

tible," &c.? It cannot be! Only practical godliness is genuine.

*It is the only religion from which springs true enjoyment.*—That which is false and hollow is not fitted to impart happiness. Men may amuse themselves with deceits, but they cannot trust them, unless indeed they are given over to a strong delusion that they believe a lie, and assuredly that is not to be happy. We are so constituted as to be without abiding satisfaction apart from repose in God as our chief good and portion, a state of the affections which can have no existence otherwise than in connexion with practical godliness. They who seek their pleasure in sensual gratification, or who glow with the fire of ambition, or who make an idol of the pleasures of taste, or who are worshippers of mammon, always find in their bitter experience that they have "fed on ashes"—"a deceived heart hath turned them aside." The sigh of disappointment seems to articulate the question, "Who will shew us any good?" They are not happy. Nor have pleasure and folly-loving professors of religion any abiding satisfaction. They are conscious of inconsistency, and that consciousness is as a worm at the root of the gourd under which they have taken shelter. They know too much of "the powers of the world to come" to be content ever to live and then to die amid their present pursuits and scenes. This makes them afraid. Besides, they dare not take full draughts of the consolations of the gospel; indeed they feel that such are not for them:—without practical godliness, they have no right to appropriate them. We read of the blessedness of "the poor in spirit," of "the meek," of "the merciful," of those "who hunger and thirst after righteousness," and of "the persecuted for Christ's sake;" but we never read of the blessedness of the gay, the worldly, the selfish, or of the hungry

and thirsty after mammon. "O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him;" but those who have no practical godliness do not fear the Lord. How intolerably wretched was Saul, King of Israel, because of his want of practical godliness! It was this lack during so many years of inconsistency which drew from Solomon the bitter exclamation, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." This was the bane of those churches in Asia so solemnly warned and reproved in the Apocalypse. Much of the happiness of genuine religion is found in the *growth* of the celestial plant; but the mere imitation, however perfect, cannot grow, it is not a thing of life!

*It is the only religion that can be useful to others.*—There is no fitness for usefulness in our Lord's kingdom apart from practical godliness. In the mysterious workings of his All-wise Providence, he can make wicked men useful in the fulfilment of his purposes; but such are not the agents he employs to enlighten and to save. There are exceptions to confirm the rule, but the rule itself is, that eminent piety is essential to eminent usefulness. The ground of this is two-fold. First of all, no man without practical godliness can be *really* in earnest for human salvation. He may be zealous in building up a party, but he weeps not over lost and ruined souls, nor does he toil and pray with intensity of desire for their conversion. The preciousness of his own soul is not in such a state realized; he has no lively conviction of the wickedness and misery of sin; nor has he any longings of spirit for the glory of the Redeemer. One cannot expect grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. It is in vain that we look for the cedar of Lebanon, where only can grow the heath of the desert. As little may we anticipate earnestness, without practical religion. Secondly, without this element, in-