

LECTURE VIII.

ECCLESIASTES XII. 13. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter ; Fear God, and keep his commandments : for this is the whole [duty] of man.**

“THE whole of man :” instruction for his duty, direction in his difficulties, consolation in his sorrows, triumph in death, and the boundless bliss of knowledge and holiness to eternity. But the fear of God and the observance of his commandments are no servile and narrow habits of mind. The Scriptures abundantly show that they comprehend, or by just deduction lead to, all that is true in knowledge and noble in feeling. “The High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity,” builds also his temple in “the contrite heart.” He has made it our duty, and a part of the filial “fear” which we owe to him, that we should acquire all that we can of sound information concerning his perfections and his works. “He giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge and joy ;” and it is laid down as one of the characters of the impious, that “they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands.”†

When the Committee of the Congregational Lecture did me the honour of the invitation to deliver the course of this year, I could not but feel grateful for the opportunity thus afforded, of making an attempt to rescue from misapprehension a branch of research into the works of

* “It will not be unwelcome to the serious reader to have this passage laid before him in a close translation. “The finishing lesson, the total, let us hear ; Revere God, and keep his commandments : for this [concerns] every one of mankind.”

† Eccl. ii. 26. Psa. xxviii. 5.