

is possible that his deeds of charity may be numerous, and that many of the schemes devised, and set in operation, for the benefit of his fellow-men, may receive much of his countenance and support; he may be regular in the performance of some of the peculiar duties enjoined in the word of God; he may be able to talk and to speculate about its precepts and doctrines; the superior, the unexampled morality of the gospel, may please his fancy, and, for a little, captivate his affections; its sublime doctrines may possibly be subjects somewhat suited to the exercise of the powers of his mind, and on them he may discourse and reason with the energy and eloquence of one impressed with a sense of their superior excellence and beneficial tendency—in a word, he may be free from every gross immorality, adorned with some of the graces of the gospel, and speculatively familiar with many of its doctrines in their various connections, but whence, it remains to be ascertained, does this propriety of conduct proceed?—and what are the motives, that lead him to value the gospel, and to expatiate on its varied excellencies?

If they are the effects of the new birth, he will have seen, and felt, that the descriptions of human nature, and the representations of the condition and prospects of man as a sinner, which the Bible contains accord with his own experience. He will have felt, that he is a rebel against the God of heaven and of earth; at enmity with the greatest and the best of beings; exposed to the judgment denounced against all, who break even the least of his commandments; and that unless divine mercy interpose, he must inevitably and eternally perish. The knowledge of his own sinful character, and his views of the holiness and justice which pervade the character and government of God, will have led him to abhor himself and to repent, as in dust and ashes. Roused by his consciousness of guilt, and exposure to the wrath of God, he will, with humility, gratitude, and joy, have laid hold on the blessed hope, which in the gospel is set before him. He will have seen the Lord Jesus Christ to be a Saviour, in every way suited to his miserable condition and prospects as a sinner, and willing to extend to him, the blessings of his great salvation. Influenced by such views, and encouraged by such experience, he will have been led to feel, his personal interest, in the salvation of Christ, and it will have been for his personal interest in it, that he has been led to value the doctrines which the gospel unfolds, and to submit his affections and conduct, to the regulation of the precepts which it enjoins. He will have been led to delight in its ordinances, because by engaging in them, he is

doing the will of Jesus who instituted them, and using the means best calculated, to promote his spiritual improvement, to fit him for the faithful discharge of the duties of this life, and to prepare him for the exercises and enjoyments of the world to come. Thus situated he will have felt, and will have acknowledged, not only with the mouth, but with the still more expressive language of the life, the debt of gratitude that is due to God, for his great and unspeakable benefit; he will have felt, and acknowledged, that now he is not his own, but bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Christ; that his former conduct, however plausible, was destitute of right principle; that now he must act, from a regard to the authority and the glory of God. In fine, he will have felt, that he is not of this world, that in it his peace is not to be found, but that he has been placed here, for discipline and preparation for another, and a better world; that once he was enslaved to sin, and an heir of destruction, but that now, he has been invested with the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and made an heir of heaven.

Such do we conceive to be what is implied in the change denoted by the language of our Redeemer, when he said, "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." It is indubitably a mighty change; "great, definite, and absolute,—a change from disorder, corruption, and derangement, to a natural and permanent," and happy "condition," and it may well be compared to a new creation, to a new birth, to a resurrection from the dead, to a change from darkness to light, to a deliverance from a state of slavery, and admission into a state of freedom. It requires but little penetration to discover, that a change so universal and radical must be beyond the power of any man to accomplish, in his own behalf. When he reflects how averse he naturally is to that which is good, how uncongenial to him are the subjects which relate to an eternal world, and how little control he has over his own thoughts and affections; he, who has thus reflected, and who has, even in a slight degree, attempted the exercise of self-government, will be convinced of the truth of the declaration, that, "it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps," far less to achieve a work of such magnitude. He will learn from experience, as well as from the word of God, that though he may be able to trace the developement of the powers of the human mind, their various connections, and the operation of the causes which lead to a change in their direction and the objects which engage them; though he may be able to trace the operation of the causes which produce and change some of the various phenomena, which nature places before his