be profitable to the people. To address men in soft soothing language, more calculated to tickle the fancy than to touch the heart; to exhibit fine-spun reasonings on moral subjects, instead of drawing forth from his quiver the sharpest arrows of truth, and levelling them at the sinner's conscience; to pass over the offensive doctrine of the cross, and the humiliating but wholesome truths connected with it, and seek admiration by empty flashes of wit, or vain flourishes of learning and eloquence, is to be guilty of betraying immortal souls. It is required of stewards that they be found faithful; and woe to such as abuse their talents, and neglect their solemn trust!

The head of a large family needs no small share of resolution and fortitude, conscientiously to act the part which duty requires, with reference to his

servants. He must not connive at habits of vice and folly, but bring them forth to the light, that they may be reproved. To keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men, he must tell them not only when they neglect his own business, but likewise when they neglect their own everlasting interests.

There is, perhaps, no case in which it is more necessary and difficult to be faithful, than when we sit by the bed of a dying neighbour or friend, who appears to be destitute of a good hope. While we view a fellow creature, whose body is reduced to the weakness of infancy, and whose mind is lulled into tranquillity by flattering thoughts of recovery, or false and erroneous notions of religion: while we seriously contemplate that awful eternity into which he is just entering without any suitable preparation, and find weeping relatives anxious to keep him quiet and easy, how painful it is to tell him his true state! In such circumstances, the feelings must follow the dictates of conscience rather than the pleadings of nature, or the course of custom. False tenderness would say, "Let the dying man alone, that he may depart in peace!" But faithfulness requires us to lay before him both his danger and the only remedy.

There are, however, counterfeits of this Christian grace as well as of every other. Some persons, under pretence of being faithful, give full vent to their own rigid bigotted notions, or angry passions. "There is," says the celebrated Cowper, "no grace that the spirit of self can so easily counterfeit as religious zeal: A man thinks he is fighting for Christ, while he is fighting for his own notions: he thinks he is skilfully searching the hearts of others, when he is only gratifying the malignity of his own." The flaming zealot erects himself into a judge; and as if he had the keys of heaven and hell, with a power to decide the fates of men, condemns to everlasting perdition all who do not pronounce his Shibboleth. He acts as if he thought men were to be frightened out of their errors, and scolded out of their sins. Persons of this cast have generally narrow views, yet use broad sweeping assertions; and in proportion to the low state of their knowledge, is the high tone of their confidence. They breathe out burning words of threatening, and marshal terrors in array against those who differ from them in a form of speech, or a point of ceremony. Destitute of the milk of kindness, they dip all their censures in vinegar and gall: they mistake harshness for faithfulness, and put party spirit in the place of zeal for the church.

II. Let us prove the vast importance of faithfulness.

1. This grace is absolutely necessary to give value to every other branch of

religion.

What is a lofty wide-spreading tree with a rotten trunk? What is a spacious and beautiful house built on the sand, which must be sapped by the rising flood, or overthrown by the wintry storm? And what are the gifts, talents, and attainments of one who is destitute of faith and sincerity? We condemn, in strong language, the man who basely betrays his friend; the subject who traitorously lays schemes for the life of his lawful sovereign; or the prince who sells the liberties and lives of his people to gratify a boundless ambition. But what shall we say of the man, who denies his God, crucifies the Saviour afresh, and exchanges the gem of truth for the poor glittering baubles of the world? What shall we say of the cowardly, half-hearted professor who trims his vessel, and makes it look well while it sails in smooth water; but, for want of a sound bottom, makes a shipwreck of faith in the tempest? It is not easy to find words dark enough to draw his picture so as to give a true likeness? We shun the wolf in sheep's clothing; the monster, with Cato's head and Catiline's heart; a John without, and a Judas within! The hypocrite is double-minded and double-tongued; he is, indeed, a double person with two faces; and all his plans and undertakings have wheels within wheels, plots and under plots. It was ingeniously said by Basil, "The hypocrite does not put off the old man, but puts on the new man upon it." And why talk of the fair appearances, the good words and good deeds, of those who are void of sincerity? The venomous serpent has a beautiful skin; but would you, on that account, put it into the bosom of your child? In fact, where there is not truth in the inward parts, all the show that can be made by a profession of religion, is but odious deception. Those faithless Israelites, who fell victims to the Divine displeasure in the wilderness, were very ready to acknowledge the true God, and promise to serve him only. "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant," Psal. lxxviii. 36, 37. Sincerity must accompany every other grace. Without it, whatever glitters and strikes the eye, will be rejected as reprobate silver. Faith must be unfeigned, love without dissimulation, and joy from a pure heart. Cicero, speaking of the fabulous ring of Gyges, which was reported to render the wearer invisible, observes, that "if a truly good man could gain possession of such a ring, he would not think himself more at liberty to sin, than if he had it not; for he studies honesty, not secrecy."

2. The importance of faithfulness is obvious, as it is necessary to our own comfort.

Though a person could wrap himself so closely in the cloak of hypocrisy, and so artfully manage his vizard, as never to be detected by his fellow creatures, would he thus make sure of happiness? No; in the path of deceit, there is no peace. Conscience will renew from time to time, her troublesome accusations. As we sow we shall certainly reap. Men may hatch the cockatrice's egg, and weave the spider's web; but their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works, Isa. lix. 5. A time is coming, when fearfulness will surprise the hypocrite, and his cry shall be, "Who can dwell with devouring fire? Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isa. xxxiii. 14. On the contrary, he who serves God faithfully, and follows Christ fully, enjoys sweet consolation. From tumults without, he can retire to commune with his own heart in solitude. Though men may blacken his character, and lay to his charge things which he knows not, he has the witness within which clears him of every foul calumny. When the friends of Job were proceeding to form a very harsh judgment of him, as a deceiver, who had possessed nothing more than a form of godliness, in the days of his prosperity, he addressed them with a manly firmness: "God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live," Job xxvii. 5, 6. Never were men more grossly slandered, more cruelly persecuted, than the apostles of our Lord. Their names were branded and held up to infamy; their words and actions were perverted, and even their best deeds turned into crimes; their persons were bound in chains, lacerated with whips, and exposed as a spectacle to the gaze of scoffers: in a word, they were accounted as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things: fit only to be trampled upon, and cast out of society as an insufferable nuisance. But hear their language; "Our rejoicing is this, 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 in the world," 2 Cor. i. 12. Such a testimony, such a triumph, no hypocrite can have. But every faithful Christian has a comfort and joy flowing from the same spring; yet he has taken no glory to himself; nor forgets to ascribe even his sincerity to the renewing power of the grace of God.

3. The importance of faithfulness is obvious, as it is necessary to the credit of religion and the honour of Christ.

Nothing has brought so much scandal on the gospel as the conduct of hypocrites and apostates. The men of the world are always on the watch, to spy defects in professing Christians. If they see them halt or trip, hear them speak

unadvisedly, or perceive them act in any thing inconsistently, the whole country must soon know it. There was one Judas among the twelve disciples, and it can scarcely be expected, but most societies will have more than one of the same character. Now by reason of such, the way of truth is evil spoken of. One bad piece of money often makes the true sterling coin suspected. An unfaithful professor opens the mouths of enemies to blaspheme. When they have shot away their last poisoned arrow, he furnishes their quiver with a fresh supply. They are glad to find any thing vicious under the cloak of hypocrisy; and triumphantly cry out, "We see now what are the fruits of religion; it is all cant and imposition. Those saints, who affect strictness of life and manners, are all close deceivers, vile hypocrites." Is not Christ often wounded thus in the house of his professed friends? If, then, the credit of religion and the honour of your Lord are worth regarding, you must own the great importance of faithfulness. It is, indeed, comparatively of little consequence what opinion men entertain of us, seeing all disguises shall be soon torn away. Then shall we "discern between the righteous and wicked between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not," Mal. iii. 18. At the approach of death, the hypocrite will drop his mask. "The swelling waves of Jordan," says Caryl, "will wash away all his paint, and expose his deformity. But the Christian who holds on his way, and is faithful even unto death, shall quit the conflict with victory, and wear a crown that fadeth not away."

III. Let us inquire, what are the leading marks, or signs, by which this faithfulness may be known.

1. A faithful man is willing impartially to examine his own state.

Self-knowledge is of more value than an acquaintance with all the mysteries of nature and all the wonders of art: yet the attainment of this needful knowledge requires labour to which few can submit. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. xiii. 5. An error respecting our own state, is, above all things, to be dreaded. But that we are very liable to fall into such an error, may be very reasonably concluded, from the numerous warnings and cautions of Scripture. "If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself: if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," Gal. vi. 3. 1 John i. 8. When a tradesman dares not look into his accounts, or settle his books, it is a sign that his affairs are embarrassed, if he be not on the borders of bankruptcy. Let me entreat you to enter the regions within,

to try and judge yourselves by the word of God. Be willing to know the worst, though every fresh discovery should give you fresh pain; and be not content with your own shortsighted scrutiny, but present to God the prayer of the psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24.

