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IN THIRTY VOLUMES:

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1750, IN FIFTY VOLUMES, DUODECIMO.

BY THE REV JOHN WESLEY, A. M.,

SOMETIME FELLOW OF LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD.

VOL. XXIV

LONDON:

PUBLISHED AND SOLD BY J. KERSHAW,

14, *City-Road, and* 66, *Paternoster-Row.*

1826.

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EXTRACTS

FROM

THE SERMONS

OF

DR. ANNESLEY

SERMON I.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OUR SUPPORT IN ALL WORLDLY DISTRACTIONS.

PSALM xcvii. 1, 2.

The LORD *reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*

THE state of affairs is often so involved and confused, that we need not wonder if we see men of wisdom greatly perplexed in their spirits, and almost sunk into discouragement. The best of men, whose hearts are most fortified with grace, would be of all others most subject to discomposure, were it not that they feel peace and comfort flowing into them from the remembrance and sweet consideration of a GOD above. What good man could have any tolerable enjoyment of himself, or possess his soul in patience, while he observes the irregular motions of things below, the restlessness, tumblings, and tossings of the world; desirable comforts and delights blasted in a moment; afflictions and troubles breaking in with a sudden surprise; order quite subverted, laws violated, and the edge of them turned against those that are faithful and peaceable in a land, and all things indeed turned upside down; wickedness rampant, and religion oppressed. These things would soon break his heart, did he not see Him who is invisible, and firmly believe a wheel within a wheel; an unseen hand, which steadily and prudently guides and directs all things; keeping up a beautiful order, where reason can discern nothing but confusion.

Those that are conv rsant in the Sacred Scriptures, find, that the flourishing state of ungodly men, and the afflicted

condition of the good, have proved to some of the saints so hard a knot, that they have gone to GOD for the untying of it; and to others it hath been the occasion of furious and violent temptations. Upon that very score, holy ASAPH was almost ready to conclude, he had in vain "cleansed his heart, and washed his hands in innocence."

But if we will repair unto the sanctuary, and consult the divine oracles, and believe them when they tell us that the eternal GOD, our GOD, is the governor of the world, it will revive our spirits, reduce our souls into their right frame, and preserve them in a due composure, when the scene of affairs is most ruffled. To entertain you with a discourse upon this seasonable subject, is the work allotted me at this time, and the question now to be answered is this:—

How may our belief of GOD's governing the world, support us in all worldly distractions?

The text which I have now read, is the precious and sure foundation on which I am to build; in that, we find these things observable:—

1. A comfortable assertion; "The LORD reigneth," *i. e.*, JEHOVAH, GOD, or if you please, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, "unto whom all power is given, both in heaven and in earth;" for that he is particularly intended in this Psalm, may be gathered from *verse* 7: "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, and boast themselves of their idols; worship him, all ye gods;" which last words relate to CHRIST, as the Apostle PAUL assures us: "When he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, Let all the angels of GOD worship him." (*Heb.* i. 6.)

2. Here is an exhortation to joy and gladness, upon account of the LORD's reigning. "Let the earth rejoice, and let the multitudes of the isles be glad thereof:" *i. e.*, let all the world rejoice; at least, all that are subjects to this mighty Lord, who have bowed to his sceptre, and submitted themselves to his government, as "a willing people in the day of his power." CHRIST was the Desire of all nations; and there is reason why he and his govern-

ment should be the Delight of all nations. Both those in the earth, by which some understand the Continent, and those of the Isles, or if you please, you may understand the Gentiles, because that passage of the Prophet, "The Isles shall wait for his law," (*Isai.* xlii. 4,) is, by the Evangelist, rendered thus, "In his name shall the Gentiles trust." (*Matt.* xii. 21.)

3. We have here, the manner how the LORD manageth his government; and that is laid down in two things:—

First, With terrible majesty and mysteriousness. This you have in the former part of the second verse: "Clouds and darkness are round about him;" which words intimate to us, the tremendous majesty of the LORD, which may well strike an awe upon his subjects and friends, and much more fill his enemies with dread and horror. He was terrible at his giving forth the fiery law upon mount Sinai. As we read, "The mountain burned with fire, unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness." (*Deut.* xi. 4.) So he is and will be still in his future appearance and dispensations; for "his fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, but burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

And as these clouds and darkness signify the terrible majesty, so the mysteriousness of his proceedings. He often goeth so much out of our sight, that we are unable to give an account of what he doeth, or what he is about to do. Frequently the pillar of divine Providence is dark throughout, to Israelites as well as Egyptians, so that his own people understand not the riddles, till he is pleased to be his own interpreter. "His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known." (*Psa.* lxxvii. 19.)

Yet the LORD manageth his government with perfect equity and unspotted justice. "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Righteousness, whereby he preserves, saves, and rewards, the good; judgment, whereby he punishes, confounds, and destroys

the wicked. These are the habitation of his throne, his tribunal, his seat of judicature. These are the basis or foundation, which give unto his throne rectitude and establishment. "His throne is established in righteousness, and the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre." Though there be clouds, yet no blemishes; though darkness, yet no deformities. "The LORD is upright, he is our rock, there is no unrighteousness in him." (*Psa.* xcii. 15.) The doctrine I shall speak to is this:—

In the midst of all outward distractions and confusions, GOD's governing the world may, and should be, our support and joy. In the handling thereof I shall observe this method. I. Inquire what government is. II. Prove that GOD doth govern the world. III. Show why this should support and comfort his people. IV Improve the whole in a way of use.

I begin with the first of these.

I. Government is the exerting that power which any one is justly clothed with, for the ordering and directing of persons and things to their right and proper ends.

In this description of government are three things to be considered.

1. In all government there is an end fixed and aimed at. Thus it is in domestic or family government, which parents have over their children by nature, and masters over their servants by contract. The end of that government is the good of the family, and every one that is a member thereof. The parent, or master, ought not to aim solely at his own honour, pleasure, and advantage; but to desire, study, and by all lawful means to promote the good of the whole. And just so it is with political government, both in cities and provinces, and kingdoms or empires. When people did at first constitute such or such a form of government, and place one or more at the helm, no rational man can doubt, but it was for some wise end; which end is either supreme and ultimate, or inferior and subordinate.

The supreme and ultimate end, ought to be the glory of GOD, the exalting his name, the maintaining and promot-

ing religion and godliness. None can shoot at a fairer mark; this is worthy of men, of the best and greatest men: it is the great end which GOD himself aims at in the works of his hands: he both made all things for himself, and for himself likewise he doth uphold and order them. And unto this end, all magistrates are in duty bound to direct their rule and all their actions. This is the great work of their place, the main business of their office. The good LORD give them all a heart to consider it, and to act accordingly! As they rule by GOD, so they are obliged to rule for him; they ought not to design the lifting up of themselves, but the lifting up the name of GOD and CHRIST in the world, especially in their own dominions. That magistrate who doth not make the glory of GOD his principal end, is himself degenerated into a beast.

