

above all censure and all praise : he often wished, that the richest part of Vitringa had been abstracted, and published by itself for the use of pious and learned students of divinity.

Dr. Owen's Exposition of the epistle to the Hebrews, 4 vols. folio, is a work of amazing depth of thought and strength of mind : but that which distinguishes this elaborate performance above all the Expositions I ever read, is the high-spirited unction of gospel piety with which he writes. You have a strain of such profound christian experience in this most admirable author as can hardly be paralleled in any other English divine : and what is farther wonderful in this Exposition, even in the midst of the most genuine piety, he demonstrates, with the greatest force of argument, the glorious doctrines of the gospel ; he detects the falshood, and demolishes the principles of the most corrupt and dangerous system of Socinianism : and I will add, that none of the abettors of those principles will meddle with Dr. Owen's arguments, but to their own confusion,

The beautiful and genuine Expositions of select and striking passages of the old and new Testament, in the works of Mr. Hervey, and that prince of all divines, Witfius, in his *Œconomy of the Covenants*, can never be too often read, or too much commended.

In

In Dr. WITSIUS's 4th book of the *Œconomy*, chap. 1. he unfolds the doctrine of salvation in the first age of the world; and explains the first gospel promise, (Gen. iii. 15) in such a copious, judicious, and evangelical manner, that I must confess I never met with its equal in any writer. His illustration of the serpent—his eating dust all the days of his life—the comfort designed for man—in the evils denounced on the devil—the enmity between the two seeds—the author of these benefits, Jehovah—the seed of the woman largely explained, and why Christ is not called the seed of Adam—how Christ bruises the serpent's head—and how the devil bruises his heel. All these particulars are most gloriously illustrated by this great divine, so that I scruple not to call his exposition of this one text, *THE WHOLE GOSPEL IN MINIATURE*.

But I should be wanting in affection to my young readers if I did not just point out some farther beautiful illustrations of Scripture in Dr. Witfius's and Mr. Hervey's works. To the above judicious and elegant Exposition of the first Gospel Promise, in Dr. Witfius's *Œconomy*—his Illustration of the Covenant of Peace, in Zech. vi. 13. book 2. chap. 2.—his beautiful Remarks on the seven Eyes on one Stone, Zech. iii. 8. book 2. chap. 7. sect. 7.—and his deep and judicious Thoughts on the Law as the
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Strength of Sin, book 3. chap. 8. sect. 44.— with his Views of Adoption, book 3. chap. 10. sect. 14. These, with many others that will occur in reading the Œconomy, will please and astonish a person of true devotional taste, if he shall read them to the end of life.

In Mr. Hervey's CONTEMPLATIONS you see, on those words, Will GOD in very deed dwell with man! some elevated and admirable thoughts, vol. 1. p. 6. but his grand Illustration of the 10th chapter of the Revelations is beyond all description sublime and striking. Nothing in any Expositor I ever read or heard of can compare with his representation of the angel swearing that time shall be no longer. See Contemplation on the Night. To which I must add his fine Paraphrase on that Representation of God's Compassion, in Isai. xlix. 15. in his Contemplation on the Starry Heavens, p. 119. edit. 2. 12mo.

In his DIALOGUES, the beautiful illustrations of passages of Scripture are so numerous and abundant, that I must mention but one, (for there is no end of all :) and I am certain, that if you read it ten thousand times, it will always please. I will say, in his words on the text, if these reflections do not contain the true sublime, in its utmost scope and fullest beauty, I profess I never saw it, nor ever expect to see it. Read his

notes

notes on Rev. xx. 11. on the white throne, and the heavens and earth flying away from the presence of the Son of God. Vol. 3. letter 8.

In his LETTERS to Mr. Wesley, p. 59, you have a most glorious and divine exposition of some striking parts of the 40th chapter of Isaiah. Only read those remarks; that will be their best recommendation.