2. A faithful Christian has a deep sense of the deceitfulness and danger of sin.

Self-ignorance generally produces vain confidence. He who is in the habit of examining his own soul, will feelingly acknowledge the truth of the prophet's words: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9. Hence, the sincere believer is so ready to confess and lament his cold indifference to what is good; his vain thoughts and worldly anxieties. "It is said," exclaims he, "the upright shall go forward from strength to strength; but I seem to go back from strength to weakness. My graces, instead of growing are declining. I feel a strange languor, a stupid insensibility. Surely, this is not the frame of a child of God." It is true, the righteous are said to "flourish like the palm-tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon," Psal. xcii. 12. But we cannot see the growth of a tree every day; it may have a gradual and slow increase, though the leaves fall during the winter. "But I am more troubled and distressed with vain thoughts than any one: they break the train of my meditations, and even mix in my prayers." But do you let those guests enter the heart by the door of the will? do you bid them welcome, and entertain them as beloved friends? It may be, they steal unperceived into the mind, through the unguarded avenues and windows of sense; you hate them while they lodge within you, and try every possible method to exclude them. If so, it is a sign of sincerity, rather than of hypocrisy. But you complain, "I am exceedingly burdened with the cares and concerns of the world; my soul cleaveth to the dust; I cannot keep my affections on the bright inheritance above." It may be replied, to be sensible of the danger of a worldly spirit, to strive and pray against it are characteristic of a sincere believer.

3. A faithful Christian fixes his whole dependence on Divine grace.

"Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord!" Jer. xvii. 5. Every one who has been humbled in the dust of self-abasement, and taught by the Spirit of God, will

dread coming under this awful curse. His hope and help are not in an arm of flesh, but in the arm of the Lord. Do you cheerfully enter the service of God? Do you deliberately put on the yoke of Christ? Do you take to you the whole armour of the gospel, resolving never to unbuckle the girdle of truth, or lay aside the breast-plate of righteousness, and the helmet of salvation? Then, "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," Eph. vi. 10.

Do you watch, and pray, and labour, according to the command of Jesus? And why such watching, praying, and striving? "Is it," as Bishop Beveridge observes, "to work your way to heaven with your own hands? to purchase an inheritance in the land of Canaan with the price of your own holiness and religion? or, to swim over the ocean of this world into the haven of happiness on the empty bladders of your own resolutions?" No: you find the need of constant supplies from the fulness of Christ. Your hope is not in human merit, but redeeming mercy. You can join with the apostle and say, "By the grace of God, I am what I am!" 1 Cor. xv. 10.

CHAPTER IX.

ON MEEKNESS.

PATIENCE keeps the mind firm and unshaken under sufferings: meekness renders it calm and unruffled amidst provocations. These kindred graces may be easily distinguished, but cannot be separated. The direct tendency of sin is to darken the understanding and disorder the affections: it extinguishes the pure flame of heaven in the heart, and kindles infernal fires in its place. From that breast where pride dwells and anger boils; where malice spreads its subtle poison, and discontent its sullen gloom, meekness must be necessarily banished. It is one thing to chain a wild beast, and another to tame it. Violent passions may be checked and modified by moral rules and good manners; but they can only be subdued, or properly governed, by real religion. Whoever has been renewed by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, will, among other fruits, possess meekness. I do not say that it will be found in every Christian, in an equal state of maturity; for both the gifts and the graces of the Spirit, in different persons, appear in different degrees. The efficacy of Divine love has been strikingly manifested, in bringing men of the most impetuous passions and stubborn spirits to a meek acquiescence in the will of God. Nothing but the Holy Spirit can work a thorough change, and turn the lion into a lamb.

1. Here I shall point out the nature and exercise of Christian meekness.

Those overweening notions, which grow out of self-sufficiency, and consolidate into all the stiff and imperious forms of arrogance; and those unreasonable resentments, which arise from ungoverned passion, and ripen into malignity, are the baneful produce of a carnal mind. He who is regenerated by the influence of the Holy Spirit, is a new creature. He puts off the old man with his deeds, and puts on the new man, which is formed after the image of God. The Christian is distinguished by humility and meekness. In the channel where filthy, desolating torrents once rolled, the pure and gentle stream now glides. Or, to adopt a Scripture allusion, Divine grace has the same influence to purify the

passions of the soul, that the healing wood of Moses had to sweeten the waters of Marah. Meekness is a disposition which keeps the mind from aspiring after things too high for us. Being fixed in our proper place, it makes us easy there. Meekness is opposed to all those troublesome passions, which, when an extravagant self-estimation is cherished, the thwarting opinions and vexatious humours of other men never fail to excite. A meek man will study to avoid giving any just cause of offence. He knows that, to indulge anger, is to whet a sword to wound his own breast, or murder his friend. Some, indeed, from constitution, are of a mild and forbearing disposition. They can sit unmoved, amidst circumstances which transport many into rage, little short of madness. But that indifference under injuries, which arises from a want of acute and lively feelings, has nothing of virtue in it. Meekness is the growth of pure religion, cherished in the heart, and displaying its fruits in the life.

1. Christian meekness fits the mind to receive or impart spiritual instruction.

Men who are fascinated with the splendour of science, falsely so called, and intoxicated with a notion of their superior attainments, are averse to the humbling, but all-important doctrines of the gospel. Professing themselves wise, they become fools. While they vainly glory in their learning and research, or boast the sufficiency of reason, or the light of nature, the discoveries of Divine revelation are either rejected or disregarded. The proud philosopher must come down from the giddy eminence of self-conceit, to sit contentedly at the feet of Jesus. The first step to true wisdom is to know the want of it: and the next is a willingness to be taught. A meek spirit, and a humble mind, are indispensably necessary in a true disciple of Christ. "Except a man be converted, and become as a little child, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 3. Wherever there is such a yielding and teachable subject as this passage requires, the gospel will be welcomed as a system of truth to enlighten the understanding, and a fund of consolation to cheer and animate the heart. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound," Isa. lxi. 1.

When Christ began to declare the will of the Father, and the apostles went forth to diffuse the light of life, who were the persons most ready to receive instruction? Did the Jewish doctors, or far-famed Grecian sages, eagerly embrace the gospel? No; they were too wise to learn, too lofty to stoop! The

poor in spirit, who were sensible of their darkness and perplexity, and longed to be led into all necessary truth, flocked to Jesus. The words of the psalmist are verified in every age: "The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way, Psal. xxv. 9. Pride blocks up the passage through which truth enters the heart. There are many errors in the world, and deep corruptions in our very nature. "The fumes which arise from a heart boiling with violent passions, never fail to darken and trouble the understanding." The humble and sincere Christian, dismissing his prejudices and prepossessions, bows with entire submission to the will of God. Though some things may be hard to be understood, and others, from their very nature, quite above his comprehension; yet, he equally sets the seal of faith to them all. This is what James calls, receiving with meekness "the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls," James i. 21.

Nor is meekness less necessary for those whose office requires them to communicate spiritual instruction. A minister of religion, whatever talents or treasures of knowledge he may possess, can have no aptitude to teach while he is intoxicated with, or carried away by the gusts of passion. The meek and lowly Jesus should be the pattern of those who proclaim his gospel. It ill becomes such as profess to follow Christ, and show unto men the way of salvation, to assume an air of self-importance, and a tone of repulsive harshness. Yet we find some who seem to think they cannot be faithful, unless they are furious; and whatever mercy may be in their message, there is no mildness in their manner of delivering it. Paul exhorts Timothy "in meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will," 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.

2. Meekness disposes a Christian to refrain from stirring up angry passions in others, and renders him calm under their provocations.

Did this temper generally prevail, there would be few animosities and contentions. I grant, indeed, that the rod of the wicked may fall, but shall not rest on the lot of the righteous. Man's wrath shall be let loose in a measure; but further than what is necessary for the praise of God, it shall not go. He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind. A meek man will not rekindle the dying embers of resentment, by lending his breath to blow them, much less add fuel to heighten the flame. He feels it his duty to guard his heart against the tumults of impetuous passion. I do not say, that anger is always sinful: when kept

within proper limits, it is often found to be a salutary check to folly and wickedness. He that can see the innocent wronged, and the helpless oppressed—hear the truth violated, and the name of God profaned, without a mixture of grief and holy indignation, is justly chargeable with criminal indifference. The anger of Nehemiah against those nobles who had unfeelingly wrested their scanty inheritance from the poor, and the anger of Christ at the merchandize carried on in the temple, were laudable. Meekness regulates, but does not destroy this passion. It makes the Christian take heed, that he be not angry without cause. When proofs are wanting, he does not brood over suspicions, or ascribe every action and word to a bad design, that they may have an unhappy tendency. He is slow to wrath, and not easily provoked.