The subordinate end is the good of the communities, the welfare of the whole country, the peace, comfort, and prosperity of all the people, over whom governors are set. The supreme magistrate is to his dominions, what the head is to the body natural, and so influence belongs to him as well as pre-eminence; he is engaged to think, contrive, order, and provide for the comfort of the body, and all the members of it. "He is the minister of GOD to thee for good," even for a fourfold good.

(1.) For natural good, that he may secure thy person and life from danger, and thy outward liberty, comforts and enjoyments from the sons of violence.

(2.) For moral good, that he may curb thy unruly passions, and hinder them from breaking out into vicious and enormous practices.

(3.) For civil good, that he may preserve public society, and keep up common honesty and justice.

(4.) For spiritual good, that he may defend the true religion, that which is pure and undefiled before GOD and the FATHER, and encourage the worship of GOD, which is warranted by the Scripture. And all this is according to the word, which doth command that "we should pray

for Kings, and all that are in authority, that under them we might lead peaceable and quiet lives, in all godliness and honesty." So that the end of government is the securing peace and quietness, and the encouraging honesty and godliness.

2. In all government there is supposed a power sufficient for the ordering things unto these ends: not only natural power, but also lawful authority; for without that there can be no just, right, and good government. Magistrates therefore are called Powers. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained by God." (*Rom.* xiii. 1.) Lawful governors are invested with authority and power; there are put into their hands the sceptre to rule, and the sword to punish as there is cause. They have a legislative power, to make laws, which shall oblige their subjects; they have a right to do this, and obedience is due from their people, obedience to all their just and lawful commands; they ought to rule in the fear of God, and their subjects ought to obey in the fear of God. "Ye must needs be subject, and that not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake, as knowing that this is the will of God concerning you." (*Rom.* xiii. 5.) And as there is an authority to enact laws, so a power to suppress the rebellious, and animadvert on those that are refractory and stubborn, and also to defend, reward, and encourage, all who perform their duty. Where this power is not, there is a miserable defect in the government, which will in time come to nothing, and confusion and every evil work step up in its place.

3. In government this power is reduced into act; there is a seasonable exerting the power in order to the attaining these ends. This is the complement of all; for that power is vain which always lies dormant. Power is not put into the ruler's hand merely for ornament, but for use. It is no other than a trust committed to him; therefore though he be a magistrate over men, yet he is a minister of God, and is obliged to serve his great Lord according to the

best of his skill, toward the end above-mentioned. As he is advanced to a high and honourable place, so he is engaged to a great and excellent work. "He is not to bear the sword in vain;" (*Rom.* xiii. 4;) and it may be said, he weareth not the crown in vain; not for a mere show, an empty pageantry, but for a good end, for excellent and noble purposes. The sword committed to him must be drawn against the enemies of God, and truth, and holiness; he must be an avenger to execute wrath, not upon the pious and peaceable, but upon them that do evil. Thus have I showed you what government is, *viz.*, using of lawful power for excellent ends.

II. The second thing propounded was to prove, that God doth govern the world. As he made it at first, so he doth still uphold and order it. In a nation you know there are many inferior magistrates, yet it followeth not but the King is supreme, who authorizeth, influences, directs, and limits them by his laws. There are upon earth, many governors, various forms of government, yea, the angels in heaven are ministering spirits, employed in special and weighty matters. But all of them are set up and sent forth by God, and fulfil his pleasure. God himself sits at the helm, and steers the course; he overrules and orders all from the highest to the lowest. For the evidencing hereof take these following particulars:—

First, The light of nature hath discovered this, and by the glimmering thereof (though it burn dimly as a candle in the socket) many among the Heathens have been led to the knowledge of it. It must be granted that they were exceedingly in the dark, differing much one from another in their sentiments about God and his Providence. Some were of opinion, that God doth not attend to the meaner and inferior creatures, nor take cognizance of small inconsiderable matters, but only of the grand concernments of mankind. Some again did assert, that God cared for all things; but it was only in a way of common general influences, and by second causes, doing nothing immediately and by himself. Others again, on the contrary side, did

affirm, that God doth immediately and by himself so work all in all, that they left almost no place for second causes. Thus were they divided among themselves, having their understandings miserably darkened. But many among the Heathens, yea, their most learned men, did own the divine providence and government. Hence it is that they call God the Rector and Keeper of the world; the Soul and Spirit of the world; and do expressly compare him to the soul in the body, and to the master in a ship, who doth command, rule, direct, steer, and turn it what way and to what port he himself thinks good. But,—

Secondly, The sacred Scriptures abound with testimonies, which may afford us full satisfaction in the point. When he was about to punish the world for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein, and to sweep away the inhabitants of it with a flood, he took care that all mankind should not be destroyed: But Noah and his family were preserved, yea, and some of all the species of animals too, that so seed might be continued upon earth, and that in the ordinary way of generation, which was an eminent instance of divine providence, and its ordering and governing the world. Besides that, attend to these passages of Scripture: "God doeth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number: he giveth rain, sends waters, sets up on high those that be low, disappoints the devices of the crafty, taking them in their own craftiness, carrying the counsel of the froward headlong." (*Job* v. 9—13.) "I am the Lord, and there is none else: I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." (*Isai.* xlv. 5, 7.) "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth: the righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their distresses." (*Psa.* xxxiv. 16, 17.) "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." (*Eph.* i. 11.) Not only some things, which are momentous and stupendous, such as strike men with wonder and amazement; but all things are of God, and not accord-

ing to the will and pleasure of others, but according to his own eternal counsel. "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and all the inhabitants of the earth: (who are counted as nothing:) and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (*Dan.* iv. 34, 35.) "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your heavenly Father." (*Matt.* x. 29.) Scriptures to this purpose might be multiplied: I will add but one more: "The LORD hath prepared his throne in heaven, and his kingdom ruleth over all." (*Psa.* ciii. 19.) But,—

Thirdly, GOD hath an unquestionable right to govern the world; it doth properly appertain unto him. The belief and acknowledgment hereof doth necessarily follow upon the owning of a GOD. To own such a being, and yet to deny or question his right to govern, is a gross absurdity.

That Being which we call GOD, is the first, highest, noblest, and most excellent Being of all; infinite and unchangeable in all perfections, and therefore he hath a right to order others that are not so. Man is endued with reason and understanding, and so is the most excellent creature in this lower world; therefore it pleased his great Creator to put the lordship into his hand, and to give him "dominion over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." How much more then is an absolute and universal rule, due to GOD, whose understanding is infinite, and in whom are all the inexhaustible, unfathomable treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Besides that, consider GOD is the fountain of being, the first cause and original of all being. The world and all things in it are the works of his hands. He made them, and fashioned them; and seeing he made all, seeing by his power and for his pleasure all things are and were created, it is highly reasonable that all things should be ordered, directed, and

disposed of according to his pleasure. Who can be so impudent and brutish, and run so cross to the dictates of right reason, as to deny him a right to give laws to them unto whom he gave life? It is every way fit, that he from whom all things had their being, and to whose power and goodness they own their continuance, should appoint them all their ends, and direct their steps, and cast their lines, and cut out their works, and overrule all their actions.

