

theo;" and Solomon said, "O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father, and I am but a little child, I know not how to go out or come in. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people; that I may discern between good and bad, for who is able to judge this thy so great people; and it pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing." Such was the wise and manly answer made by a youth about twenty years of age. Now, reflecting on what almost all youths in his circumstances, with strong passions, a love of magnificence, and in possession of the proudest throne in Asia, would ask, we cannot but strongly admire Solomon's modesty and wisdom, and that diffidence in himself, which turned him in confidence to God. Thus guided by heavenly principles, which can alone triumph in conflicts which monarchs have to undergo as well as others, he took upon himself the Royal power as God's vicegerent upon earth, and as his appointed instrument of blessedness to his people. He was the predecessor of one far greater than himself, and prefigured him who was to gather all the earth under his dominion. He was, as it were, riding in a glorious procession, which his orderly conduct would bring happily towards its end; and although great, he was only the harbinger in that mighty procession, and wore the livery of that heavenly Sovereign who, as in a triumph, closed up the rear. The principles which Solomon had chosen are like the soul of man, which cannot be affected by the elements of this world, but are able to defy their most violent assaults, and are like the wind which throws down palaces, but is itself unassailable; while, on the other hand, worldly principles, like the body of man, yield before the assaults of kindred elements, and break up and waste away by being exposed to stronger and more corrupt principles of the same world. Solomon proved himself, by his choice, to be filled with that spirit which became him who had been anointed by God prophet and priest. And the inward grace bestowed in that outward unction had been put to such good use that it carried more grace, and the wisdom shown in this petition obtained the gift of more wisdom. God gave him a wise and understanding heart, so that there was none like him before him, neither after him should any arise like unto him. God also proved in him the rule which his blessed son, Jesus Christ, afterwards laid down when he commanded us to seek first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, and then all earthly blessings shall be added to it. Because Solomon had asked this heavenly gift only, and mentioned none that were earthly, God gave him the earthly also,—“I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, keep my statutes, and my commandments, as thy father did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.” From the Tabernacle, at Gibeon, Solomon returned to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. Thus he consecrated the first days of his reign, and commenced his course under the most happy auspices. He made God the beginning, happy if he had made him also the end, of all his doings. It is not, however, my desire, on the present auspicious occasion, to touch upon the last and melancholy years of King Solomon's life, but rather to connect the few observations I shall offer at this time with the youthful and more early portion of his reign—while his heart was yet pure and the Lord preserved him. I would observe, in the first place, that there is not, perhaps, in the history of mankind, a more beautiful picture than that which is here represented. A young man in the bloom of life, when everything was gay and alluring around him—in the moment of ascending to a brilliant throne, where pleasure and ambition were before him—betaking himself thus humbly to God, and imploring of him that wisdom which might enable him to resist the temptations with which his situation surrounded him, and to fulfil the duties to which he was called. Had it been in the latter periods of his reign, when satiated with pleasure and disappointed in ambition, when fatigued with the cares and pageantry of a throne, that he looked abroad for better comforts,—had it been at such a time when Solomon directed his soul to heaven, much of the merit of his piety would have been lost. It would have then appeared only as the last refuge of a discontented mind, which interest, not disposition, had led to devotion; and which only sought for repose in piety, because it had been disappointed in everything else. But at such a season to be guided by such sentiments, in such an hour to betake himself to God, bespeaks a mind so humble and yet pure; a disposition so ardently and yet so rightly inclined; and a soul so well fitted for every kind of excellence, that no language of praise seems too strong. It is not, however, from the peculiar situation of Solomon, that the beauty of this memorable instance of devotion arises. Its charm chiefly consists in its suitableness to the season of youth—in its correspondence to the character and dispositions which distinguish that important age, and which we eagerly desire to see in the young. Piety or the fear of God in youth has in it something singularly graceful and becoming—something which ever disposes us to think well of the mind in which it is found, and which, better than all the other attainments of life, appears to promise honour and happiness in future days. It is suited to the opening of human life, to that interesting season when nature in all its beauty first opens on the view. It is suited still more to the tenderness of young affections—to that warm and generous temper, which meets everywhere with the objects of gratitude and love. But most of all, it is suited to the innocence of the youthful mind—to that sacred and sinless purity, which can lift up its unpolluted hands to heaven; which guilt hath not yet torn from confidence and hope in God, and which can look beyond this world to that