Besides, meekness not only prevents anger where there is no cause, or a very slight one; but, when it does rise, tempers, and, in due time, removes it. Ungoverned anger produces the most dreadful effects. A fit of rage cost the emperor Valentinian his life. Some have alienated their best friends, and maimed or slain their own children, in a gust of passion. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." James iii. 6. Let but the tongue be moved with anger, and it becomes a wildfire; touching the trains that have been previously laid, it springs the mines of mischief with a tremendous blast, and does more injury in a moment than years can repair. Even Moses, who was distinguished for meekness, so far lost himself at the waters of Meribah, as to speak unadvisably with his lips; on which account he was excluded from Canaan. We are especially warned against retaining or cherishing irascible passions. Anger resteth in the bosom of fools; but it must not take up its abode in the breast of a believer. Hence, Paul says, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath," Eph. iv. 26. Anger is a guest to which you must not give one night's lodging. Once indulged, it will gain a settlement: and, when out of sight, will be within hearing; easily roused up by a whisper, to distract and disturb. Nothing is so difficult to expel as an old grudge.

3. Meekness disposes the mind to forgive injuries. The maxims of men, and the precepts of the gospel; the spirit of the world, and the Spirit of Christ, are on this point directly opposite. Ungodly men think it both just and necessary to retaliate injuries. "To love and forgive enemies," says an ingenious writer, "was a lesson so new and utterly unknown, till Jesus taught it by his doctrine, and enforced it by his example, that the wisest moralists of the wisest nations and ages, represented the desire of revenge as the mark of a noble mind; but how much more magnanimous, how much more beneficial, is forgiveness? It is more

magnanimous, because every generous and exalted disposition of the human mind is requisite to practise it; and it is the most beneficial, because it puts an end to an eternal succession of injuries and retaliations." To a vicious taste, revenge is sweet. If, in the conflict of ambition, a hasty word kindles anger, it is thought by many the most honourable method to quench it with blood. But the gospel breathes another spirit. There is no subject, on which the language of our Lord is more express and positive, than on the necessity of a forgiving temper. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift," Matt. v. 23, 24. That God who loves mercy more than sacrifice, will not allow the implacable to approach him. In vain does the innocent victim, or the costly incense blaze on the altar, if the unhallowed fires of wrath are not extinguished in the heart. Take care to be at peace with men, before you present your peace-offering to God. When Christ taught his disciples to pray, he particularly connects the forgiveness of those who have injured us, with the hope of our obtaining pardon of God. It is remarkable, that this is the only part of the prayer which our Lord taught, on which he makes any comment: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses," Matt. vi. 14, 15. Aristotle says, "It is good to revenge ourselves upon our enemies; for it is but just to return the same measure that we have received." But, Christian, you are taught by a far better Master. When Peter put the question, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" doubtless, he thought by such a number, he had extended charity to its utmost limit. Jesus replied, "I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven," Matt. xviii. 21, 22. "The reflection," says Paley, "calculated above all others to allay that haughtiness of temper, which is ever finding out provocations, and which renders anger so impetuous, is that which the gospel proposes; namely, that we ourselves are, or soon shall be, suppliants for mercy and pardon at the judgment-seat of God." Imagine our secret sins all disclosed and brought to light; imagine us thus humbled and exposed, trembling under the hand of God, casting ourselves on his compassion, crying out for mercy—imagine such a creature to talk of satisfaction and revenge; refusing to be intreated, and disdaining to forgive; extreme to mark and resent what is done amiss;—imagine, I say, this, and you can hardly picture to yourself an instance of more impious and unnatural arrogance.

4. Meekness will dispose the Christian to suppress the first risings of a

murmuring spirit, and to live contented with the allotments of Providence.

To an ambitious man, no state of outward prosperity can yield satisfaction. Though riches be heaped upon riches, and honours added to honours, his desires will outgrow his possessions. Contentment is a disposition opposed to ambition, to anxiety, to envy, and to avarice. It enables us to bow the mind to the circumstances of our lot, when it is impossible to raise our condition to the wishes of the mind. In order to this, we must have a succession of lessons in the school of Christ. "I have learned," says Paul, "in whatever state I am, therewith to be content," Phil. iv. 11. The meek shall eat, and be satisfied. Is it because they have more costly food? No truly; the seasoning makes all the difference. The meek are conscious that they have forfeited every blessing, and deserve nothing but the unmingled dregs of Divine wrath; and though their table be furnished with but coarse and scanty fare, gratitude gives it a rich and peculiarly pleasing relish. On the contrary, the worldling often turns from his most sumptuous dainties with satiety and disgust.

Some have not been able to see the wise man's meaning, where he says, "The meek shall inherit the earth," Psal. xxxvii. 11. Had he declared that they must inherit heaven, the sense would have been clear. But how shall we reconcile the words as they stand with the actual condition of men? Do we, in general, find the meek possessed of the largest estates? Is wealth, or worldly power, in the hands of the saints? So far from it, that they are, for the most part, an afflicted and poor people. The true state of the case is this—All sincere believers enjoy what temporal comforts they have, be they many or few, in virtue of the unchangeable covenant of grace. The promise engages, that their bread shall be given them, and their water sure: and with this they are content. The poorest peasant, who blesses God for every comfort, and serves him in the strength of it, may be said to inherit the earth; for he possesses just that measure of its produce which infinite Wisdom sees good for him; while the wealthy worldling, who misapplies his abundance, is but an unprofitable steward.

II. I shall adduce a few considerations to recommend the cultivation of meekness.

1. Meekness is one of the clearest evidences of personal religion.

It is certainly possible to know what is our true character; whether we are to be classed with the righteous or the wicked; whether we are the foes or the

genuine followers of Christ. Now, if it is possible to know this, all must grant that it is highly desirable. A bare profession of regard for the gospel is no evidence of personal religion. The empty formalist, like the fig-tree which our Lord cursed, may have a goodly covering of leaves, but, being without fruit, is a cumberer of the ground, fit only to be cut down, and cast into the fire. Strong, but short-lived convictions, are no evidences of personal religion. Few are to be found, where the gospel shines, who have not had some beams of light flashing on the mind, some pangs of remorse in the conscience, some moments of melting sorrow or melancholy reflection, accompanied with faint purposes of amendment. Talents and abilities are no evidences of personal religion. A man may have a clear thinking head, a strong retentive memory, and a ready fluent tongue, and be able to preach and pray so as to excite admiration; and yet be a stranger to vital godliness. We must not judge of our characters by outward distinctions, or transient impressions; but by the state of the heart, or the habitually prevailing tempers of the mind. It is not the gift of nature, but the graces of the Divine Spirit, which evidence our adoption into the household of faith. Among these graces, meekness holds a very eminent place. God has expressly promised to beautify the meek with salvation. Does this lowly and lamb-like disposition prevail in you? Do you cheerfully submit your understanding to the revelation of God's will? Forsaking the glare of false lights, do you confidently follow this unerring Guide? Do you tremble at the idea of wresting or perverting the Holy Scriptures? Do you desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby? A meek disposition makes the soul teachable and ingenious. No doctrine will be rejected by such an one, on the pretence of its being mysterious; nor any precept, because of its strictness.

I would further urge you, to examine whether your passions are brought under the government of reigning grace. Do you endeavour, with soft words, to turn away wrath? You have to deal with persons of various dispositions. "Reproaches, like needles, may make uneasy impressions on a rough temper, and awaken it to fury; but every surgeon will tell you, a callous, or hard flesh, is to be cured by suppling oils, and not by the incision knife." Do you strive to prevent or allay every turbulent emotion in your own bosom? When defamed, abused, and wronged, can you speedily turn your thoughts to lay hold of every suitable reason that may blunt the edge of your resentment, instead of labouring to sharpen it, by thinking on the injury itself: a proud, fierce, fretful, implacable Christian, is as great a contradiction as can be conceived. Surely, that man whose conduct shows the craft of the fox, the treachery of the tiger, and the cruelty of the wolf, can have none of the marks of the lamb.

Are you ready not only to moderate anger, but likewise to pardon offences? A forgiving spirit is a very bright evidence of vital godliness. Many, through interest, indolence, and timidity, may forbear to avenge injuries, who never heartily forgive them. But wherever grace reigns it will produce this effect. Do you then sincerely forgive your worst enemies? Have they a share in your most earnest prayers? Could you, like Stephen, recommend to the Divine mercy the vilest persecutors? Let conscience reply to these interesting and solemn inquiries.

I would also urge you to examine whether you contentedly submit to the allotment of Providence. A meek disposition wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit, will not be lost by a change of circumstances. It softens adversity and tempers prosperity. It makes the same man who was cheerfully obedient as a servant, mild and condescending when he becomes a master. It cures vanity and calms passion. If these begin sometimes to rise and swell, the Christian has his antidote at hand. He asks himself, What have I that I have not received? What have I that I have not misimproved? Be faithful, reader, in examining yourself. Judge not of your state by opinions, or sudden impulses and short-lived feelings. It is not from creeds and confessions, from raptures and ecstasies, but from faith, love, and meekness, wrought into the settled tempers of the soul, that we have ground to conclude ourselves the true followers of Christ, and the adopted children of God.

