

nishes, can scarcely fail to perceive that it is a work not of human contrivance but one which bespeaks the amplitude of an infinite and divine intelligence. It never confounds, like every other religion that ever has exercised, or which yet exercises any influence upon the minds of men, the distinction between good and evil, right and wrong, or righteousness and unrighteousness. It never justifies nor cherishes, like the religion of the ancient heathens, the indulgence of any brutish propensities, nor does it dignify with the name of virtue what was only a certain firmness of purpose in the work of destruction—an impudent dexterity in the art of killing their fellow-creatures. Its provisions are not calculated for the vain pride of empire. It seeks the benefit of individuals rather than the advantage of nations, and it seeks that end by the only means which are greatly calculated to promote it, not by adapting its institutions, its moral precepts, and its promises to the naturally depraved sense and corrupted heart of man, but by turning the affections of his heart into another and an unusual channel, by correcting the disorder of its passions and preparing it for the enjoyment of a holy and heavenly existence.

The religion of Jesus Christ addresses itself neither exclusively to the imagination, nor exclusively to the reason, nor exclusively to the heart of man. To each of these faculties or parts of his constitution, it allows its due occasion of exercise and its proper influence; but while it indeed requires them all, it demands the affections of the heart as peculiarly indispensable. This is the temple where it loves chiefly to dwell, where its influence is most sensibly felt, and indeed, where its power is most urgently required. This is the seat of its warfare, the field where its battles are to be fought and its triumphs to be won. Upon this throne it must sit, if not without dispute at least in reality—and in effect the sovereign and ruler of the individual kingdom of man.

1st. The religion of Christ, we have said, does not consist in the lively exercise of imagination upon the facts of divine revelation. It is not enough, that the great transactions and facts revealed in the Bible, the fall of man and the means of his recovery from the second death, the blessedness of the angels, the glories of heaven and the miseries of hell; it is not enough that these and similar themes be contemplated with wonder and profound interest or delight. Pleasant and wondrous speculations are neither the substance nor the end of religion. It by no means consists in the gratification of those emotions that arise from the taste or the poetic fancy of the individual. But

there are many who mistake the activity of a strong imagination for its sum and substance. It behoves them, however, to remember that between these two, there is a very wide distinction. The gifts of God are not the grace of God; for the natural advantages which the providence of heaven may bestow upon any person, however rare and admirable they may be, are no indication that they who possess them are peculiarly in favor with God. The man to whom it is given to meditate easily and intently upon matters of religion, to think of them as a connoisseur, or as one revolves in his mind afterwards the strange sights he has seen and the curious adventures which he has performed in a dream, but to whom it is not given to reduce any doctrine or precept of the gospel to practice, nor to be tremblingly alive to the immense stake which he himself has involved in the matter—that man has no more reason to suppose that God intends his salvation, merely because he has given him the power of contemplating these things, than a rich man has to imagine that he has secured the favour and forgiveness of God, because God has granted him riches, and waters his fields with the rain that falls from heaven. It is a property very observable in those who only imagine religion, that they always fly to its loftiest pinnacles and seek only to explore its dark and mysterious recesses. Some flight of fancy always hurries them away from the useful and practical, and instead of diligent meditation, instead of prudent discipline and well ordered devotion, instead of seeking to have their hearts established by grace, they indulge their contemplation without any design of making it effective, they take up with high speculations, doubtful interpretations of unfulfilled prophecies, and any dark subjects which their imaginations may fill with the immense and marvellous, forgetting all the time that one grace of the heart, one word spoken in christian charity—and with unaffected meekness, that a cup of water administered for Christ's sake, is worth a thousand speculations of the head, though they reached as far as an angel's.

In alliance with the ardent imaginations of revealed truths, there is often found a depraved self-esteem—a combination which gives birth to a moral phenomenon of a very deplorable character, though not of rare occurrence. Of all the sources of error and guilt, there is none, either in the impenitent or in the believer himself, that requires to be more suspiciously guarded against and to be subjected to severer scrutiny and mortification, than the self-love which persuades a man to believe that whatever the case of others may be, he is certain of being exempted from the anger of God, or which fills his