society of kindred spirits, “of whom is the kingdom of heaven.” The progress of life may indeed bring other acquisitions; it may strengthen religion by experience, and add knowledge to faith. But the piety which springs only from the heart—the devotion which nature and not reasoning inspires—the pure homage which flows unbidden from the tongue, and which asks no other motive for its payment than the pleasures which it bestows—these are the possessions of youth and of youth alone. I would in the second place remark that the feelings of piety are not only natural and becoming in youth, but they are still more valuable as tending to the formation of future character. They spring up in the first and purest state of the human mind. When the soul comes fresh from the hands of its Creator and no habits of life have contracted the sh of its powers, they come in that happy season when life is new and hope unbroken, where nature seems everywhere to rejoice—to rejoice around, and when the love of God rises unbidden on the soul. They come not to terrify or to alarm, but to present every high and pleasing prospect in which the heart can indulge; they come to withdraw the veil which covers the splendours of the Eternal Mind, and to open that futurity which awakens all their desires to behold and attain, and in the sublime occupations of which they feel already, as by some secret inspiration, the home and destiny of their souls. At such a period religion is full of joy. It is not an occasional, but a permanent subject of elevating their meditation—a subject which can fill their solitary hours with rapture, and which involuntarily occurs to them in every season when their hearts are disposed to feel, and to which they willingly return from all the disappointments or follies of life and resume again their unfinished joys. If there be a moment of human life in which the foundation of virtuous character can be laid, it is at this period. If there can be a discipline which can call forth every nobler faculty of the soul, it is such early exercises of piety. They not only suggest but establish a tone and character of thought which is allied to every virtuous purpose; they present those views of man and of the ends of his being, which awaken the best powers of the soul, and they afford prospects of the providence of God which can best give support and confidence to virtue. But again, there is no man, perhaps, who in some fortunate moments of thought has not felt his soul raised above its usual state by religious considerations. There are hours in every man's life when religion seems to approach him in all her loveliness, when its truths break upon his soul with a force which cannot be resisted; and when in the contemplation of them he feels his bosom swell with emotions of unusual delight. In such moments every man feels that the dignity and purity of his whole being is increased. The illusions and temptations of the world appear beneath his regard, his heart opens to nobler and purer affections and his bosom regains for awhile its native innocence. In the greater part of mankind, however, these moments are transient; life calls them back again to their usual concerns, and they sometimes relapse into all the folly and weakness of ordinary mortals. Now it is the tendency of early piety to fix this character of thought and endeavour to render that temper of mind permanent, which in many is only temporary and transient. By the great objects to which it directs the minds of the young, by its precedence to every other system of opinions, which might oppose its influences, by its power to arrest and retain their attention, it tends gradually to establish in the soul a corresponding dignity in every other exercise. While yet the world is unknown and the calm morning of life is undisturbed, it awakens desires of a nobler kind than the usual purposes of life can gratify, and forms in secret those habits of elevated thought which are of all others the most valuable acquisitions of youthful years, and fit it for future attainments in truth and virtue beyond the reach of ordinary men. Once more, another fruit of early piety is that it presents those views of man and of the end of his being which call forth the best powers of our nature. We readily accommodate our acquisitions to the opinions we entertain of the scene in which they are to be employed, and to the expectations which are formed in respect to us. It is hence that the different situations of human life produce so great diversities of character and improvement. The poor man whose life is to pass in obscurity, and on whose humble fortunes the regard and observations of the world are never likely to fall, is seldom solicitous to distinguish himself by any other acquisition than those which are suited to the humility of his station, and which the exigencies of his station demand of him. The great and the opulent, on the contrary, who are born to be the objects of observation and attention, feel themselves called upon to suit their ambition to the opinions of mankind; and, if they have the common spirit of men, usually accommodate themselves to these expectations. It is in this manner that early piety has an influence in forming the future character. It represents man as formed in the image of God, as “but a little lower than the angels,” and as crowned with glory and honour. It represents life, not as the short and fleeting space of temporary being, but as the preparation only for immortal existence; as a theatre on which he is called to act in the sight of his Saviour and his God, and of which the rewards exceed even the powers of his imagination to conceive. It represents all this in the season when no lower passions have taken the dominion of his heart, and when his powers are susceptible of being moulded by the ends which are placed before him. In such views of man, all the best qualities of his nature arise involuntarily in the soul—the benevolence which loves to diffuse happiness, and to be a fellow-worker with God in the designs of His Providence—the fortitude which no obstacles can retard and no dangers can appal in the road to immortality—the constancy which, reposing in the promises of