Fourthly, For God to govern the world is no dishonour to him; it doth not the least eclipse his most excellent glory. It is true, as I before hinted, though some men cheerfully acknowledged a governing and overruling Providence, yet they conceived it extended not itself to vile and contemptible creatures, or to minute and inconsiderable things; judging of him by earthly potentates, who take state upon them, and trouble not themselves with any but the more weighty and momentous affairs of their dominions, and leave things of smaller importance to their inferior officers.

But this is not the manner of the God of Jacob, nor doth he count his care of the meanest and most minute beings, to be any reflection upon him. Therefore, he expressly tells us, that "the young lions seek their meat of God; that he giveth to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens when they cry. He clothes the lilies, and sparrows are not forgotten by him, not one of them falls to the ground without him; the very hairs of our head are numbered."

And what dishonour can all or any of this be to him? Is it possible that his doing so should render him cheap to the children of men? Nay, is it not enough to commend him to all wise and thinking persons, that he is so great a God that he can extend his care to so many millions of objects, and so graciously condescending, as to look after the lowest of the works of his hands?

Surely since it was not unworthy of his divine power to make the meanest creature, it cannot be unworthy of his goodness to maintain and order it. If his eternal power

and Godhead are clearly seen in the things that are made, then his goodness doth likewise display itself in providing for them, and his wisdom in governing and directing them. It is true, he humbles himself when he beholds those things which are above, much more when he regards those things that are here below; but that humbling of himself is a glorifying of himself, and doth deservedly commend and endear him to his people: "O LORD, thou preservest man and beast; how excellent is thy loving-kindness!" (*Psa.* xxxvi. 6, 7.)

Lastly, Our GOD is abundant in mercy and goodness. He is the Father of mercies and GOD of compassions; and as that doth render him fit to govern the world, so it may work in us an assurance that he doth and will do it. Shall we fancy him like the ostrich, concerning which it is said, "That she leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beasts may break them; she is hardened against her young ones, as if they were not hers." (*Job* xxxix. 14.) Thus to do is utterly inconsistent with the divine goodness. To fancy such a thing of GOD, would be to blaspheme him; He hath a kindness for the works of his hands, and that will carry him to a caring for them. The world will love its own, and doth not GOD much more? A good Prince, who is the father of his country, and deserves that name, will, to the best of his skill, guide and rule his kingdom, at the helm whereof Providence hath placed him, that his own honour and his people's welfare may be secured and promoted. That man deserves not the place nor name of a master, who neglects to make provision for his own family, and keep up order in it. That is an unnatural father, unworthy indeed to be called man, who doth not, according to his best knowledge and ability, mind his children and govern them.

Now none is so good as GOD, none such a father as GOD, no love comparable to his love. All that love which may be found in the creatures, is but a drop from his

ocean, a spark from his flame; and, as I have said, all the world is his own, and all that is therein the works of his hands. He built this huge and stately fabric, and furnished it with all its inhabitants, from the highest and most glorious angel, to the meanest and most contemptible insect; and how can we possibly think otherwise, but that the pity and love which he hath for the works of his own hands, will draw out his wisdom, and power, and care, for the ruling and directing of them? For any one to deny this care, nay, to hesitate about it, would be a base disparagement, and affront to him.

III. The third thing we have to do, is to show how our belief of God's governing the world may support us in all worldly distractions; and that we may draw out the sweetness of this truth, we must consider these following particulars:—1. God's accomplishment for the work. 2. The extent of his government. 3. The properties thereof. 4. Several things relating to the Church and its members.

1. God is most fit and accomplished for this great work. It is indeed a business too hard for a creature's hand to despatch, and a burden too heavy for a created shoulder to bear up under. To govern the world is a thing utterly impossible to a created being; not only to the wisest man on earth, but also to the highest angel in heaven. None can govern the whole world, but He that created it. Creation is peculiar to God; the greatest angel cannot create the smallest spire of grass. The most minute drop of being can proceed only from Him, who is the Original and Fountain of all being. So the government of the whole world is peculiar to God, because there is so much contrariety in it, so many antipathies. Men have unruly passions; they interfere in their several interests, and, while they are carrying them on, quarrel and jostle one another; and who but God can order all, and direct them to most noble and excellent ends? Who but God can take these several scattered shreds, and unite them together in one curious and amiable piece of work-

manship? Who but GOD can take these jarring discords, and turn them into an admirable and delightful harmony?

That GOD is perfectly accomplished for the work, so that he can not only do it, but the doing thereof will be no pain nor trouble to him, may thus appear:—

1. He is an immense Being: "heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool." Those that have many businesses scattered up and down, must needs suffer some of that business to lie by neglected, because they themselves are limited creatures. Some things may be out of order under the government of the most prudent and pious Prince, because he cannot be at once in all parts of his dominions; but GOD is omnipresent, filling heaven and earth: "If thou goest up to heaven, he is there; if thou make thy bed in hell, behold he is there; if thou dwellest in the uttermost parts of the sea, there shall his hand lead thee, and his right hand shall guide thee." All things are within his reach; wheresoever any thing is doing or to be done, there GOD is; who is present in every place, and with every person. He stands at our right hands, and so may well guide them; so to do will cost him no travail nor trouble. "In him we live and move, and have our being;" not at a distance from him, not out of him, but in him.

2. GOD can easily govern the world, because of his almighty power. He is stronger than all; his word is enough to accomplish all his will. The wisest of men are foolish creatures, and the strongest are weak. Kingdoms and nations have frequently proved ungovernable to potent Princes; such breaches have been made as they could not heal; such tempests have risen as they could not lay: but GOD is of infinite power, as he hath an arm long enough to reach, so strong enough to rule all things. He binds the sea with a girdle, and stays its proud waves, saying, "Hitherto shall ye go, and no further." "He makes the wrath of man to praise him," though it be more boisterous than the sea, "and the remainder thereof he shall restrain. He hangeth the world upon nothing; he hath compassed

the waters with bounds; he divideth the sea with his power; the pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. Lo, these are part of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? and the thunder of his power who can understand?" The power of his thunder is great, which "discovered the forest, and makes the hinds to calve." What, then, is the thunder of his power? When God doth but whisper a rebuke into the ear of a man, that maketh his beauty to consume like a moth. What, then, can he do, nay, what can he not do, when he thunders from heaven? In short, his power is irresistible, and his will in all things efficacious. He can master all difficulties, and conquer all enemies, and overcome all opposition; when he hath a mind to work, who shall hinder him? He asks no leave, he needs no help, he knows no impediment: mountains in his way become plains; his counsel shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart, to all generations.