2. Meekness is one of the brightest ornaments, as well as one of the clearest evidences of personal religion.

It is the ambition of some to dwell in houses embellished with every thing curious, costly, and magnificent, that can attract the gaze of the multitude. Others give up almost their whole time and care to deck and garnish the body. The labours of the silk-worm woven in the finest Indian loom, gems dug from the mine, and pearls fished from the bottom of the sea, with all the rare products that nature and art can supply, are collected to adorn a piece of polished clay, that ere long must become a mass of corruption, a prey to worms. But does not the soul, the immortal part, require our chief care? Should not our daily concern be to have it enriched and improved? Do you ask, Whence and how? I reply, With heavenly wisdom, charity, and peace. Wealth may array the body, but piety only can grace and dignify the soul. Without the fruits of the Spirit, learning is but useless lumber, and worldly pomp an empty glitter. Now, among those graces which form the Christian character, and reflect so much honour on the gospel,

none is more necessary than meekness. Hence Peter, speaking to pious females, says, "Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing gold, or of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price," 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4. This ornament is decidedly superior to all others. Think of its permanence. Meekness makes no ostentatious display to the eyes; but, investing the hidden man of the heart, it will wear well. It is said, like the soul itself, to be incorruptible. When all the beauties of the visible creation are faded, and all its glories extinguished, this fair ornament will shine with untarnished and ever-growing lustre. Think of its unspeakable value. Some things are fondly admired by children, which are despised by men, and those things which are highly prized and eagerly sought by men, appear but worthless toys to angels. But a meek and quiet spirit, in the view of all good men, in the eyes of holy angels, and in the sight of God, is of great price.

3. Meekness will enable you to achieve the noblest victories.

Many who have, through love of power or fame, laid cities in ashes, or desolated whole kingdoms, are complimented with the title of heroes. Painters and poets celebrate their triumphs. But ought not such actions to be abhorred and execrated, rather than admired and applauded? It has been justly said, Alexander conquered the world, but was himself vanquished by his own violent passions. The Indians, not unaptly, called him, "The mighty murderer," as others have termed him, "The Macedonian madman." The Christian is clad in heavenly arms, to subdue first the world within, and achieve other conquests than those which shine in the pompous pages of history. But meekness is essential to success in this holy warfare. Let this safeguard be removed, and the enemy instantly rushes in and gains an advantage over him. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls," [19] Prov. xxv. 28. The religion of Jesus forbids us to return railing for railing, or injury for injury. Where our Lord in strong language inculcates meek forbearance, some, indeed, take the words literally, and argue from thence the unlawfulness of self-defence. This I think is an error, though I cannot here discuss that point. We are not to resist evil, except to prevent it; or appeal to the law for redress, till we have applied to all gentler methods without effect. "Let the little bee," said one, "defend its little honey, with its little sting, for its life depends on the nourishment it has gathered." But the Christian has no envenomed sting: and if he had, he must not use it. The law of kindness is on his tongue, and if any have

offended, he tries to restore such in the spirit of meekness. "in taking revenge," says Lord Bacon, "a man is but even with his enemy; in granting forgiveness, he is superior to him." When Cleomenes was asked what a wise king should do, he replied, "Good to his friends, and evil to his enemies;" to which Aristo said, "How much better is it to do good to our friends, and make friends of our enemies!" "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," Rom. xii. 19–21. Have you with well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men? you have gained a greater trophy, than if, like Brutus, with a vengeful hand, you had stabbed a tyrant to the heart. Have you by mild forbearance or winning kindness conciliated an enemy, or brought a profane hardened scoffer to weep and pray? you have obtained a nobler victory than if you had subdued an empire. The honour which arises from overcoming evil with good, will be read in the book of God's remembrance, when time shall be no longer!

III. I shall offer some directions that may be useful in promoting Christian meekness.

1. Set a watchful guard over your tempers and passions.

In cities men have been so often destroyed and ruined by devouring conflagrations, generally occasioned through accidental causes, that they have invented various methods for preventing, escaping, or extinguishing fires. They have watchmen to walk the streets, means of easily procuring water, and engines to pour it on the blazing houses. And is there not need of equal precaution to prevent or extinguish those fires of passion, which even the slightest accidents frequently kindle within? It is much easier to suppress the first emotion, than those which follow it. None but fools will reject the wise man's advice: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life," Prov. iv. 23. The tradesman must keep his shop, or he cannot prosper; the cultivator must keep his vineyard, or it will not be fruitful; and the Christian must keep his heart, or he cannot be safe. Consider the dreadful consequences of ungoverned anger. Can we behold a more frightful and horrid sight than a person whose mind is darkened and disturbed, and whose very frame is shaken and disfigured by a storm of passion? While we see a man in violent anger, the eyes red and fiery, the cheeks pale as ashes, the lips quivering, the hands trembling, and all the

powers of nature in a ferment, we must own the truth of the ancient maxim, that rage is a short fit of madness. But is there neither cure nor preventive for it? Some have recommended a passionate man, when the fit comes on, to hasten to a looking-glass, and there survey himself; that shame may draw up into the face, in guilty blushes, some of that blood which boils and foams about the heart. This advice has something plausible in it; but yet it is, perhaps, anticipating rather too much to expect that the reflected shadow of a fool should cure folly; or, the sight of a madman remove phrenzy. Few, in prescribing remedies for this disease, are sufficiently acquainted with its force and virulence; its tendency to increase, even by many things applied to abate it. Were it only an infirmity of nature, we should pity, and not blame it. "But resentment," as Dr. Johnson observes, "is a union of sorrow with malignity; the combination of a passion which all endeavour to avoid, with a passion which all concur to detest. The man who retires to meditate mischief, and to exasperate his own rage; whose thoughts are employed only on means of distress and contrivances of ruin; whose mind never pauses from the remembrance of his own sufferings, but to indulge some hope of enjoying the calamities of another, may justly be numbered among the most miserable of human beings." And we may add, where rage and rancour are united in the same person, nothing but power is wanting to present a complete portrait of the devil. Is there something so shameful in the sight, and so shocking in the consequences, of ungoverned anger? then, Christian, guard your heart most vigilantly against it. Better were it to admit a thief into your house, than this incendiary into the soul. Shut every gate, bar every door, and block up every avenue where it is wont to gain access. As you dread satanic influence, or regard your own peace, set a watch over your tempers and passions. It is worthy of remark, that when the apostle commands us not to let the sun go down upon our wrath, he adds, in the very next words, "Neither give place to the devil," Eph. iv. 26, 27. That enemy is always near, but if the sentinels cease to watch, and mutiny or tumult arise among the passions, he will soon be within your trenches. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. v. 8.

2. Avoid, as much as possible, all occasions which excite and nourish pride and passion.

I join these, from the full conviction that they generally go together. "Only by pride cometh contention," Prov. xiii. 10. Meekness never yet sat on a haughty brow. Now, though believers are partakers of the Spirit of Christ, they are but renewed in part. They are both humble and meek, but not in the same degree as

their Lord. The remains of corruption in them are like sediment at the bottom of a pool, which rises when the water is troubled. Let it, then, be your care to avoid those causes, which stir up your proud and angry passions. Experience will best enable you to judge in this case. Perhaps there are certain companies in which you always feel disconcerted and hurt: you are pierced with the keen stings of ill-natured wit, or heated by the opposition of strenuous argument. It may be, you meet with some who speak perverse and uncharitable things on purpose to vex and provoke you; they are gratified by finding they have a power to wound your feelings. I do not advise you to withdraw from society: this would neither be your duty nor your interest. But you ought to be the more cautious in selecting the persons with whom you associate. He who carries tinder should keep out of the way of sparks.

Perhaps there are certain undertakings and pursuits by which you feel yourself constantly irritated. It is well to find the sphere for which we are fitted, and keep it. Where you have fairly a liberty of choice, avoid those employments and affairs which rob you of self-possession. Though your path be narrow, you must confess there was room enough to have escaped many wounding thorns, upon which you have trodden through inattention.

There are also peculiar circumstances and seasons, which call for a double portion of the spirit of meekness. When we are worn with painful disease, weighed down with the infirmities of age, or tried with sudden disappointments and disasters, we have great need to beware that a fretful and morose temper do not grow up in us.