In Dr. LOWTH'S PRÆLECTIONES we have the same true spirit of manly and elegant criticism on a vast variety of sublime passages in the psalms and prophets: and I must declare it as my judgment, that Dr. Witfius, Mr. Hervey, and Dr. Lowth, considered in their native genius, imagination, and taste; the rational and delicate conduct of their studies; the elevation, penetration, and grandeur of their conceptions; their tender and devout passions; and their masterly command of language in point of perspicuity, purity, and energy, must set them in a very distinguishing eminence as the first writers on Scripture ever known in the world. And we may remark, that whilst we read authors of the first rank for taste, learning, and eloquence, they always instruct; they never disgust, but ever elevate our powers, refine our passions, and give new pleasures on every fresh perusal. And christians of the best sense and judgment will never despise or speak evil of such excellent expositors of Scripture,
but

but will feel, in their best moments, the most ardent gratitude to God the Redeemer, who is the author of all those shining talents which adorn the brightest men in the world.

VII. DELIGHT in the SCRIPTURES as the clear and only DISCOVERY of the SUPREME GOOD, CHRIST JESUS, the SON of GOD.

When we mention GOOD in this place, we not only contemplate *objective* and *absolute* GOOD, merely in its own nature, but likewise as *relative* to our happiness. Our faculties are soon at their utmost limits in contemplating God as an absolute good; but when we consider him as related to us, and as producing our happiness, the prospects are various, ravishing, infinite, and eternal; and in this light I shall consider the Lord Jesus Christ.

An object may be considered as fit to make us happy by its own immediate influence—or as removing misery—or preventing misery—or as preparing a man for happiness, by restoring and perfecting the faculties and principles of fruition to enable a man to enjoy happiness. Now, in all these views, Christ is to be considered as the supreme good: he is fit to make us happy by his own immediate influence—he is able and willing to remove all our misery—he is resolved to prevent eternal misery—and he prepares us for
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happiness, by restoring our depraved powers to liberty, purity, and strength; and infusing such noble and sublime principles of fruition as shall fit us ever to contemplate and love the supreme, objective, and absolute good.

And this shews the unspeakable and transcendent excellence of true holiness diffused through the soul by the Lord Jesus; as it prepares a man's faculties for happiness; strengthens the understanding, rectifies the will, refines the taste for the purest enjoyments; purifies and elevates the affections to their best objects, and thus enables the soul to converse with the SUPREME TRUTH, GOODNESS, and BEAUTY, to eternity.

THE ESSENTIAL PROPERTIES AND CHARACTERISTIC
of the SUPREME, objective, and relative GOOD
all center in the eternal SON of GOD.

The supreme good of man, or that which constitutes his everlasting happiness, must be agreeable and satisfying to our highest *capacities*, and suitable to the most elevated and refined *taste*—fitted to all situations and conditions in life—suited to all offices, and worthy employments—may be enjoyed without blushes and shame, i. e. sorrow and self-contempt—possessed without suspicion of being a fool: and without dread of ill consequences—and which comforts a man and blesses him with serenity under all the
troubles

troubles of life—refines and sweetens the passions of the heart—will abide the severe test of sound reason, and endure the most judicious review and the most impartial reflection—improves upon longer experience—grows still better on enjoyment—and whilst the more we possess it, and the deeper we drink into the spirit of this GOOD, it yields sweeter fruitions on the most frequent repetitions: and, in point of duration, this GOOD is eternal as our existence, and large as our immortal capacities of happiness. This must be the SUPREME GOOD!

Now all these glorious properties, and excellent characteristics of the SOVEREIGN GOOD of man, belong, in the highest and noblest sense, to our DIVINE and glorious REDEEMER. Christ, as the SUPREME GOOD of man, must be that alone which constitutes our everlasting happiness: he is the sole good that is agreeable and satisfying to the highest capacities of our souls: he is, indeed, the SUPREME TRUTH and goodness suited to OUR SUPREME POWERS of enjoyment, and suitable to the most elevated and refined taste: his grace, i. e. his good will to us and his good work in us, is fitted to all the situations and conditions of our life, and to all the worthy offices and characters we can sustain: his tenderest friendship may be enjoyed without blushes and shame, i. e. sorrow and self-contempt; his purest good-

ness may be possessed without the painful suspicion of being a fool; and without the least dread of future bad consequences: his patronage and love will comfort a man, and bless him with serenity under all the trials and troubles of life, and the terrors of death: his grace refines and sweetens the passions of the heart: and the most intense union of soul with his person will abide the severe test of sound reason: the sweetest sense of his friendship and converse will endure the most judicious review and impartial reflection: an interest in him, as the supreme beauty and good, improves upon longer experience; and grows still better on farther enjoyment: and, whilst the more we possess his love, and the deeper we drink into the SPIRIT of this GOOD, it yields sweeter FRUITIONS on the most frequent REPETITIONS: * and, in point of duration, this
 divine