3. God is fit to govern the world upon the account of his wisdom and knowledge. His eyes run to and fro through the earth; he observes all the motions and ways of men. He understands what hath been, is, and shall be. "Hell is naked before him;" how much more earth? His eye is upon the Conclave of Rome, the cabals of Princes, and the closets of particular persons. Excellently doth David set forth the divine omniscience: "Thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising, and understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways; there is not a word in my tongue, but, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before." (*Psa.* cxxxix.) He knows not only what is done by man, but also what is in man: all his goodness, and all his wickedness; all his contrivances, purposes, and designs. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?" Do you ask who? The answer is ready: Jehovah. "He searcheth the heart, he trieth" and possesseth "the reins." Those are dark places, far

removed from the eyes of all the world; but GOD's eyes are like a flame of fire, they carry their own light with them, and discover those recesses, run through all the labyrinths of the heart; they look into each corner of it, and see what lurks there, what is doing there. O what manner of persons should we be! With what diligence should we keep our hearts, since GOD observes them with so much exactness! Men may take a view of the practices of others; but GOD sees their principles, and to what they incline them. Yea, he knows how to order and command the heart; not only how to affright it with terrors, and to allure it with kindnesses, and persuade it with arguments, but likewise how to change it by his power. He can not only enfeeble it when set upon evil, but also confirm, and fix, and fortify it to that which is good. The hearts of Kings are in the hands of the LORD, and he turneth them as the rivers of water.

4. GOD is fit to govern the world upon the score of his longsuffering and forbearance. Those that have the reins of government in their hands, had need be persons of excellent and cool spirits; for if they have great power, and but a small stock of patience, they will soon put all into a flame. That man who hath but a little family to manage, will in that meet with exercises enough; how much more he that is set over a kingdom? and unspeakably more yet he that is to govern the world; especially considering the present state of the world, and how things have been ever since sin made an entry into it. "The whole world" now "lieth in wickedness;" and GOD is every day mocked to his face. Angelical patience would soon be spent, and turned into such fury, as would reduce all into a chaos. There is not an angel in heaven, but if there were a commission given him, would do immediate execution, and sheath the sword of vengeance in the bowels of malefactors. But "GOD is infinite in patience, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Though he be disobeyed, abused, grieved, vexed, pressed with the sins of men, even as a cart is pressed that is laden with sheaves,

yet he spares, and bears, and waits. How loath is he to stir up all his wrath, and to pour out the vials thereof! He counts that his strange work; when he goeth about it his bowels often yearn, and his repentings are kindled together. He seemed to stand with his hand stretched out, as one resolved to give a consuming blow, but he laid aside his weapons of indignation, and in the greatness of his compassion cried out, "How shall I give thee up, EPHRAIM? How shall I deliver thee, JUDAH? How shall I make thee as ADMAH, how shall I set thee as ZEBOIM? My heart is turned within me; I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy EPHRAIM, for I am GOD, and not man." Thus we see GOD is accomplished for the government of the world.

In the second place let us inquire concerning the extent of GOD's governing providence; how far and unto what it reaches. And take this in general: The whole world, and whatsoever is contained within the compass of heaven and earth, are ordered by him as his family, the Church is regarded by him as his spouse, and all good men as his children. All men, even the worst and vilest, with all their actions, and all creatures, even the meanest, are ordered by GOD, and directed to their appointed ends. But we will descend to particulars.

First, The governing providence of GOD extends itself to all creatures whatsoever, both animate and inanimate; the greatest and the least. "He rules the stars; the influences of Pleiades and the bonds of Orion are from him. He causeth the sun to shine;" sets him daily and annual journeys; and when he pleaseth stops him in his course, and turns him back, "when he comes out of his chamber as a bridegroom, or a giant refreshed with wine. He makes small the drops of rain, and causeth them to fall upon one city, and not upon another. He feeds the fowls, and musters caterpillars, locusts, flies, as his armies. Angels are his servants," absolutely at his beck, "ready to execute his will; and by him they are sent forth to

minister to his children, and to punish his enemies." He hath enraged devils in a chain, and both confines them, and employs them as he himself thinks good. He permitted one to be a lying spirit in the mouth of AHAB's prophets. He permitted SATAN to do much against JOB, yet kept him from touching his life. He cast devils out of the possessed, and gave them leave to enter into a herd of swine. He governs men too, keeping ABIMELECH from violating SARAH's chastity, and LABAN from touching JACOB's liberty or goods, and ESAU from offering violence to his life. The meanest creatures are the objects of his care, and the noblest are overruled by his power.

Secondly, The governing providence of GOD extends itself to all motions and actions. Without Him we can do nothing. As a special assistance is necessary to gracious acts, so is a general concourse to natural ones. Unless He support, we cannot stir a step, nor strike a stroke, nor speak a word, nor form a thought. GOD suspends the creature's actions when he pleaseth. Thus he kept the fire from burning the three children that were thrown into it, when put into its greatest rage: He stopped the mouths of lions, and kept them from preying upon DANIEL, when hunger was feeding upon them; and it was He that taught and commanded the rapacious raven to forget itself, that it might carry food to a Prophet. GOD orders and directs actions to ends never designed by the doer; yea, he makes the most vile and wicked actions subservient to most excellent ends. The King of Assyria thought of nothing else but to destroy nations; but GOD sent him as an executioner of his justice to punish a hypocritical nation, and the people of his wrath. Thus GOD doth not only uphold his creatures in their beings, and assist and strengthen them in their actions, but he doth also direct, order, and overrule those actions, so that their issue shall be admirable. Wicked men have base and sordid ends in the commission of sin, but GOD hath holy ends in his permission thereof; while they gratify their lusts, he

fulfils his pleasure; and while they act like Devils, he acts like God.

Thirdly, This governing and overruling providence of God extends itself to all issues and results of things, both good and evil. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the disposal thereof is of the Lord." He is the fountain of all the good and comforts which we enjoy, for which we are under everlasting obligations to praise his name. That the house is built, we owe more to God than to the workmen; and in the preservation of the city, God is more to be thanked and acknowledged than the watchman. It is unquestionably men's duty to follow their callings, and mind their business, and study good husbandry; for the sluggard shall be clothed with rags, and the prodigal will be glad of husks; but if after all endeavour and care, an estate comes in, it is more of God's sending than of man's fetching. The blessing of God makes rich, and not man's diligence without it. When you are sick, it is your wisdom and duty to send for the most able, skilful, and faithful physicians, and to follow the method, and use the means which they prescribe; but when your distempers are removed, and your health is restored, you are beholden more to God than to men and means: for notwithstanding them, your souls would dwell in silence, if the Lord himself were not your help. "The battle is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift; nor doth promotion come from the east, or the west; but the Lord pulleth down one, and setteth up another."