Do you see it your duty to counsel the thoughtless, and reprove the profligate? show your love to their persons while you abhor their ways. Are Christians of your acquaintance overtaken with a fault? restore them in the spirit of meekness. In such offices of benevolence and friendship, "He that is slow to anger is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly," Prov. xiv. 29. How evidently was this seen in Jonah, when he said, "I do well to be angry, even unto death?" Jonah iv. 9. At that time there was a greater tempest in his soul, than that which his disobedience had before raised on the sea. As I have observed that immoderate anger invites the infernal enemy, the same cause drives away the Holy Spirit. Mr. Hall observes, "From his descending on Christ in the form of a dove, as well as from many express declarations of Scripture, we may with certainty conclude, the indulgence of all the irascible and malignant passions to be peculiarly repugnant to his nature; and it is remarkable, that the

injunction of not grieving the Holy Spirit is immediately followed by a particular caution against cherishing such dispositions: 'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you,' Eph. iv. 31, 32. Have you not found by experience, that the indulgence of the former has destroyed that self-recollection and composure which are so essential to devotion? Vindictive passions surround the soul with a sort of turbulent atmosphere, than which nothing can be conceived more opposite to that calm and holy light in which the Spirit loves to dwell."

3. Place before you the brightest examples of meekness.

In the Holy Scriptures, you will find this grace exhibited in the conduct of the saints; Moses, Samuel, David, and the apostles, may be recommended as examples. It is true, these all had their spots and blemishes: they were sometimes off their guard, and uttered a rash word; but their deportment was, in general, marked by moderation and forbearance. In Jesus Christ you have a perfect pattern of meekness and resignation. How kind and condescending was he to his disciples! he was ever ready to answer their inquiries, to solve their doubts, to calm their spirits, and to heal the wounds which their contentions had made. Truly could he say, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart," Matt. xi. 29. Men who excel others in quickness of apprehension, or extent of knowledge are apt to frown on the dull and ignorant; but Jesus, to whom were all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, was all mild forbearance and condescension to the meanest. What meekness appeared in his conduct towards those who went to hear him for no other purpose than to catch at something objectionable in his words, and cavil at his doctrines and deeds! He coolly reasoned with the Pharisees and Sadducees! or put them to silence, not by clamour, but by proposing questions which they could not answer. When they charged him with blasphemy, he vindicated himself by an appeal to the Scriptures, John x. 34. What meekness did he show towards the men who buffeted, mocked, and crucified him! he breathed out his departing soul in prayer for them: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!" Luke xxiii. 34.

It would be easy to mention many pleasing instances of meekness, and its happy fruits in every age. "I must not be an enemy," says a pious writer; "I would not have one. To be an enemy is sin; to have one, is sorrow." The meekness of Archbishop Cranmer was such, that those who did him an injury

were almost sure of receiving from him some favour. The late excellent Cornelius Winter was an admirable example of this virtue. Speaking in a letter of a Christian brother who was offended with him, he says, "Though he should still be angry with me, I cannot treat him as an enemy. We must bear our sufferings from the church as well as from the world, and stand the shock to which we are liable from the misunderstandings and resentments of those we love. I bless God, the misapprehensions of my friends do not alienate my affections from them! and though I feel wounded, I can distinguish between the thrust of an assassin's poniard and the blow of an offended brother, who would not strike if he did not mistake."

4. Seek meekness by meditation and prayer.

When you hurt others, or are hurt by them, through the rising of passion, do not excuse yourself by saying, "I cannot help it." Religion is to extend its influence to constitutional sins, as well as to those contracted by habit. Have you effectually tried the efficacy of meditation and prayer? Have you retired from the tumults and provocations of the world to the still serenity of the closet? When chafed or agitated by the calumnies or injuries of the crowd, have you, like the wounded deer, hastened to the cool shade of retreat? If you have not, make the experiment. Commune with your heart: "I have sustained a great loss in property; but why should I also lose my time and my temper? My friend has treated me with neglect; but might it not be from inadvertence, rather than design? My enemy has laboured to degrade me; but why should I sink my own character by yielding to ungoverned passions? If his charge be false, it cannot hurt me, but must recoil on himself: if it has some foundation in truth, I should correct my own conduct, and get advantage from a foe." Such converse with your own heart will not only tend to abate resentment at the time, but also form a milder and softer habit.

With meditation, join prayer.

"When you are angry," says one, "answer not till you have repeated the fifth petition of the Lord's prayer: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.'" Either the exercise of devotion will destroy resentment, or resentment will destroy the spirit of devotion. Let your eyes be lifted up to the great Father of spirits, and address him in such language as this: "Known to thee, O Lord, are all my thoughts, my follies, and my sins. Grant me forgiveness, and extend the same blessing to my worst enemies, through the atoning blood of thy

dear Son. Send down thy Holy Spirit into my heart, to subdue pride, to sanctify every passion, and fit me for thy service and glory. Let no anger, ill-will, or malice, have a place in this bosom. O let humility and meekness, forbearance and moderation, still influence my heart, and constantly shine in my life!"

CHAPTER X.

ON TEMPERANCE.[20]

"TEMPERANCE," says Dr. Campbell, "which has been considered in the schools, as denoting a superiority over the concupiscible affections, like what is implied in meekness over those called irascible, pride, anger, and impatience, is as necessary for the government of the appetites as the other is for the passions. There is no virtue which has been deemed more essential to the Christian character; there is none which has been generally more misunderstood, or which false religion has dressed out in more fantastic colours. It is acknowledged on all sides, that it would ill befit the students of a doctrine so divine as the Christian, to be the slaves of appetite. To be voluptuous, and to be heavenly-minded, can scarcely, to any understanding, appear compatible." The apostle tells us, that drunkenness, revellings, and such like, are among the works of the flesh. On the contrary, that temperance, which is fully inculcated in the precepts of the gospel, is effectually produced by the influence of the Divine Spirit. Let it not be thought this subject can be of no use, except to vicious profligates. Our Lord thus spake, not to the multitude, but to his disciples when they were alone: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares," Luke xxi. 34. And Paul, in his epistle to the church at Rome, saith, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," Rom. xiii. 13, 14.

I. I shall exhibit a brief outline of temperance. Understanding this term according to the compass of its meaning as used in the New Testament, it includes moderation in the enjoyment of those comforts which are given for our support and refreshment; and chastity, which is the due government of those passions that were planted for the continuance of the species.

1. To be temperate we must use with moderation the common comforts that Providence bestows for the support of nature.

It is by a wise appointment ordered, that the body should be under the control of the mind, and the mind subject to the revealed will of God. Intemperance breaks and subverts this order. The appetites bear rule, and one base indulgence opens the way for another, in the swift descent of licentiousness, till the man is sunk below the level of a beast. Is it possible to behold a more disgusting sight than an epicure, "whose kitchen is his temple, whose cook is his priest, and whose god is his belly?" Some vices wear a decent aspect, but gluttony and drunkenness are not less offensive than pernicious. Time was, when those who gave themselves up to wine and wantonness, were accounted sons and daughters of Belial, and branded with infamy.[21] Riot and excess sought the cover of darkness, and shunned the eye of observation, "They that are drunken," says Paul, "are drunken in the night" 1 Thess. v. 7. Yet in our age, and in this country professing Christianity, how often does the most brutish profligacy stalk forth, without shame, at noon day!

Temperance will lead us not only to avoid the most filthy haunts of excess and lewdness, but also to suppress every kind of fleshly indulgence that is detrimental to the soul. All anxiety about what we shall eat and drink, all labours to provide and arts to prepare such things as, while they pamper the body, engross too large a portion of our time, embarrass our circumstances, and deaden our hearts to religion, are to be considered as a degree of intemperance. What! it may be said, are we forbidden to enjoy ourselves? Are the gifts of fortune to be thrown away, or perish unused? Is every spark of cheerfulness to be quenched? Are we condemned to sit down in sullen and gloomy melancholy? Must we fast and fret our bodies into meagre skeletons? I reply, temperance requires no such things. Let monks in their damp cells, or hermits in their wild deserts, cherish those rigid and morose notions. The Christian must neither insult the God of Providence by despising his gifts, nor provoke him by wasting and abusing them. Let him eat his meat with gladness and singleness of heart to the Lord, and yet keep his eyes fixed on things of much higher importance. "The well-instructed Christian," says one, "eats that he may live; the sensualist lives that he may eat." The former considers the body as but an underling, a servant to the soul, and all its members as instruments of righteousness to God? the latter makes the soul a slave to the body, dimming the understanding, clogging the memory, and stupifying the conscience by voluptuousness.

2. To be temperate we must possess that chastity which is opposed to lascivious passions.

If we measure the evil of these passions by the manifold miseries they bring upon society, we can scarcely be too severe in condemning them. Adultery is generally preceded by a train of villanous intrigues and plots, and followed by jealousies, family discord, and separation, and sometimes by murder itself. "By lying and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood," Hos. iv. 2.

