

the whole man, as an inward sense of God; of his authority over us; of the laws he has set us; of his eye ever upon us; of his hearing our prayers, assisting our endeavors, watching over our concerns; of his being to judge, and reward or punish, us in another state, according to what we have done in this. Nothing will give us such a detestation of sin, and such a sense of the goodness of God, and of our obligations to holiness, as a right understanding and firm belief of the Christian religion.

“By living according to the rules of religion, a man becomes the wisest, the best, and the happiest creature that he is capable of being. Honest industry, the employing of time well, a constant sobriety, an undefiled purity and chastity, with continued serenity, are the best preservatives, too, of life and health; so that, take a man as an individual, religion is his guard, his perfection, his beauty, and his glory. This will make him a light in the world, shining brightly, and enlightening many round about him.

“Thus religion, if truly received and sincerely adhered to, would prove the greatest of all blessings to a nation. But by religion I understand something more than receiving particular doctrines, though ever so true, or professing them, and engaging to support them, even with zeal and eagerness. What signify the best doctrines, if men do not live suitably to them; if they have not a due influence upon their thoughts and their lives? Men of bad lives, with sound opinions, are self-condemned, and lie under a highly-aggravated guilt.

“By religion I do not mean an outward compliance with forms and customs, in going to church, to prayers, to sermons, and to sacraments, with an external show of devotion; or, which is more, with some inward forced good thoughts, in which many satisfy themselves, while these have no visible effect on their lives, nor any inward force to control and rectify their appetites, passions, and secret designs. These customary performances, how good and useful soever when understood and rightly directed, are of little value when men rest on them, and think, because they do them, they have