So for evil things, we are too prone to rest in second causes, and care not to look so high as God; but whether we take notice of him or no, there is no rod under which we smart, but God's hand lays it on. Eliphaz tells us, "Affliction cometh not forth from the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;" (*Job* v. 6;) *i. e.*, they do not come by chance; though many things be contingencies, yet all things have a cause. To us, indeed, they are casual, but to God they are certain. He himself foresaw and

fore-appointed them. There is nothing of fortune, but all is of counsel. "Is there any evil in the city, and the LORD hath not done it;" *i. e.*, any penal evil, any afflictive evil. There is no sickness nor pain thou groanest under, not a loss thou meetest with, not a cross that pinches thee, but thou mayest write the name of GOD upon it. "He creates darkness, as well as forms the light." When things run cross to men's desires and expectations, they grow froward, and quarrel at this and that; but let this silence them, and work them to a humble and patient submission, that all is of GOD. Israel rebelled against the house of DAVID, therefore REHOBOAM armed JUDAH and BENJAMIN to bring the kingdom again to him; Stay, said GOD, "ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel: return every man to his house, for this thing is of me." All good is of GOD, that obligeth us to thankfulness: all evil is of GOD, and that should teach us patiently to submit. "I was dumb," said DAVID, "and opened not my mouth, because LORD, thou didst it."

In the third place, we shall inquire after the properties of GOD's government, or the manner how he orders and governs all things.

1. GOD doth govern the world mysteriously: so the text tells us: "Clouds and darkness are round about him." As there are mysteries in the word, so in the works of GOD. Things hard to be understood, many riddles, which puzzle men of the largest and most piercing understandings. "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; but he knoweth the way that I take." GOD knoweth our ways, and counteth our steps; but the wisest of men do not know all GOD's ways. His way is frequently in the sea, and his chariot in the clouds, so that he is invisible, not only in his essence, but also in the design and tendency of his operations. Those that behold him with an eye of faith, do not yet see him with an eye of understanding, so as to discern his

way, and whither he is going. ST. PAUL assures us, "His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out." Some of them indeed are obvious, plain, and easy. We may upon the first view, give a satisfactory account of them. We may read righteousness, equity, mercy, love, in them, because written in capital letters, and with such beams of light, as he that runs may read them. But others of GOD's ways are dark and obscure, so that they are out of our reach, and above our sight. He that goes about in them to trace GOD, may quickly lose himself. They are like that hand-writing upon the wall, which none of BELSHAZZAR's wise men could read or interpret. There are secrets of state and government, which are not fit to be made common. But this may be our comfort, though GOD doth not now give an account of his matters, nor is he obliged thereunto, yet he can give a satisfactory account, and one day his people shall be let into the mystery. And though many things which GOD doeth, they know not now, yet they shall soon know them afterward. And when they know, they shall approve and admire both the things, the reason, and the end; they shall then be perfectly reconciled to all providences, and see that all were worthy of GOD.

2. GOD doth govern the world wisely: he did indeed threaten it as a dreadful judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem, "That he would give children to be their Princes, and babes should rule over them." (*Isai.* iii. 4.) Not meaning children in years, for JOSIAH, a child, was one of the best of their Kings, but children in understanding; such as had no prudence, nor conduct, knew not how to hold the reins, or direct the course. It is certainly fatal to the world, when a young foolish Phaëton is got into the chariot; when an unskilful pilot sits at the helm, the passengers of the ship will soon be brought to their last prayers. But GOD is wise in heart, yea, infinite in wisdom: all the treasures of wisdom are in him, and no wisdom is to be found in angels or men, but what came from him,

and all that (were it united in one) would not be comparable to what is in him. "The very foolishness of God is wiser than men."

There are two things of which wisdom consists, and both are in God most eminently: Knowledge of the nature of things, and Prudence to dispose and order them. God knows all things perfectly, and orders them all exactly; all things are naked and opened before him, and most curiously and accurately managed by him. Men in authority sometimes mistake and miscarry, doing many things amiss: but in all things God acts very wisely. He is not a man that should err or repent; ever since the creation, all things have been done with that unreprovable exactness, that if the world were to begin again, there should not be an alteration in a tittle: all hath been so well that nothing can be mended. Those dark and obscure passages of Providence, at which good men are startled, and by which all men are posed, are excellent and curious strokes, and as so many well placed shades, which commend the work, and admirably set off the beauty of Providence. That is a great Scripture most worthy of our particular notice: "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his will:" (*Eph.* i. 11:) which words plainly speak these two things:—

(1.) The independency of God in his operations. He asketh not leave of any, neither men nor angels; he is not beholden to them, he doth not advise with them, he cannot be forced or hindered by them. He acts not according to their will, but his own, and fulfils all his pleasure.

(2.) The wisdom of God in his working. He doeth all according to his counsel; he is a God of judgment, a most judicious God, and all his works are done in judgment.

It is said of God, that "He is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working;" (*Isai.* xxviii. 29;) this latter necessarily follows the former. He must needs be excellent in working because wonderful in counsel: all that he doeth, is the result of a most admirable judgment, and mature counsel. The holy Prophet therefore was ravished

in his spirit upon the consideration of God's works, both for their number and for their wisdom; "O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all!" (*Psa.* civ. 24.) They are very many, yet all very good, notwithstanding their multitude and variety. God miscarried in none; there is an impress of wisdom upon them all.

3. God governs all things powerfully; where the word of a king is, Solomon tells us there is power. What power then doth the word of God carry with it! He orders and rules, turns and overturns things as he thinks good. That is a comfortable place which we have: "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations." (*Isai.* xxxiii. 11.) The counsel of the Lord doth so stand, that all things shall fall before it that rise up in opposition to it. The counsel of the Heathen is brought to nought, and the devices of the people are of no effect. As the rod of Moses prevailed against the rod of the magicians, so do the thoughts and counsels of God, against all other thoughts and counsels that run counter to them: "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that he did, in the heaven and in the earth, and in the seas, and in all deep places." (*Psa.* cxxxv. 6.) God's will obtains every where: down man, down Devil, you must yield: things shall not be as you will, but as God will. We may well say, "Who hath resisted his will?" Many indeed disobey and sin against the will of his precept, but none ever shall frustrate the will of his purpose; for he will do all his pleasure, and in his way mountains shall become a plain.

Many men think, and some say, they will do what they will, especially great men, who are advanced in place and armed with power. Their will is their own reason, and shall be other men's law: but to say, I will have my will, is a speech too lofty for a creature. When they exalt their wills, God can bind their hands, and break their necks. How resolved was Pharaoh? He would do this and that, that he would: "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will over-

take, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, mine hand shall destroy them." (*Exod.* xv. 9.) But GOD resolved, that as high, and great, and proud as PHARAOH was, he should not have his will, and GOD was too hard for him. "Thou didst blow with the wind, the sea covered them, they sunk down as lead in the mighty waters; by the blast of GOD they perished, and by the breath of his nostrils they were consumed." (*Ver.* 10.) GOD did easily scatter and consume them, as if they had been but dust or chaff; the breath of GOD's nostrils stopped the breath of their nostrils: nay, GOD need not send forth a blast; when he did but give a look, the host of the Egyptians were troubled. When GOD hides his face from his people, he troubles them; and when he looks upon his enemies, he can trouble them.