Chastity not only prevents us from entering upon a criminal course, but also guards us against those actions, words, looks, and thoughts, which have a tendency to wantonness. Marriage is honourable in all, but the tender endearments which belong to it are unlawful in any other state. A chaste person will carefully avoid all those intimacies and familiarities with individuals of the opposite sex, which so often issue in the most fatal consequences. He will watch over his very words, that nothing may escape his lips that can bear a meaning capable of kindling lascivious passions. Many indeed would blush to utter ribaldry or low offensive language, who still contrive to convey impure ideas by distant hints, ambiguous expressions, artful allusions, and facetious tales. When a decent veil covers the mischief, it is more likely to pass without hindrance, and work its way into the mind. There are many things which ought not even to be named among us, as becometh saints. Chastity will guard the eyes, as well as govern the tongue. Many think nothing of sin, unless it appears in some gross acts that draw with them immediate disgrace and misery. Let such read our Lord's comment on the seventh commandment, "I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart," Matt. v. 28. Chastity will keep us from allowing a place in our minds even to lascivious thoughts. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" James i. 15.

II. It will be necessary to assign some reasons why temperance is called the fruit of the Spirit.

Many may be disposed to ask, "Are not the strictest moderation, and the purest chastity often found in those who make no pretension to religion? May not temperance be considered as a moral virtue, which can be sufficiently cultivated without calling in the aid of Divine influence? Has it not shone with great lustre in the examples of some distinguished pagans? In reply, I would

offer the following observations.

1. Nothing can be justly denominated a virtue, but that which is produced by a proper motive, and referred to a proper end.

A principle of rectitude, or purity, must influence the heart. Now nothing can change and effectually renew the heart, but Divine grace. As there may be a cold or callous state of mind under sufferings and provocations, which widely differs from a meek and patient spirit; so there may be a freedom from the excess of sensuality which has nothing of the grace of temperance in it. One vice often prevents and opposes another. When the depravity of corrupt nature flows with great force through one channel, it will be almost exhausted, or greatly diminished in all the rest. A piece of ground may be free from a particular kind of weed, for no other reason than because it is already covered and choked with weeds of a different sort, and both cannot grow together. The miser, for instance, severely blames prodigality and brutish excess, and boasts that no one can charge him with such odious vices. But let the secret be told why does *he* refrain from them? Not forsooth because he hates intemperance, but because he loves his money. The ambitious man may look to a certain pinnacle of eminence, and throw aside low self-indulgence, because it would clog his efforts and check his progress. Some from a kind of apathy, or constitutional coldness, show no propensity to any thing but indolence, and the vices which spring from it. Others are so circumstanced as to have no powerful temptations to try them. The man who rows his little boat in still water, and never felt the impulse of the strong current, deserves no praise for not plunging into a whirlpool, because he was always beyond the sphere of its attraction.

The operations of the Divine Spirit only can produce that which strictly deserves the name of temperance. Philosophy has often bent its force against the disorderly affections of human nature; but has proved unsuccessful, either by failing short of the mark, or overshooting it. Seeing the mischiefs which sprung from indulging the passions, the vain-glorious stoics aimed to root them out, rather than to regulate them. But it surely shows more skill to tame a wild animal, and make it useful, than to kill it. Superstition has also made many attempts similar to those of the stoics, and to no better purpose. Hence arose, in the dark ages of popery, so many monasteries and nunneries, in which persons of both sexes made vows of perpetual celibacy, and shut themselves out from all the innocent enjoyments and useful duties of human life. Hence those rigid rules of discipline, those pains and penances, those fasts and flagellations, in which so

much of piety was placed. To avoid intemperance, they acted as foolishly as the man does, who, to prevent his house from being consumed with fire, instead of keeping it in its proper place, and guarding against the danger of sparks, at once puts his fire out, and sits down to shiver amongst all the rigours of a northern winter. Temperance, growing out of a mind habitually influenced by the Holy Spirit, is essentially different from monkish austerity. It duly regulates, but does not destroy the passions.

2. The operations of the Holy Spirit, applying Divine truth to the heart, have recovered many from the most fixed and inveterate habits of gross sensuality, to a life of sobriety and purity.

To confirm this observation, we need only refer to the first fruits of their ministry, whom Christ first employed to preach the gospel. The degraded state of sensuality and profligacy, into which the heathen nations were sunk, is proved by the united testimonies of all ancient historians. Wherever the gospel was heartily received, a happy change followed. Peter, addressing himself to Christians, takes it for granted, that they were entirely separated from their former dissolute companions and practices: "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you," 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4. Indeed the effect produced by the gospel, in humanizing the most brutish men, and transforming them into new creatures, was one of the strongest evidences of its Divine authority and excellence. The apostle thus addresses himself to the Corinthians: "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 9–11. In a place where sensuality, the most odious and shameful, had long been deeply fixed in the habits of the people, the good effects of the gospel were strikingly conspicuous. In many, a glorious change was produced. This, however, was not to be ascribed to mere outward means; such as the eloquence of the preacher, or the miracles which struck the senses; but, as appears from the above cited passage, to the quickening and purifying influence of the Holy Spirit. In a city where the contagion of profligacy had infected all ranks, and showed its extreme virulence by the strongest symptoms, the efficacy of Christianity was indisputably evident.[22]

But such instances were not confined to that age: in every age, some have been brought, by the power of Divine grace, from the vilest intemperance to a life of sobriety and chastity. Colonel Gardiner, who, before his conversion, was so much given up to profligacy, particularly to lewdness, that he used to say, "God himself could not reform him without giving him a new constitution," declared that, "afterwards he felt no temptation from what had once been his besetting sin." Mr. Brainerd, whose labours were so eminently blessed to the conversion of many American Indians, after that remarkable outpouring of the Spirit, which attended the preaching of Christ and him crucified, among them, observes, that a very visible and happy change immediately followed in their conduct. "Numbers," says he, "of these people are brought to a strict compliance with the rules of morality and sobriety, and to a conscientious performance of the external duties of Christianity, without their having been frequently inculcated upon them, and the contrary vices particularly exposed. When the great truths of the gospel were felt at heart, there was no vice unreformed, no external duty neglected. Drunkenness, their darling vice, was broken off, and scarcely an instance known of it for months together. The practice of husbands and wives in putting away each other, and taking others in their stead, was quickly reformed. The same might be said of all other vicious practices: the reformation was general, and all springing from the internal influence of Divine truth upon their hearts."

3. The operations of the Holy Spirit, applying the word of truth to the heart, subdue those strong propensities to intemperance, which would break out and gather strength by indulgence, if not prevented by a powerful counteracting cause.

That remedy is exceedingly valuable which not only heals disease where it already prevails, but also prevents disease, by operating as an antidote to contagion. Some have alarmed their serious friends, by discovering very early the most restless and violent passions, and the strongest propensities to sensual indulgence; yet, of such sanguine persons, there are not a few who, through the power of religion on the mind during the blooming season of youth, have not only escaped the pollutions that are in the world through lust, but become eminent examples of every Christian virtue. Those who attentively observe the openings of the tender mind, and mark the influence of the gospel in determining the course men pursue, will not want, within the sphere of their acquaintance, instances of this description. As Divine providence protects us from many in visible dangers, as well as from those which are seen; so Divine grace, which

reclaims us from some sins, preserves us from falling into others. Extraordinary escapes and remarkable conversions excite uncommon attention; the mind bounds with joy, and burns with gratitude. But are either temporal or spiritual blessings less valuable, because they are communicated through means which do not border on miracles? Surely, there ought to be the same thankful acknowledgments in both cases. "Walk in the Spirit," says the apostle, "and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh," Gal. v. 16. Spiritual-mindedness cannot consist with the sickening scenes of riot and lewdness. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit," Rom. viii. 5.

III. We shall mention some of the advantages of temperance.

1. There is a noble kind of freedom invariably attending Christian temperance.

Bondage of every kind is considered as a grievous calamity. Our Lord declares, that "whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin," John viii. 34.

This, of all others, is the most galling and disgraceful slavery. You know how many every where submit to it! How many drudge and toil all day long, to supply their clamorous and insatiable passions! How many are violently, hurried away by their own impetuous and unbridled appetites! Is it possible to be in a more wretched state, than to be continually employed in serving divers lusts and pleasures? Such persons may break through the restraints of Providence, and cast down the fence of decency and affect to glory in their exploits; but they are bound and lettered in the cords of their own sins. While they boast of their liberty, they are themselves the servants of corruption. Such persons might blush at the maxims and conduct of pagans.[23] Would not any one think it a most grievous punishment to be tied to a beast, and be dragged by it through wounding thorns and miry swamps? But every sensualist makes his own fetters, and voluntarily binds himself to a brutish life. He puts himself under the power of lust and appetite, and suffers the body to drag the soul into every sink of vice and infamy.

But "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. The believer is not only free from the curse, but also from the reigning power of sin. The senses, appetites, and passions become subject to the enlightened understanding and renewed will. The inferior powers of our nature are brought

to obey, rather than rule the higher faculties of the soul. This is justly styled, "the glorious liberty of the children of God," Rom. viii. 21. Who can calculate, who can conceive, the advantages connected with such a privilege? "Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life," Rom. vi. 22.

