

volume contains the bitterest expressions of sorrow uttered by some of the best of men, and the Saviour himself teaches us, that if we would share the happiness of his people, we must take up our cross and follow him. We do not pretend to deny that the Christian is the subject of painful feelings, and that he is called to the discharge of the most painful duties. But let these sorrows be examined as to their nature, let them be traced to their origin, and followed out in their effects, and it will at once be seen that they spring not from religion, but from sin. It is true that the man who is altogether destitute of religion is altogether unacquainted with this class of sorrows, but the reason of this is, that he is "blind, knowing nothing;"—he is unfeeling, and not aware of his danger. Could he be brought to see his true circumstances, the pleasure in which he now seems to indulge would flee from him, and he would be the subject of inexpressible sorrow. The Christian, the man who has embraced the truths of the gospel, and who is living by faith on the Saviour, feels himself yet a sinner; he is the subject of "an evil heart of unbelief, prone to depart from the living God," and this fact gives him pain. To oppose sin, and to rise above it, is the object after which he labours, and to resist the evil inclinations of his heart, is the cross he has daily to bear. Thus we see that the sorrows of the Christian spring from sin; and it is the province of religion to support him in this conflict, to strengthen him for these labours; and this it does in a degree of which the worldly man can form no idea. It exhibits the promises of God on which the mind can repose, it conducts to the throne of grace where the soul derives strength immediately from heaven, and it exhibits the crown of victory he shall finally wear, and the world of repose in which he shall indulge in eternal triumphs in the presence of his Saviour.

It may be objected farther to the doctrine we have attempted to prove, that many professing Christians are disposed to melancholy, and appear the subjects of the deepest sorrow. This statement is correct, but from what does this melancholy arise? Perhaps it is a constitutional disease,—perhaps it is the result of some erroneous views of the truth which they have somehow or other imbibed,—or possibly it arises from a fear that they do not possess religion: it is certain it does not spring from religion itself. Let these persons be appealed to, and they will be found to have a conviction that religion alone can make them happy,—they will desire its possession above every other object, and it will not be possible by any means to draw their attention from it. With all the gloom that oppresses their minds, they are happier in the pursuit of spiritual good than they could be in the world, and did they possess more correct views of religion itself, their enjoyment would be far superior to what it is. This is proved by the happiness which many of these persons experience when they are more enlightened as to the true nature of religion, and have their hopes excited of an interest in the Divine favour.

But once again, an objector may ask, if religion makes a man happy, how is it that so many of its professors forsake it? It is admitted that these persons have never tasted its happiness, and that because they have never possessed religion. It is religion itself, or the experience of a right disposition of heart towards God, that makes a man happy, and not the mere profession of it. As a man, in order to obtain respect from his neighbours, may profess an acquaintance with the sciences, while he is altogether destitute of a correct or enlarged knowledge of them, even so may he profess religion without loving it or enjoying any of its advantages. There are many persons to be found whose consciences