Nay more, GOD can not only bind the hands of men, but he likewise can bind their wills, yea, and turn their hearts too as the rivers of water. He can make enemies to be at peace, and lions to lie down with lambs, and leopards with kids, and Egyptians to give their jewels unto Israelites; yea, he can not only pacify them, but reconcile them, turning their enmity into friendship, their hatred into love. ESAU resolved to kill his brother JACOB; but he embraced him, fell on his neck, and kissed him. Observe that passage, which plainly speaks GOD's power over the spirits and wills of men: GOD's command there was, "Thrice in the year shall all your men-children appear before the LORD GOD of Israel;" and his promise was this: "No man shall desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy GOD thrice in the year." (*Exod.* xxxiv. 23, 24.) The Jews were environed with enemies, and those enemies might very well desire their land, flowing with milk and honey; and when all the males were gone up to Jerusalem, that was a fit opportunity for an invasion. But saith GOD, trouble not yourselves, do your duty, go up when I bid you, and I will take care and overrule in the case; look you to your duty, and I will look to your borders: I will so order the spirits of your enemies, that

not a man among them shall have any mind to give you a disturbance, or to make an inroad into your country. And this may afford strong consolation to us in the very worst of times, and when things are darkest, that the GOD whom we serve, hath such an effectual influence upon the hearts and wills of men, even of those that are his people's most desperate and enraged enemies.

4. GOD doth govern the world most righteously. So the text tells us: "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." It is true, many times affairs are so managed, and things at such a pass, vice encouraged, and virtue frowned upon, godliness trampled under foot, and profaneness triumphing; that thereby some have been induced to question a Providence, and even good men have been stumbled. But it doth not become any of us to call the great and glorious GOD down to the bar of our reason, nor to measure his dealings with our line. It is not for us to be his counsellors or judges. Rather, where we cannot comprehend him, let us adore him; still resolving with JEREMY, to hold fast this conclusion, "Righteous art thou, O LORD." And this is certain, whatsoever advantages some wicked men may have as to outward enjoyments, yet even here good men have the better of them, their lines are cast in more pleasant places, so that they have no cause of envy or complaint.

Have wicked men at any time the smiles of the world, the favour of great ones; do they glister with jewels, and abound with sensual comforts? But good men, though they be poor and despised, and counted the offscouring of the world, have the love of GOD's heart, which is most cordial, better than wine; the graces of his SPIRIT, which are beyond the gold of Ophir; and the light of his countenance, and beams of his favour, which make the most lightsome and comfortable day. They are arrayed with the robe of righteousness and garment of salvation, which adorn them more than garments of wrought gold. CHRIST leads them into his banqueting house, and there spreads over them the banner of his love, which affords the

surest protection and the sweetest shade. Who but themselves are able to tell or conceive what unspeakable and glorious joy they have, what triumphs and exultings of soul, when JESUS kisseth them with the kisses of his lips, and by his own SPIRIT witnesseth with theirs that they are the children of GOD. What are mines of gold, what are crowns and sceptres, to one drachm of grace, one smile from heaven, one whisper of divine love, one embrace of a Saviour? 'Cursed,' said noble GALEACIUS, 'be that man who counteth all the world worth one hour's communion with JESUS CHRIST!' And if one hour's communion be so precious, what is a life of communion?

But then, stay until the winding up of the bottom, until that last and great day shall dawn, in which there will be a revelation of the righteous judgment, and of the marvellous goodness of GOD, wherein the wicked shall be stripped of all their honour and power, of all their riches and pleasures, and turned into hell, for the unquenchable fire, and the worm of conscience eternally to feed upon them. And those who have closed with CHRIST, and bowed to his sceptre, and walked closely with GOD, and studied the power of godliness, shall enter into peace, and be clothed with glory, and sit upon thrones, possessed of a fulness of joy, and drinking rivers of pleasure, under the brightest and warmest beams of divine love, and in the full uninterrupted enjoyment of "those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man." Then all the world, the most stupid and unteachable part of it, will be throughly convinced, that "there is a reward for the righteous, a GOD that judgeth in the earth;" and that true "godliness is profitable for all things, both for the life that now is, and for that which is to come." Therefore, in the mean time, though "clouds and darkness are round about the throne," yet let us rejoice in the firm belief of what the Prophet tells us: "The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." (*Psa.* clxv. 17.)

The last thing promised for the proof of this, that GOD's

governing the world may well support us in the midst of all distractions, is to present to your consideration, several things more particularly relating to the church and people of God. And they are these :—

1. The nearness, dearness, and intimacy of that relation, in which the Church stands to God. What may not the wife and children of a loving and mighty King promise themselves from his government? Certainly they may well be assured, so long as he keeps his throne, they shall want neither defence nor comfort. The Church is God's vineyard, and will he not water it, and keep it every moment, lest any hurt it? She is the spouse of Christ, and will he not be tender over her, and kind to her? He is a father to his people, and will he not look after them, and afford them maintenance and necessary supplies? He is more than a mother to them, and will he not draw out his breasts of consolation to them? Doubtless they may expect all good, all kindness, all comforts from him, who hath been graciously pleased to put himself into all relations unto them. David looked with an eye of faith but to one relation in which God stood to him, "the Lord is my shepherd;" and from thence he saw sufficient encouragement to conclude, that "he should not want." What mayest thou then, O believer, argue from all God's relations? He is my God, my King, my Master, my Father, my Husband; therefore, surely I shall not want. He is a sun and a shield; a sun for comfort, and a shield for security. In his beams, then, "his children shall rejoice, and in his shadow shall they sit safely, and no good thing shall he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

2. The special interest which God hath in his Church and people. They are his portion and inheritance; and no one will, if he can help it, lose his portion. Naboth would not part with his inheritance upon any terms, neither sell nor change it; much less will Christ with his. His people are his jewels; and will he suffer them to be lost? They are his treasure; and what, shall his enemies rob him of that? No, no; "where his treasure is, there is his heart

also;" and where his heart is, there shall his eye be watching, and his hand of power shall be stretched out, and his wings of protection shall be spread abroad, and "salvation itself shall be for walls and bulwarks." The interest which God hath in all the world is not comparable to that interest which God hath in the Church. The rest are but his slaves, these are his children; the rest are but the rude wilderness, these are his gardens enclosed. In others he sees his power, but in these his image and his Son. Others are the work of his hands, but these are the workmanship of his Spirit.

3. That entire affection which he beareth his Church and people. As he stands in all relations to them, so he hath all affections for them. You that understand what love is, feel within yourselves what a mighty power and vigour there is in it. Now there is no love in the world comparable to the love of God. He hath a flame to our spark, an ocean to our drop. The dearest of God's love is placed upon Christ, and in and for Christ's sake the same love is placed upon the Church and people of Christ: "Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." And what will not such love do? It will awaken care, and call forth power, and engage wisdom, and open the exchequer, and stick at no pains, no expense. "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." (*Isai.* xliii. 4.) "God loves the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob, and the dwellings of Jacob more than all the tents and palaces of wickedness, and more than all the thrones of iniquity, that frame mischief by a law; for these shall have no fellowship with him." He loves one saint more than he doth ten thousand ungodly wretches, and his poor Church more than all the world. And since this God, who is so much your friend, governs the world, sit down and think how much you may expect from him; nay, what good is there which you may not expect?

