

the thoughtless, try to deepen it. How keen-eyed is the worldling in observing and securing every occasion that may conduce to his gain! How prompt and dexterous is the wanton profligate in drawing the young and unsuspecting into snares that end in ruin! Shall so many watch for iniquity with so much patience and alertness as the wild beast waits for his prey, and shall not we watch for favourable opportunities of doing good! How much regret have even some good men felt, who, when an effectual door had been opened for usefulness, have lingered in slow preparation, or hesitated about scruples, till they have seen it shut for ever! The friend they purposed to admonish is cold in the grave. The riches they intended to bestow as a thank-offering to the Lord, have made themselves wings, and fled. The good work they planned and begun, was interrupted by long and frequent delays, till death cut short their days. When there is nothing more in the book of Providence or in the gospel to learn, and no more good needs be done, you may cease to be on the watch.

IV. Our present and future happiness requires us to be watchful.—Though this may be generally implied in what has been already stated, yet its importance is such as to merit a more explicit treatment. I know, indeed, that our whole happiness flows from grace as the fountain. Nothing that we have done, or can do, ought to be named as the cause, but yet watchfulness and prayer are means for the attainment of this grand end. Whence proceeds that doleful cry—"My soul cleaveth to the dust!" Ah! it is from the humble saint deploring his deadness and distance from God. But hark! the same voice prays, "Quicken thou me according to thy word." Say ye who know by experience, are not those your happiest days when you are most watchful? when most jealous over your own hearts—most fearful of being entangled in the world—most alive to God? On the contrary, does no spiritual slumber dim your views, damp your joys, and wither your strength? Besides, your departure is at hand. The great heavenly Bridegroom has left an express injunction that you should both watch and wait for his appearance. This event ought to fill your thoughts. Is it true you know neither the day nor the hour. But is this a good reason for indifference or forgetfulness? Far otherwise. This, Christians, is the very reason given to excite your vigilance. "Watch, for ye know not the day—the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." *Thou* solemn, that awful, and glorious day will come.—He whom sinners despise and saints adore, shall illumine yonder vault of heaven with his cloudy chariot, and thousands of descending angels. Happy! thrice happy those, who shall lift up their heads and see their salvation drawing nigh! Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then the Christian, with his loins girt, and lamp burning, shall gladly advance to meet his Lord. In the improvement of this subject.

1st, I will address a few words to you who are living carelessly, who are given up to folly, and vanity, and the world. How can you put far away the evil day? How is it that you remain insensible? Can a few particles of dust cover the mid-day sun, and shut out his rays! How, then, can you contrive with the poor floating trifles of time to shut out all the great things of eternity? Alas! you have loved darkness rather than light! You obstinately drink in the stupifying poison, sin; you have yielded to the tempter's infernal arts, till you have cast off fear, and are past feeling! God cries, "Hearken to the sound of the trumpet;" but you have practically replied, "We will not hearken!" You have had mercies beyond number from the God whom you have dishonoured! Stroke after stroke from the correcting rod hath left you unmoved! And now, what shall I say? Sleep on, for you shall no longer be disturbed! Sleep on, offended Majesty has given you up, saying, "Let them alone!" Sleep, till the king of terrors awake you to dwell with everlasting burnings! Gracious heaven! It would chill my blood, and pierce my soul to address you in such language! I would rill warn, remonstrate, and beseech you! "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade man." Ungrateful, rebellious sinner! what fruit wilt thou gain in thy ways? for rest assured, "the end of these things is death! Are thy pleasures any thing but the idle, transient dreams of madness?" What meanest thou, O sleeper! Arise! call upon thy God, that thou perish not. Pardon

and life are yet proclaimed through the atoning blood of Jesus.

2nd. Let me address a few words to you who have begun to watch and pray, and engage in the arduous conflict. Christian, dost thou set thyself on thy watch-tower, and trust only in the name of the Lord as thy strong tower? Yes. Then take courage—all is safe! Though an host should encamp against thee, thy heart need not fear. Experience worketh hope; you have found out many of the wiles of the enemy—you are not ignorant of his devices—"Put on the whole armour of God!"—"Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might!"—"The Lord God shall bruise Satan under your feet!" You have reason to rejoice that far more watchful eyes than your own are engaged on your behalf. God, indeed, commands us to watch, and it is an incumbent duty; but so often have we sunk into shameful slumber and stupidity, that we should long ago have been irrecoverably lost, had not the Lord watched over us for good. How many falls he hath prevented, and how many deadly shafts from the quiver of our infernal foes he hath turned from us by his invisible hands, we shall never fully know, till we read all the wonders of Providence in the register of heaven. The Lord bless you and keep you, guide you by his counsel, and afterward receive you to glory. B. L.

## REMARKS.

A sensible, practical, experimental discourse! Mr. T. preaches as he writes, like a man of God. He feels the importance of what he undertakes to discuss. His grand and principal aim is to be useful. He watches for souls as one who must give an account; "warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."



## THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION.

A variety of considerations combine to render religion the most momentous of all concerns. It therefore challenges and merits the most strict and impartial examination, and carries along with it the evidences of its peculiar value and importance.

Religion is infinitely important, if we view it as having God for its object; and as including in it all those exalted virtues which he has given of himself; as well as that true worship and service which such discoveries render necessary and indispensable. With respect to man, it derives its value from every thing that serves to raise him above the brutes, and to give him importance among the works of God.—In this last point of view let us for a little contemplate it.

Mankind are naturally formed for religion, and were it not that their nature is corrupted, it would be their element, their pleasure, and delight. Destitute of it, it must follow they do not answer the end of their creation; and, in this respect, are excelled even by the lower animals. These last are provided with instincts suited to their particular natures, and which operate with an exactness and certainty that is truly astonishing. Thus do they all *silently*, yet, in another respect, loudly and *expressively*, declare the divine wisdom and goodness. But man is possessed of a *rational nature*. He is capable of extensive perception, judgment, and reasoning; and is therefore eminently fitted for glorifying God in a way more peculiar to himself. With respect to this lower world, man is as it were the high priest. All the rest of the creatures, both animate and inanimate, seem to point to him as their mouth to God. Without man this world would be a desert. There would be none to contemplate and admire the divine workmanship. But there are still higher discoveries of God in the Scriptures; than which there is nothing so much concerns man to know. It is here the most of God is to be seen. Revelation admits, as first principles, all our natural discoveries of God; but adds to these its own vastly superior light. It gives us infinitely more clear and extensive views of the divine character. Now surely there is nothing that can so worthily employ, and at the same time afford such scope for the human understanding, with its various powers, as the revelation of God in his works and in his word. So far is religion from excluding reason, that here is chiefly its province, here it is absolutely necessary, and here it has its fullest, its highest exercise.

Religion no less respects man as possessing *affectious and desires*. These, although subordinate, are nevertheless essential and most important principles in our nature, and, according as they are exercised, become the sources either of much pleasure or of much pain. To these religion presents the most suitable objects, and is therefore calculated to excite, to employ, and to enable them. It opens to view every thing that is truly great and good, desirable and excellent; every thing that deserves our love and esteem—that is calculated to excite our gratitude, our hopes and joys; every thing that tends to give real delight and satisfaction. In short, it is designed and fitted to engage the whole heart, and to touch all the secret springs of the soul.

Viewing man as formed for society, we have another proof of the great importance of religion. Here it is intended to elevate and direct all the social principles, which, without its aid, are ready to mislead and ensnare. It constitutes the strongest and best of ties, and serves mightily to improve every other: Its tendency is both to unite and to endear, as well as to excite to the performance of all the relative duties. Besides, what can be more suitable and exalted than real social religion? About what can the tongue (which is evidently intended for society), be so worthily employed as in speaking of God! What can be more fit and becoming, or a source of higher enjoyment, than those who are possessed of the same common nature, and dependant on the same Almighty Being, joining "with one mind and one mouth to glorify God?"

Religion is still more important when we consider man as *immortal and accountable*. To admit that man is immortal, and after all to be uniformly governed by temporal considerations, is the most unreasonable thing that can be conceived. The very probability of a future state ought surely to have a mighty influence on mankind. But having such clear and consistent evidence with regard to it, and yet to have little or no impression of it, this involves such a degree of folly and stupidity that language is quite inadequate to express it. How is the matter heightened when we view man as *accountable*!—From the different relations in which we stand to the Almighty arise so many obligations to love and serve him. "If I be a father (says he) where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear?" Our rational and moral endowments, as well as all other external blessings, are so many talents for which we must give an account to God; and to neglect or misimprove them, is to be guilty of the greatest unthankfulness and ingratitude. Accordingly we are assured by the word of God (and which conscience, when faithful to its duty, strongly corroborates), that all men shall be judged "according to their works."

But the importance of religion most of all appears when we consider man as *guilty and depraved*; as having incurred the divine displeasure, and liable to eternal misery. In this view of things, it becomes the most important of all enquiries, How man may be reconciled to God? That which can give a satisfactory answer to this question, is the most valuable of all other knowledge. This is the province of the *Gospel alone*; and on that account all things are but less when compared with the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ." What does it signify what a person knows, if he does not possess this knowledge? What would it avail him though he knew all arts and sciences, and every thing that is reckoned valuable and reputable; if he know not that which only can give peace to his conscience, and a solid ground of confidence before God; if he is still ignorant of that which is calculated to support under all the evils of this present life; to fortify against the fears of death, and give the lively hope of life eternal? To what purpose would it be for a person to accumulate all the wealth that can be conceived, if he is not rich towards God. Or, to say in the emphatic words of our Lord—"What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Religion is the proper source of happiness which all mankind so naturally and so eagerly pursue. To promote this is, next to the glory of God, its leading design. It makes Him the fountain of all true happiness; it teaches, that in "His favour is life, and that his loving kindness is more to be desired than life." It gains the victory over sin, the fertile cause of human misery; and rectifies all the disorders of the mind. As it furnishes motives to duty peculiarly