

II. In all these senses, Jesus Christ is the true God. But how is he *Eternal Life*?

1. The thing directly intended in this expression, is not that he will be eternal life: although this is a great and important truth, and never to be forgotten. "He is the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." He is the purchaser of that "crown of life," which will be given to all that are "faithful unto death." And he will be the soul of all their joys to all the saints in glory.

"The flame of angelic love
Is kindled at Jesus's face;
And all the enjoyment above,
Consists in the rapturous gaze!"

2. The thing directly intended is not, That he is the resurrection: although this also is true, according to his own declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life:" agreeable to which are St. Paul's words, "As in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." So that we may well say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

3. But waving what he will be hereafter, we are here called to consider, what he is now. He is now the life of every thing that lives, in any kind or degree. He is the source of the lowest species of life, that of vegetables, as being the source of all the motion on which vegetation depends. He is the fountain of the life of animals, the power by which the heart beats, and the circulating juices flow. He is the fountain of all the life which man possesses, in common with other animals. And if we distinguish the rational from the animal life, he is the source of this also.

4. But how infinitely short does all this fall of the life which is here directly intended, and of which the Apostle speaks so explicitly in the preceding verses! (ver. 11, 12.) "This is the testimony, that God hath given us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life;" (the eternal life here spoken of,) "and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not" this "life." As if he had said, *This is the sum of the testimony which God hath testified of his Son, that God hath given us, not only a title to, but the real beginning of eternal life. And this life is purchased by, and treasured up in his Son—who has all the springs and the fountains of it in himself, to communicate to his body, the church.*

5. This eternal life then commences, when it pleases the Father to reveal his Son in our hearts—when we first know Christ, being enabled to "call him Lord by the Holy Ghost;" when we can testify, our conscience bearing us witness in the Holy Ghost, "the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And then it is that happiness begins—happiness real, solid, substantial. Then it is that heaven is opened in the soul—that the proper, heavenly state commences, while the love of God, as loving us, is shed abroad in the heart, instantly producing love to all mankind—general, pure benevolence, together with its genuine fruits: lowliness, meekness, patience, contentedness in every state—an entire, clear, full acquiescence in the whole will of God, enabling us to "rejoice evermore, and in every thing to give thanks."

6. As our knowledge and our love of him increase—by the same degrees, and in the same proportion, the kingdom of an inward heaven must necessarily increase also; while we "grow up in all things into him, who is our head." And when we are *En auto pefectomenoi*, "complete in him," as our translators render it; but more properly, when we are filled with him, when "Christ in us the hope of glory," is our God and our All, when he has taken the full possession of our heart: when he reigns there in without a rival, the Lord of every motion there: when we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, we are one with Christ, and Christ with us: then we are completely happy—then we live all "the life that is hid with Christ in God." Then, and not till then, we properly experience what that word meaneth, "God is love; and whosoever dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

III. I have now only to add a few inferences from the preceding observations.

1. And we may learn from hence, First, That as there is but one God in heaven above and in the earth beneath, so there is only one happiness for created spirits, either in heaven or earth. This one God made our heart for himself: and it cannot rest, till it resteth in him. It is true, that while we are in vigour of youth and health—while our blood dances in our veins—while the world smiles upon us, and we have all the conveniences, yea, and superfluities of life—we frequently have pleasing dreams, and enjoy a kind of happiness. But it cannot continue: it flies away like a shadow; and even while it does continue, it is not solid, or substantial—it does not satisfy the soul. We still pant after something else, something which we have not. Give a man every thing that this world can give, still, as Horace observed near two thousand years ago:

Curtæ nescio quid Semper abest ei.

Still—

"Amidst our plenty something still
To me, to thee, to him is wanting!"

That something, is neither more nor less than the knowledge and love of God: without which no spirit can be happy, either in heaven or earth.

2. Permit me to cite my own experience, in confirmation of this: I distinctly remember, that even in my childhood, even when I was at school, I have often said, "They say, the life of a school-boy is the happiest in the world: but I am sure, I am not happy. For I am not content, and so cannot be happy." When I had lived a few years longer, being in the vigour of youth, a stranger to pain and sickness, and particularly to lowness of spirits, (which I do not remember to have felt one quarter of an hour ever since I was born,) having plenty of all things, in the midst of sensible and amiable friends, who loved me, and I loved them, and being in the way of life, which, of all others, suited my inclinations; still I was not happy! I wondered why I was not, and could not imagine what the reason was! The reason certainly was, I did not know God—the source of present as well as eternal happiness. What is a clear proof that I was not then happy, is, that upon the coolest reflection, I knew not one week which I would have thought it worth while to have lived over again: taking it with every inward and outward sensation, without any variation at all.

3. But a pious man affirms, "When I was young, I was happy, though I was utterly without God in the world." I do not believe you: though I doubt not but you believe yourself. But you are deceived, as I have been over and over. Such is the condition of human life!