4. God hath especially charged himself with his Church

and people. Now a good King looks upon it as his duty to study and promote the welfare of all his subjects, but in a more particular manner, the happiness of his consort and children.

There is, as I have shown, a general providence of God, which extends itself to the whole world; but besides that, there is a special providence exercised about good men, of whom he is as tender as the apple of his eye. The interest of his people lies closest to his heart, and doth most engage his thoughts. Others are under his eye, which runs to and fro through the earth; but these are under his wing. Doth God take care of oxen? Yes, that he doth, and of asses too, and of young lions, and wolves, and bears, and tigers, and all the beasts of prey; but he takes another manner of care, for his lambs, and his doves, in the clefts of the rock, and in the secret places of the stairs. You read, and rejoice when you read, "that he is the Saviour of all men, but especially of those that believe." (1 *Tim.* iv. 10.) They are his peculiar people, and so the objects of his peculiar care: whatsoever God doeth, he minds them; and whoever are neglected, they are not. What, Noah drowned in the waters of the deluge, or Lot burned with Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain! No, no; it could not possibly be. Noah must be secured in the ark, before the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up; and Lot must be arrived at Zoar, the city of his refuge, before the storm of fire and brimstone could fall.

5. God hath already done great and marvellous things for his people, not only in the ordinary way of his common providence, but likewise putting forth extraordinary and magnificent acts whensoever their case did call for them. Miracles have been nothing to him at such a time; he hath not only wrought one or two, but multiplied them; there hath been a series of them, as if he counted them cheap. His arm hath awakened, and put on strength, and also put forth strength. No less than ten wonderful plagues did he send upon that proud King Pharaoh, Israel's oppressor;

and rather than he should not have let them go, he would have sent a thousand more. And if after they were gone, PHARAOH would pursue them, GOD would make for Israel a way through the sea, and for PHARAOH and his host, a grave in it. The course of nature was stopped, and the sun made to stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, that his people might avenge themselves upon their enemies. Clouds showered down manna upon them, and flinty rocks poured out water. And though such kind of works have not been performed in the latter days, yet GOD in them hath not left himself without witness, neither is his arm shortened: miracles are as easy to him now, as they were formerly, and if need were he would do them. But besides them, consider these three things, which GOD hath done all along.

(1.) He hath in all times preserved and kept up a Church in the world. Though CHRIST hath but a little flock, and that encompassed with ravening wolves, yet he hath always had a flock. When all flesh had corrupted their way, there was a Church in NOAH's family. When Israel had generally perverted their way, and turned aside to abominable idolatry, there were still reserved seven thousand faithful worshippers, that had not bowed the knee to Baal. In the thickest darkness, and most furious rage of Popery, there were those that owned and suffered for the truths of the Gospel. The four mighty monarchies of the world have been shaken down and broken in pieces, but "the kingdom of the LORD is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation." The Church indeed, hath not been always alike conspicuous, nor hath it always been in the same state of purity, peace, and prosperity; but it hath always had a being. CHRIST was never without some militant subjects, nor his truth without some faithful witnesses.

(2.) GOD hath employed angels for his Church, who knowing it to be the will of their great Creator, readily comply and cheerfully obey. As the gates of hell set themselves against it, so doth the host of heaven engage

for it. "They are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." (*Heb.* i. 14.) When the Prophet ELISHA was in danger from environing enemies, the mountain was immediately garrisoned with horses and fiery chariots, that came in to be his guard. They have it given them in express charge, to bear the saints up in their hands, and to encamp round about them; and may not this be a singular comfort to believers? What, though they be the objects of hell's envy, and earth's malice, yet they are GOD's darlings, and the charge of angels! And whatsoever work angels have to do for them, they not only despatch it faithfully, but delight to do so.

(3.) GOD hath turned all things to the Church's advantage, so that it hath not been a loser in the upshot: both the north and the south wind have made spices to flow forth. "All things work together for good to them who love GOD." Comforts and crosses, mercies and judgments, sunshine and storms, ordinances and afflictions, every thing, all things are employed, all busy, all at work, and all at work for good. Take a wicked man, and all things are against him; take a child of GOD, and all things are for him; all are sent upon an excellent design, and shall prosper in it. More particularly, oppositions, persecutions, and fiery trials, have issued in these three things, which are choice advantages.

[1.] By these things, GOD separates between the good and the bad, the precious and the vile. In those fields where there is care taken to sow the best and cleanest corn, the envious one will come and scatter tares. Churches contract filth and corruption as well as other bodies, and though they were very pure in their first erecting, yet afterward they degenerate. Some among them leave their first love, and their first works, and live not according to the Gospel. Now afflictions are the physic GOD gives for purging them out; these are the fan of CHRIST, with which he clears his floor; they are his fire for the refining of his gold, and severing it from the dross. When storms

arise, the unsound fruit falls off: when persecution ariseth, stony-ground hearers are offended; then away go formalists, and all such as were strangers to the power of godliness.

[2.] By troubles and persecutions, the good are bettered; in such times, and by such means, their corruptions are mortified, and their graces are brightened. The trees of righteousness root the faster for being shaken with tempests, and flourish the more for their pruning. Their fierce trials refine their souls, and heat them into a greater zeal for God and holiness. The very rage and malice of their enemies, doth strengthen their care, and raise their resolution, so that they grow stronger and stronger. Upon these two accounts, when times are saddest, and persecution hottest, whatever may be said of the actings of men, there is no cause to complain of mal-administration on God's part, so long as the Church is made purer, and the saints are made better. But,

[3.] By these persecutions the Church is enlarged, and the number of her children is increased. The oppressing of the Israelites by Pharaoh, issued in their multiplying. When the Church at Jerusalem was scattered, the kingdom of Christ was enlarged the more. Those afflictions which happened to St. Paul, ended in the furtherance of the Gospel. The blood of the martyrs hath all along been the seed of the Church. Persecutors are fools as well as madmen; they lose what they do; Christ and the Gospel gain. So doth God outshoot his enemies, and make their very wrath to praise him. Do you, all you that profess religion and godliness, look to it, that the number of Christians be not lessened through your wretched apostasy, and then it shall be augmented through your firmness and holy constancy. That is the fifth thing by which we may support and comfort ourselves, *viz.*, The great things which God hath done for his people.