* The VANITY of the WORLD appears in a most striking and convincing light when set in contrast with the SUPREME GOOD, the LORD JESUS. Worldly good, and sensual unlawful pleasure, cannot be suitable to our supreme powers of fruition: they are not at all adapted to a refined and elevated taste: they are not fit to make us happy in all conditions and characters in life. Unlawful pleasures cannot be enjoyed without blushes and shame. A sensualist must feel shame, i. e. sorrow and self-contempt: he never can have one moment's solid self-approbation: nor can he possess his pleasures without the painful suspicion of being a fool, and a most pungent and alarming dread and horror at future bad consequences; which flings gall and wormwood into his cup, and embitters all his insatiable desires of pleasing sensations. The man of the world has nothing to comfort him under the vexatious trials of this perishing life, or the more awful terrors of approaching death: he has nothing to refine and sweeten, but every thing to pollute the affections, and sour the passions of the heart: his guilty pleasures will never bear the severe test of sound reason, and the
 trial

divine friend is eternal as our existence; and his fulness of perfections and grace are large as our immortal capacities of happiness. He must, therefore, be indeed the SUPREME BEAUTY, and the SUPREME TRUTH and GOOD TO MAN.

R E C O L L E C T I O N .

We must close this Contemplation with a short review of what we have said. — We have considered, my dear reader, that the Scriptures demand the utmost wonder and veneration: the firmest faith in their infallible truth and certainty: the highest esteem for their inexpressible dignity and excellence: the most ardent desire after their true SENSE, and the blessings contained in the exceeding great and precious PROMISES: they demand all the good will of the human heart; the most exquisite delight and glory in the rich discoveries of law and gospel. We have taken a survey of that sublime and high-spirited GRATITUDE which every true christian owes to

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trial of an impartial review: his foul and groveling gratifications can never improve upon longer experience, nor grow better on farther enjoyment: but, on the contrary, the more frequently his impure pleasures are repeated, the more flat and insipid they will grow; and the more pain and disgust they will create, the more nauseous, loathsome, and horrible they will be; the more the wretch will be weary of life, be disgusted with his own existence, and all its polluted sensations: and whilst the worthless profligate drinks deeper into the cup of intoxication and poison, the more sickness of soul he will feel: and the most frequent repetitions of these filthy fruitions of debauch, will render his guilty soul the more weak, wicked, turbulent, and surfeited, to the very end of life. — Read Bp. HOPKINS's admirable DEMONSTRATION of the VANITY of the WORLD, in his works. Folio.

God the Father, Son, and holy Spirit, for a Bible inspired, perfected, preserved, purchased with divine blood, translated, printed, and expounded by some of the wisest and best men that ever existed in the whole world. We resumed the affection of delight for the sake of a special and peculiar object, who deserves and demands all the most unbounded delight that millions of good men and angels can ever feel; and who is, and ever will be, the highest object of delight to the eternal God the Father, who rests his heart in him; who boasts of him to his whole happy empire; and triumphs, with all the joy of a God, in those ravishing words: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have an entire acquiescence and delight."

And shall we not then, O! Lord Jesus, consider thee as an object of complete delight and joy! shall not our ideas of Christ meet thine, O! divine Father! shall not our supreme powers and passions, rising to God in an heavenly flame, re-echo back, This is thy beloved Son, in whom our souls are eternally well pleased! We are pleased, O! divine redeemer, with thy grandeur and dominion: with thine immense wealth and riches: thine infinite wisdom and knowledge: thine irresistible power and strength. We rejoice in the joy and unbounded delights of thine heart: we triumph in thine highest honours, thy peer-

less dignity, and eternal fame : we love thee for thine incomparable beauty : we rejoice, that neither men or devils can finally eclipse thy lovely perfections, or diminish thy happiness, or disturb thy repose and pleasure : we can add nothing to thee ; but 'tis a joy of heart to us, that thou art, and ever wilt be, the supreme BEAUTY, and the supreme TRUTH and GOODNESS to our souls when time shall be no more. Amen.

Select BOOKS to be read on the Subject of
this CONTEMPLATION.