"Flowers and myrtles fragrant seem to rise,

All is at distance fair; but near at hand,

The gay deceit mocks the desiring eyes

With thorns, and desert-heat, and barren sand."

Look forward on any distant prospect; how beautiful does it appear! Come up to it; and the beauty vanishes away, and it is rough and disagreeable. Just so is life! But when the scene is past, it resumes its former appearance: and we seriously believe, that we were then very happy, though, in reality, we were far otherwise. For as none is now, so none ever was happy, without the loving knowledge of the true God.

4. We may learn hence, Secondly, That this happy knowledge of the true God is only another name for Religion—I mean *Christian Religion*, which, indeed, is the only one that deserves the name. Religion, as to the nature or essence of it, does not lie in this or that set of notions, vulgarly called *faith*—nor in a round of duties, however carefully reformed from error and superstition. It does not consist in any number of outward actions. No: it properly and directly consists in the knowledge and love of God, as manifested in the Son of his Love, through the eternal Spirit. And this naturally leads to every heavenly temper, and to every good word and work.

5. We learn hence, Thirdly, That none but a Christian is happy—none but a real, inward Christian. A glutton, a drunkard, a gamester may be merry—but he cannot be happy. The beau, the belle, may eat and drink, and rise up to play: but still they feel they are not happy. Men or women may adorn their own dear persons with

all the colours of the rainbow; they may dance, and sing, and hurry to and fro, and flutter hither and thither; they may roll up and down in their splendid carriages, and talk insipidly to each other; they may hasten from one diversion to another: but happiness is not there. They are still "walking in a vain shadow, and disquieting themselves in vain." One of their own poets has truly pronounced, concerning the whole life of these sons of pleasure,

"'Tis a dull farce, an empty show;
Powder, and pocket-glass, and beau."

I cannot but observe of that fine writer, that he came near the mark; and yet fell short of it. In his Solomon, (one of the noblest poems in the English tongue,) he clearly shews where happiness is not; that it is not to be found in natural knowledge, in power, or in the pleasures of sense or imagination. But he does not shew where it is to be found. He could not; for he did not know it himself. Yet he came near it, when he said:

"Restore, Great Father, thy instructed son:
And in my act may thy great will be done!"

6. We learn hence, Fourthly, That every Christian is happy, and that he who is not happy is not a Christian. If, as was observed above, Religion is happiness, every one that has it must be happy. This appears from the very nature of the thing: for if religion and happiness are in fact the same, it is impossible that any man can possess the former, without possessing the latter also. He cannot have religion without having happiness, seeing they are utterly inseparable.

And it is equally certain, on the other hand, that he who is not happy, is not a Christian: seeing if he was a real Christian, he could not but be happy. But I allow an exception here, in favour of those who are under violent temptations; yea, and of those who are under deep nervous disorders, which are, indeed a species of insanity. The clouds and darkness which then overwhelm the soul, suspend its happiness; especially if Satan is permitted to second those disorders, by pouring in his fiery darts. But excepting these cases, the observation will hold, and it should be well attended to: whoever is not happy, yea happy in God, is not a Christian.

7. Are not you a living proof of this? Do not you still wander to and fro, seeking rest but finding none?—Pursuing happiness, but never overtaking it? And who can blame you for pursuing it? It is the very end of your being. The great Creator made nothing to be miserable, but every creature to be happy in its kind. And upon a general review of the works of his hands, he pronounced them all very good: which they would not have been, had not every intelligent creature, yea, every one capable of pleasure and pain, been happy in answering the end of its creation. If you are now unhappy, it is because you are in an unnatural state; and shall you not sigh for deliverance from it? "The whole creation" being now "subject to vanity, groaning and travelling in pain together." I blame you only, or pity you rather, for taking a wrong way to a right end: for seeking happiness where it never was, and never can be found. You seek happiness in your fellow-creatures, instead of your Creator. But these can no more make you happy, than they can make you immortal. If you have ears to hear, every creature cries aloud, "Happiness is not in me." All these are, in truth, "broken cisterns, that can hold no water." O turn unto your rest! Turn to him, in whom are hid all the treasures of happiness! Turn unto him, "who giveth liberally unto all men," and he will give you "to drink of the water of life freely."

8. You cannot find your long-sought happiness in all the pleasures of the world. Are they not "deceitful upon the weights?" Are they not "lighter than vanity" itself? How long will ye "feed upon that which is not bread?"—which may amuse, but cannot satisfy. You cannot find it in the religion of the world—either in opinions, or a mere round of outward duties. Vain labour! Is not God a spirit? and, therefore, to be "worshipped in spirit and in truth?" In this alone you can find the happiness you seek: in the union of your spirit with the Father of spirits. In the knowledge and love of him who is the fountain of happiness, sufficient for all the souls he has made.