6. There are very great and glorious things which God hath further to do. If all were accomplished which God has in his heart to do for his Church, none of us should be

here, the world would have an end, and time would be no more. The world doth owe its continuance to the Church. It is but the stage upon which God is acting for his name, and for his Church; and when the act is finished, the stage shall be pulled down. When wicked men are plotting against the Church, and persecuting her children, they are digging up those very foundations, on which themselves stand, and pulling down the pillars that uphold them. And as God continues the world for the sake of the Church, so he hath great things yet in his purpose, which must not fail of accomplishment. Such as these, The giving great peace to her children; the bringing down her proud and insulting enemies: The bringing in both his ancient people the Jews, and the fulness of the Gentiles: The making the place of his feet glorious; and setting up the mountain of his house in the top of the mountains, and causing the Kings of the earth to bring their glory and the honour of the nations into it.

7 God hath laid upon himself strong obligations to do these things, and therefore we are on the sure hand. God hath bound himself by promise, and that is good security; God's word is settled in heaven. God can as soon cease to be, as falsify his word. Whatsoever thou hast a promise for, O believer, thou mayest be as sure of, as if thou hadst the thing in thine own possession. And how dark soever providence may seem to be, do not fear; for there always is a sweet harmony between providences and promises; yea, the great work and business of providence is to give accomplishment to the promises.

8. God is greatly concerned in the welfare of his Church and people: he is more concerned than we are, and all the men in the world. It is true, we are nearly concerned in the prosperity of the Church; in the Church's peace it is that we shall have peace. Our all is embarked in this ship, if that should be cast away, we are ruined: let religion be lost, and we are lost. Farewell prosperity and all that you can call good; and therefore none of us should be careless, or wanting, in prayer and duty. But know,

God is more concerned than we are. As to this lower world, God's stock of glory lies in the hands of his Church and people, and his revenue is brought in by them, and will he not look after them? Let us not fear where no fear is; let us not fear in the midst of fears. We may be confident that God will wisely steer the course, and carry the ship safe into its harbour, in which he hath his name and honour embarked. He will never give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images; and if not to graven images, then not to Papists. Suppose those cursed Philistines should take the ark, yet know assuredly, the captivated ark will be too hard for Dagon; graven images and all idolatry, shall fall before it.

9. *Lastly*, let us comfort ourselves with this, that the government is laid upon Christ's shoulder, and the sceptre put into his hand, and all power both in heaven and earth committed to him. God the Father hath set him up for his King "upon his holy hill of Zion," and hath so established and fixed his throne, that he looks with scorn upon all the attempts of his enemies. And all that power which he hath, was committed to him, and is to be employed by him for the continuance and comfort of his Church. "He is made head over all things to the Church." Whatsoever he hath as head, is for the advantage of that his mystical body. And what may we not expect from such a Father as God: from such a King as Jesus? And with what peace and delight may we sit under his shadow! Well might the holy Psalmist say, "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Sion be joyful in their King." (*Psa.* cxlix. 2.) From what Christ hath done, we may strongly argue to that which he will do. He was incarnate for his Church; he was made under the law for her; he became poor for her; he humbled himself for her; he laid down his life for her; he bare the rage of man, and the wrath of God, for her; he "endured the cross, and despised the shame," because it was for her; and therefore, question not but he will rule and govern for her.

Having thus finished the doctrinal part, I come to the application.

And, *First*, I exhort you that are the people of God, to fetch support and consolation from this precious truth. The times in which we live are, indeed, very dark and tempestuous: God is shaking all nations. But let this support, and quiet, and comfort you; that however things go, God still governs the world. And that this may be sweet to you, follow these directions:—

1. Make sure that you be in the number of Christ's subjects; such as have submitted to his government, and are devoted to his fear. If you have kissed the Son, you may rejoice at the thoughts of God's governing the world, when you feel and are assured of his governing in your hearts. Then may the remembrance and consideration of his universal kingdom be cordial to you, when you find he hath erected a kingdom within you. This is firm ground of strong consolation, and of quietness and assurance for ever. If you are the loyal subjects of Christ's kingdom, then you are the children of his family, and you may promise yourselves that he will carefully look after you, and graciously provide for you. He hath a peculiar repsect to his peculiar people; for them he hath a strong tower, in which they shall be safe, when he cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. Judgment begins at the house of God, and that is to make way for mercy; those judgments prepare for deliverances here, and for glory hereafter. But O the dreadful storms of wrath that shall fall upon the wicked! What thunderbolts will God assail them with, that will strike them down in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, and shall never be quenched! Come, Christians, trust in the Lord, and give up yourselves to him; and then, when enemies threaten you, and dangers face you, and fear is on every side, even then mercy shall compass you about.

2. Heedfully look to it, that you govern yourselves according to the will and law of God. Then may you take the comfort of God's governing the world. When

you wisely rule your own spirits, and your affections, and conversations, there is a promise, that "unto such God will show his salvation." The laws of a land protect the subjects so long as they keep them. A transgression of the law is the endangering of a subject. "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." Their commission, as large as it is, reaches no farther; when you leave that, you lose your guard; but while you keep your way, angels, yea, the God of angels will keep you. Do not so much fear losing your estate, or your liberty, or your lives, as losing your way, and leaving your way; fear that more than any thing; nothing but sin exposes you to misery. So long as you keep your way, you shall keep other things; or, if you lose any thing, you shall get that which is better; though you may be sufferers for Christ, you shall not be losers by him. If a good man should be deprived of his temporal comforts, it will commend spiritual ones the more to him. God's voice is never so sweet, as when he speaks comfortably in a wilderness. If a child of God should be cut off by a violent stroke, he is thereby brought the sooner to his Father. If enraged persecutors add to his sufferings, in so doing they add to his crown; and by making his burden heavy, they make his glory the more exceeding weighty.

3. Let God's governing the world be the matter of your faith: no truth will be a staff of support, unless you carry it in a believing hand; precepts will not prevail, threatenings will not awe you, and promises will not comfort you, any farther than they are believed. Present you with never so precious a cordial, it will do you no good unless it be mingled by you with faith; therefore believe that the management of all things is in the hand of God, and pray that you may have a well confirmed faith hereof; when faith is weak, it affords but weak comfort; strengthen your faith, and that will greaten your peace and raise your joy.

To this end, be careful that you do nothing to the prejudice of your faith; do not you weaken that which must

support you. What a madness was it for SAMSON to let his locks be cut, when he knew he should lose his strength together with them. Now there is nothing in the world so prejudicial to faith as sin is. A guilty conscience doth always make a palsy hand, shaking whensoever it goes about to lay hold of GOD and CHRIST, or any promise. Rebukes to conscience are severe checks to faith. What is all GOD, to one that cannot say, My GOD? Guilt makes faith and comfort run low; whereas "great peace have they that love the law, and nothing shall offend them:" they have peace in trouble, joy in sorrow, calms in storms, inward sedateness in the midst of outward commotions. "If our hearts condemn us not, then have we boldness towards GOD;" and if so, then comfort comes in from every prospect which we have of GOD. Let us then look upon him which way we will, we shall see smiles and delights; that very appearance which is dark to others will give light to us.

Lastly, