

scheme, and is set up in opposition to the gospel, taking its rise from the purity and holiness of God's nature and the essential difference of good and evil, prescribes a worship pure and holy; but it prescribes it to men who have lost their purity and holiness, and are no longer able to perform the rigorous conditions; it requires brick without allowing straw; exacting of men, in their present degenerate state, the purity and holiness of uncorrupted reason and nature: it affords no strength or assistance to men, to secure against sin; and when they have sinned, it cannot give them any certain assurance of pardon and forgiveness; so that men, not being able to perform its conditions, and having no security of the mercy of God without performing them, can have no settled peace or satisfaction in it." *Sermon on Eph. ii. 18.*

It is a distinguishing excellence of Christianity, that it is adapted to the fallen condition of man:—it is glad tidings to perishing sinners. It sees man far from happiness, and hastening rapidly to ruin; and like the angel of mercy descends from the throne of Jehovah, points to the cross of the Saviour, directs the sinner to seek the favour of God through the blood of atonement, and to walk in the path of holiness, which must confer present and conduct to future happiness.

Few words are used in a greater latitude of meaning than is that of *Religion*. We frequently use it without conveying any very distinct ideas, and at some other times what we mean may be misunderstood. There are two very distinct senses in which the word is employed, and of which it is of importance to have clear views. We sometimes mean by the term the *object* which religion contemplates; hence we speak of the Religion of the Bible, and the Religion of Nature; the Christian Religion, and the Pagan; the Popish Religion, and the Reform-

ed; at other times we consider it as relating to the *subject* whom it concerns; and then we mean the dispositions it creates in the heart of man, and the conduct to which it leads. The view we shall now take of it, will, in some degree, include both these. We shall consider religion *as a disposition of heart, produced by the Holy Spirit of God, by means of the word of truth, which raises a man above the pursuits of the present world, leads him to the worship and obedience of God, and prepares him for the enjoyment of heaven.* The religion we advocate, is divine in its origin, spiritual in its nature, and holy and benevolent in its designs. Let us endeavour to examine this view of it, and see how far it is calculated to produce pleasure in the hearts of those who possess it.

Such is the unhappy state of man, that till an entire change takes place in his nature, he cannot possibly enjoy the felicity of which his soul is capable, and for which it was originally created. The benevolent design of the Creator was, that the affections of man should be placed on himself as the great source of his happiness, and that he should look to his gracious hand for the supply of all his wants. So long as Adam did this, he was filled with enjoyment, but when he turned from Jehovah to seek happiness in created good, he became miserable. From that period to the present, the dispositions of men have been sinful,—their hearts "have been fully set in them to do evil,"—and an awful progress has been made in the ways of iniquity. The world has presented a scene of dreadful warfare; the millions of its inhabitants have formed a mighty army who have taken up the weapons of rebellion, and appeared against the God who made them, resolving to cast off the restraints of his law, and to be governed by their own way-ward inclinations, which have formed an alliance with Satan, the