2. Temperance ensures the best enjoyment of the comforts which God bestows.

Why did the great Creator so plentifully store with conveniences and blessings the world in which we dwell? Why does he cause the seasons, in their constant round, to renew the face of the earth with beauty, and fill her bosom with fruits? Why does he furnish our table, and make our cup run over, with the bounties of his providence? Was it intended that these things should perish untasted? Such a notion is unreasonable and absurd. We are assured, that God has given us all things richly to enjoy. But intemperance, while it perverts the blessings of Divine goodness, defeats its own aim. Through eagerness to gratify the appetites and animal passions, nature is overloaded and health impaired. "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine!" Prov. xxiii. 29, 30. The drunkard, the glutton, and the debauchee are often filled with the most painful and loathsome diseases. The truth of the well known proverb cannot be called in question, "Meat kills more than muskets; and the board destroys more than the sword." I have read of a very extraordinary mode of executing capital offenders practised in some heathen country. "There is an engine shaped like a beautiful lady, which the criminal salutes, and afterwards retires. He returns again to salute the fatal machine: the figure opens its arms, and cuts him through the heart!" Whether such a custom now actually prevails in any place, I cannot engage to affirm. I quote the story for the sake of the allusion it supplies: it presents us with a true image of that flattering but cruel goddess, Sensual Pleasure. Those who eagerly press into her arms, are sure to fall and perish at last. But the temperate man enjoys the benefit designed in earthly things, while he still looks for something higher and better. He draws from the creatures the sweetness they are capable of imparting, without draining them to the dregs. He eats and drinks with moderation, and is satisfied with the goodness of the Lord.

3. Temperance assists the exercise of benevolence.

It is true, that some who are given up to luxury and extravagance, do occasionally relieve the needy and wretched; but, for the most part, benevolence must be sought among characters of a different description. While Dives puts on his purple and fares sumptuously every day, Lazarus at his gate weeps and starves, unpitied and unsuccoured. Indeed, the profuse, expensive, and squandering habits of sensualists, deprive them of the means of doing good. A soft, effeminate, luxurious life, quite unfits for the self-denying and arduous exertions of Christian charity. Such persons are too delicate to bear the sight of poverty and disease: it is too painful a task for them to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, or put forth a hand to lighten the load of calamity under which a fellow creature groans. The prophet describes persons of this character, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion! ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chaunt to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph," Amos vi. 1. 3–6. Temperance, by moderating our passions, and lessening, rather than multiplying our wants, puts us in circumstances capable of benefiting our fellow-creatures. Some Christians of no great wealth, have been remarkably useful in society. And surely one who spares to spend in charity, who is himself satisfied with little, that he may give to him that needeth, has made considerable progress in the school of Christ. It deserves to be noticed, that Jesus, while he lived on earth, and went about doing good, never wrought a miracle to satisfy his own hunger, though he wrought many to satisfy others.

4. Temperance prepares us to engage in the various duties of religion.

Whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart; and when the heart is alienated from God, he abhors the mockery of lip service. To be prepared for the presence of that Being who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, we must be sanctified wholly, in body, soul, and spirit. Holiness becomes the house of God, and every branch of his worship. The sensual heart is a furnace, whose smoke darkens the mind, that it cannot discern sublime and heavenly realities. The sacred solemnities of religion are profaned by the unhallowed touch of the beastly libertine. Drunkards and profligates might mix with such devotees as the carousing worshippers of Bacchus, but are offensive in the sight of Jehovah. The apostle Paul sharply reproves the Corinthians, for abusing, through intemperance, the most solemn and interesting ordinance that ever was instituted

—I mean the sacrament of the Lord's supper, 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21. How unfit is he to draw nigh to God, who comes into the sanctuary reeking from the haunts of excess! We are engaged in many important and necessary duties, which require the full exercise of all our powers, both of body and mind. "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love," 1 Thess. v. 8.

The temperance here described is needful, to prepare us for the Christian race and the Christian conflict. This is finely illustrated by an allusion to the annual Olympic games of Greece. "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away," 1 Cor. ix. 24–27.

IV. Let me now specify some means which may be useful in the cultivation of temperance.

1. Consider all the blessings you enjoy as talents, which you are solemnly called to use and improve.

Do you not see yourself utterly unworthy of the comforts you possess? By sin, you have forfeited your inheritance; and does God yet, with a liberal and unsparing hand, shower down his mercies upon you? Then, certainly, it becomes us to use all the good things bestowed, with the strictest moderation. What would you say of a servant, that wasted his master's substance before his eyes, and turned his kindness into an occasion of abusing and affronting him? And are you not a servant of God, a steward of the great Master of all? Nothing you have is, properly speaking, your own. You hold every thing in trust, by the most precarious tenure. The piercing eyes of Jehovah are perpetually upon you. The awful day is fast approaching, when you must give up the account of your stewardship, whether the blessings conferred upon you have been wasted, or profitably employed. Lay these things to heart, that, when the allurements of sensuality are presented you may flee from them with abhorrence. Many, like Belshazzar, have been seized with terror by the judgments of God in the midst of their luxurious revels. Some have been hurried out of time into eternity in a state of intoxication. Dreadful transition! the bare idea of which, meeting the imagination, makes it recoil, and strikes a shivering chill through the whole

frame. Consider, then, how temperately you ought to use those blessings which Providence assigns to your lot, blessings of which you are so unworthy, blessings for which you must so soon answer at the bar of God?

2. Take heed what company you keep.

This caution may be suitable for all, but is especially necessary for the young. Without a close observation of the world, we cannot conceive how great is the force of bad example on the yielding mind of youth; and the examples of none are so dangerous, as those who affect a life of gaiety and sensual pleasure. Hence, the apostle, after repeating the maxim of the atheistical profligate, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die," immediately adds, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners," 1 Cor. xv. 32, 33. How seasonable, in this age, is the exhortation of Solomon! "Be not among wine-bibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh!" Prov. xxiii. 20.

You may think it sometimes necessary to meet your connexions and neighbours, for the purpose of cherishing and expressing mutual sentiments of friendship. Too many seem to suppose, they can have no pleasant social intercourse without what they call good living; a phrase which in their sense of it denotes the voracious gratification of appetite. But you may be hospitable to your neighbours without a great abundance of sumptuous provisions; you may be cheerful among your friends, without pushing round the sparkling glass, till intoxicating liquors have fired the brain, and destroyed the use of reason.

Sometimes you are called to meet company, to transact the affairs of business. I am disposed to think intemperance has often gained an ascendancy in the bustling resorts of traffic. Many imagine they may lay aside their usual reserve, if they can make a good bargain over a bottle. Those who are deterred from wallowing in excess, by the fear of losing both their credit and profit, venture to draw a little nearer and nearer to the gulf of intemperance, till some of their bolder associates plunge them in, and then glory in the exploit.

There are some seasons which are usually celebrated with festivity and joy. It cannot be denied, that great and glorious events ought to fill us with gladness, and that it is lawful to express it in a social and hospitable manner. Abraham, the father of the faithful, made a feast for his household, on the birth of his son Isaac. Our Lord honoured with his presence the marriage feast of Cana, where he wrought his first miracle. On such occasions, the Christian, that he may act

conscientiously and consistently, requires the greatest caution and holy vigilance.

3. Let your attention be chiefly directed to the attainment of Spiritual and Divine blessings.

It is possible to keep at a due distance from beastly excess, and yet be far too much employed in providing for the body. "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Matt. vi. 31, continues to be the constant cry of the multitude. It is disgraceful for a Christian to spend a great deal of time in procuring delicacies, or to talk while he sits at table, with frivolous earnestness, about the excellence of certain dishes or the savour of certain wines. Having such things as are wholesome, let us be content with them. Let the prayer of Agur become our own: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me," Prov. xxx. 8. A temperate man does not need the science of cookery to prepare his repast; nor does he fix the exact quantity of his meat and drink by weight and measure. He is not singular to attract admiration; but sober and moderate, to qualify him for all the duties of his station. While Martha was cumbered about much serving, the one thing needful was forgotten. Mary chose the better part, and her conduct is worthy of imitation. Remember, God himself has made a feast in Zion to which you are always welcome. He hath sent forth his servants to invite you, saying, "Come; for all things are now ready.—Thus saith the Lord, hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" Matt. xxii. 4. Isa. lv. 2, 3. Cant. v. 1. Here there is no danger of excess. The choicest provisions are spread before you in the promises of the gospel. With such plenitude and variety of spiritual blessings, you have no cause to envy the worldly voluptuary. If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, your experience may furnish you with arguments to shun the inlets to intemperance. Besides those Divine enjoyments which you have received, higher and better things are still in reserve for you. The worldling subsists on cold-served repetitions; the Christian has new pleasures as he advances, for he draws from sources which can never be exhausted. Let us then go on unto perfection. There are stores of knowledge which we have not begun to gather; clusters of comfort, which hang ripe and ready to be plucked; springs of joy that we have never tasted, or yet opened.

4. Seek a larger measure of the Holy Spirit's influence.

Rules of discipline alone will prove insufficient to govern and purify the mind. "For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," Tit. ii. 11, 12. If we are not taught by Divine grace,, we shall learn nothing aright. The fruit of the Spirit was never yet produced on the stock of unrenewed nature. To seek it there is like looking for grapes on thorns, or figs on thistles. Even in the precepts of the gospel, which relate to such virtues as temperance, we are carefully conducted, by inspired guides, directly to the throne of grace. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess," said Paul, "but be filled with the Spirit," Eph. v. 18. But why is this latter part of the passage put in the form of a command? It is because that God, who hath the residue of the Spirit to communicate, hath promised it in answer. By an abundant supply of his Divine influence, evil propensities are subdued, and good ones strengthened. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live," Rom. viii. 13. Let then your eyes be daily lifted up to that Being, who is the fountain of all purity and bliss. Let your cry be, "Lord, grant me thy good Spirit, that I may bring every thought, every passion, and every power into sweet subjection and obedience to thy will. Guard me from all the flattering baits of forbidden pleasure. Give me grace to serve thee with my body and spirit, which are thine. Thou knowest my weakness; thou seest my wanderings. My God, to whom can I go, but unto thee? Guide me with thy counsel and endow me with heavenly strength. Let thy Holy Spirit renovate and sanctify all my affections and powers. May I live to thy praise, die in thy favour, and be for ever happy in thy presence."

THE END.

[1]See Dr. Gregory's excellent Letters on the Evidences, Doctrines, and Duties of the Christian Religion, Vol. ii. Letter 17.

[2]Quid opus votis? Fae te ipse felicem vel bonum.--SENECA. "What necessity is there for prayers? Make thyself virtuous or happy." He proceeds to say, "When you once possess yourself, you will no longer be a supplicant, but a companion

of the gods." Here we see the essence of carnal wisdom and stoical pride.

[3]If they be wild enthusiasts who teach the necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence, then we must place in this number such men as Taylor, Barrow, Boyle, Hale, Tillotson, Clarke, Watts, and Doddridge. But it is vain to expect that the most celebrated or venerable names can shield a doctrine which is confessedly mysterious, from the shafts of ridicule, discharged by the followers of Socinus. Those candid, learned, and rational Christians, who have found out that the sacred writers are bad historians and inconclusive reasoners; and dare boldly tax the apostles as being tinctured with Jewish prejudices, and bewildered with extravagant and unintelligible allegories, will not hesitate a moment to set at defiance the whole host of able divines, eminent scholars, and biblical critics!

[4] Gal. v. 22. The fruit of the Spirit is ἀγάπη, charitas. Illa de qua, 1 Cor. xiii. Charitas erga Deum et proximum. Ab hac orditur quia haec reliquorum radix est origo.—PAREUS. "It is that charity, or love, so fully delineated in 1 Cor. xiii., love to God and love to our neighbour. This is mentioned first in the train of all the graces, because it is the root and origin of all the rest."

[5]Mrs. More's Practical Piety.

[6]Dr. Watts's Discourse on Love to God.

[7] Dr. Johnson's Religion and Superstition Contrasted.

[8]Luther often used this maxim: "Delight in sorrow; sorrow in delight. Rejoicing in the Lord; mourning in ourselves."

[9]She possessed a large measure of serenity and cheerfulness of temper. This happy disposition of mind, which is more than once recommended in the sacred writings, and is so great an ornament to true piety, continued with her to the last moment; so that, excepting some intervals of generous grief, occasioned by her social affections, her whole life seemed not only a constant calm, but also a perpetual sunshine.—Gibbon's Memoirs of Pious Women.

[10]Hilaritas est erga proximum, quae morositati contraria est.

[11]Sane non debebat homo minimum de hac pace rumorera audire, quin statim ad eam sibi acquirendam ingenti animi impeta ferretur. Et si necesse foret ad ultimos orbis terminos proficisci, ut de ratione illius comparandae erudiretur,

impigro animo suscipiendum illud iter erat. Sed ecce incredibilem numinis benevolentiam! Non modo de praestantia tanti boni sufficienter homines in verbo suo instruit, sed et copiose eos informat, qua via eo potiri queant: verbum reconciliationis indendo ori servorum suorum.—Wit. OEcon. lib. iii. ch. 9.

On hearing the slightest rumour of this peace, surely every man ought to feel the most ardent desire immediately to acquire it. And though he should have to travel to the furthest regions of the globe to be instructed in the method of obtaining it, he ought, with the greatest readiness and cheerfulness, to undertake the journey. But, behold the wonderful loving kindness of God! He not only sufficiently teaches men, in his own word, the excellency of so great a blessing, but also amply informs them in what way they may come to the possession of it, by committing the word of reconciliation to the lips of his own servants.

[12]Gal. v. 22. "The fruit of the Spirit is long suffering and patience;" Μαχροθυμια. This word is used to signify a frame of mind fitted to endure, with manly firmness and meek resignation, the various sufferings we meet in the path of duty, whether from the hands of men, or immediately from the chastening hand of God. The above passage in the version of the Vulgate, has "Patientia ;" in Beza's "patiens animus." It is sometimes rendered patience by our translators. See Heb. vi 12. James v. 10.

[13]In the first ages of Christianity, it had become a proverb, ("Soli Christiani mortis contemptores,") that "Christians only were despisers of death." Epictetus, indeed, attempts to account for it, but in such a way as discovers his ignorance or malice. He speaks of the Galileans, namely the Christians, being indifferent to sufferings from madness or habit. The satirical and profane Lucian, describing Christians, says, "These poor creatures are firmly persuaded that they shall one day enjoy eternal life; therefore, they despise death with wonderful courage." Here we find the brightest display of the noblest virtues basely stigmatized; and the grand principle from which they sprung, a firm belief of future happiness, held up to ridicule.

[14]"Hic est magnus animus qui se Deo tradit." SENECA. "That is a great mind which commits itself to God,"—"Animus aequus optimum est aerumnarum condimentum."—PLAUT. "The best ingredient for seasoning sorrow is patience."

[15]Hervey's Theron and Aspasio.

[16]Gal. v. 22. "The fruit of the Spirit is goodness." Ἀγαθωσύνη, signifies goodness in general. But here, as in many other places, it denotes kindness, benevolence, munificence. In this sense it is evidently used, Matt. xx. 15. "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" The context makes it manifest, that a generous or bountiful disposition is intended, as distinguished from that justice which renders to men their due, but nothing more. See also Rom. v. 7. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die."

[17]Gal. v. 22. Πιστιζ. This word, as Dr. Doddridge justly observes in a note on the passage, signifies fidelity. There are several other Scriptures in which it bears this sense; see Rom. iii. 3. 1 Tim. i. 14. Matt. xiii. 23. Our translators properly render it fidelity, in Titus. ii. 10.

[18]Cicero says, "Nihil honestum esse potest quod justitia vacat." "Nothing can be honourable which nullifies justice." In our Christian country, how many might blush at the morality of this heathen! The debts contracted in gaming, they think it absolutely necessary to discharge; but tradesmen may lose the fruits of their honest industry, and sink with their families to ruin, without being either paid what is due to them, or pitied in their fall. This may be honour by the law of fashion; but it is base injustice in the court of conscience. Such a sentiment, when once imbibed, operates like a deadly drug, which, for a short time exhilarates the spirits, but taints the whole mass of blood. It resembles not so much a single bullet, which does mischief in one point of direction, as a chain-shot, that, in its wide wasting range sweeps away every thing before it.

[19]An ancient and well known poet gives the following wise precept: "Animum rege, qui nisi pater imperat." "Govern your own mind, or it will tyrannically rule you." "Qui se volet esse potentem, animos domet ille feroces." "He who would have the command, must subdue his own ferocious passions." Boethius, the Christian philosopher, wrote this maxim in his celebrated book, and exemplified it in his life. He was beheaded by order of Theodoric, in the sixth century: and with him, says a learned writer, the Latin tongue and the last remains of Roman dignity, may be said to have sunk in the western world.

[20] Gal. v. 23. Ἐγκρατεία, signifies that self-government which guards us against all excess in sensual pleasures. It includes the full import of what, in our language, is expressed by the two words temperance and chastity. Piscator, Beza, Grotius, and other eminent critics, take it in this extent of meaning. See Poole's

Synopsis.

[21]When Eli suspected Hannah of intemperance, she said, "Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial," 1 Sam. i. 16. The Hebrew word which we translate Belial, may from its compounds signify either one without yoke, void of restraint and self-government; or one who is unprofitable and useless. No term can more correctly describe revellers, adulterers and drunkards. They are dissolute and licentious, slaves of unbridled appetite; and instead of being a blessing, are a pest to society.

[22]Corinth was proverbially addicted to intemperance and lewdness. There was, in the city, a temple of Venus: to which, according to Strabo, belonged above a thousand priestesses—all avowedly vicious.

[23] It was the saying of a heathen, "Major sum et ad majora natus, quam ut corporis mei sim mancipium."—"I am greater, and born for greater things, than to be a slave to my body."