1. Read the excellent Mr. BENJAMIN BENNETT's beautiful display of the USEFULNESS of the several parts of SCRIPTURE for doctrine, conviction of errors, correction of morals, and instruction in righteousness, in his Sermons on the Truth and Inspiration of Scripture. Sermon. 12, 13. And on the practical Dispositions and Affections due to Scripture. Sermon. 14.

2. Bp. HALL's CONTEMPLATIONS on the HISTORICAL Parts of SCRIPTURE, 3 vols. 8vo. Edinburgh edit. 1770, surpasses every work of the kind, and, indeed, exceeds all our praises.

3. As Bp. HOPKINS's admirable TREATISE on the VANITY of the WORLD is a striking contrast to the BEAUTY and FULLNESS of Christ, as the SUPREME GOOD, I will here give a short abridgment of that work ; and I the rather do it, because the book itself is little known, and because great numbers of people are eternally undone by an excessive love of worldly things.

The bishop's discourse takes its rise from these words, Eccl. i. 2. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. He begins by observing, that there is nothing in the world vain, in respect to its natural being—that nothing is vain in respect of God the creator—that, therefore, all the vanity that is in worldly things, is only in respect of the sin and folly of man, which perverts the right use of all things. He goes on to display the vanity of the world

world in ten heads. 1. All its glory and splendor depends merely on opinion and fancy: 'tis our imagination that paints the world in strong colours. 2. The vanity of the world appears in its deceitfulness and treachery: it betrays our hopes into delusion, and our souls into guilt. 3. The world is a vexatious vanity, in four views—vexation in getting riches and pleasures—vexation in enjoying them—vexation in losing worldly goods—and whether we get or lose, we are still disappointed in our hopes. 4. A little cross will embitter great comforts and sensual pleasures. 5. The longer we enjoy worldly things, the more flat and insipid they grow. 6. All the sensual pleasures of the world are only a tedious repetition of the same things; the same shallow sensations. 7. The world can stand us in no stead under the horrors of a guilty conscience, and at the dreadful hour of death. 8. The world is vain, because 'tis unsuitable to the nature and powers of a soul—the soul is spiritual; the world is gross—the soul is immortal; the world is perishing—the necessities of the soul are quite of another kind from worldly things. 9. The vanity of the world appears in its inconsistency and fickleness; the world is full of perpetual variations; there is no certain stability in any one worldly thing. 10. The vanity of the world appears in this, that it never satisfies. The highest condition cannot free us from cares and crosses: and be our condition what it will, we still desire change. We can no more rest in an high estate than in a low one: we still desire something farther and better. Hence see the gross folly, madness, and guilt of most men in idolizing a meer vanity.

N. B. I wish this smart little book was re-printed for the use of the rising age.

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H O L Y S C R I P T U R E S .

The NATURE of HOPE, and its EXERCISE on the DISCOVERIES of the WORD of GOD.—SUBJECTION, and ready OBEDIENCE of SOUL and CONSCIENCE to the whole WILL of GOD in SCRIPTURE.—ZEAL for the HONOUR of SCRIPTURE, and ardent ATTEMPTS to diffuse the KNOWLEDGE of SCRIPTURE to the utmost of our ABILITIES.—The most pungent MOTIVES to ZEAL briefly represented.

VIII. **H**OPE of being happy in the possession of the HONOURS and JOYS discovered in the SCRIPTURE, is another affection due to the word of GOD, and essential to the spirit and character of a true christian.

In our glorious book, the grand objects of hope are most clearly revealed—the grace of hope is powerfully infused—the exercises of hope are richly encouraged—and the fruits and works of hope are most generously rewarded.

Hope is the ardent desire and expectation of absent good. Faith regards objects as present to the mind: but hope considers those objects and blessings as absent. And this affection is raised and cherished in the soul by the clear prospect of the possibility and probability of enjoying them, founded on the sincerity and faithfulness of God in his promises; the oath of God, which has confirmed those promises; the blood of Christ, which has bought those blessings; and the infinite fulness of the grace and power of Christ to apply all those promises to the soul.

As the grace of hope will be considered at large in a subsequent part of this work, we must not enlarge upon it here. I shall only shew how the rich fulness of Christ, revealed in Scripture, is the precious object of the christian's hope.

The fulness of Christ consists in the infinite all-sufficiency of his nature for his own happiness, and for the complete happiness of all his people, without the least deficiency or failure through our eternal duration. In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Col. ii. 9. This is his essential fulness.—It hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell. Col. i. 19. Of his fulness we have all received, and grace for grace. John i. 16. Full of grace and truth. This is his relative and diffusive fulness towards us. His essential fulness as God,

and his relative fulness as mediator, both conspire to raise our hope to the most sublime height and vast extent into eternity. The whole fulness of the Deity substantially dwells in him : his human nature is the temple of the Deity : and all the perfections of God, in their utmost fulness and glory, abide for ever in his incarnate person : and the fulness or perfection of Deity is a natural idea of all that is comprehended in Godhead. * Now hope views Christ in all his fulness, as revealed in Scripture ; and this excites its most lively and vigorous exercise : and, indeed, what can there be to damp or discourage our hopes, when we view him in his full glory and dignity, becoming a subsistence in the eternal person of the Son of God. Full in his communion with his divine father ; delighting always in him—full in a sufficiency to answer every end of God the Father's grace—full to the utmost capacity of an uncreated God ; and full to the utmost capacity of the most wonderful and glorious creature—full of the greatest beauty and loveliness of a living temple—full of a divine satisfaction to infinite justice—full of a divine and infinite righteousness to justify our souls—full of a divine and infinite spirit to sanctify our hearts—full to suit all sorts of necessities at all times, and in all conditions in which his dear people can possibly be—full in the most active
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* Dr. Guise.

and ardent readiness of bounty to supply all sorts of wants—full in the abilities of a God to gain a perfect victory over all kinds of temptations, trials, and oppositions whatsoever, from men or devils—full as a complete example, or beautiful pattern of obedience to angels, but especially to all believers in the world—full to give the utmost pleasure and delight to all holy souls ; and to give infinite pleasure to his divine father—full to be an everlasting memorial of the grace and glory of the Father, in giving such unparalleled excellencies to the Son of Man in union with the Son of God. *

Now, clear views of this astonishing fulness of Christ, revealed in the gospel, have the fittest tendency to cherish the most vigorous hopes of enjoying all sorts of blessings for this life, and that which is to come. Hope is one of the most delightful affections of the mind : and is the support and guide of the soul in all sorts of labours, trials, and afflictions : it is of a cheering and enlivening nature : and it is an abiding grace at all times : 'tis an ever living grace, and is always more or less in exercise. Hope has this remarkable and singular property, that it is living when other graces seem to be ready to die ; and when a true christian is in the worst condition, he cannot give up his hope ; nor will he

* See Dr. Owen on Communion with Christ in Grace, p. 72. edit. 1657.

HE PART WITH IT FOR ALL THE WORLD.—See Dr. Wright on Hope, in his Great Concern, 8vo. p. 201. And Dr. Gill on Hope. Body of Practical Divinity, p. 99.

In a word, this lively scriptural hope produces the most noble and sublime FORTITUDE: it raises a man above the frowns of the world, the rage of hell, and the terrors of death: it carries us cheerfully through all the difficulties of life, and makes hard things easy to the mind: it keeps us from the two extremes of true fortitude—rashness and insensibility, and fearfulness and impatience: it cherishes real MAGNANIMITY or greatness of soul, which raises a man above the influence of the *good* or *evil* things of this world.*

IX. SUBJECTION and intire OBEDIENCE of SOUL and CONSCIENCE to the whole WILL of GOD in SCRIPTURE, is another essential DISPOSITION of the true CHRISTIAN.

The grand fundamental law in GOD's rational empire is love: it resembles the supreme, universal, and eternal law of gravitation in the Newtonian

* A man of true MAGNANIMITY does not think an affluence of worldly goods necessary to make him happy; nor does he leave it in the power of the evil things of the world to make him miserable. He who will not be a slave to PERSONS, hating all subjection which is not founded in justice and reason, will, from the same principle, scorn to be enslaved to THINGS; for SLAVERY is the same, *whosoever* or *whatsoever* be the TYRANT. A man that hopes to dwell eternally with GOD in the highest heavens, disdains all slavery to TYRANT PERSONS or TYRANT THINGS.—See Grove's Mor. Philos. vol. 2. p. 177—179.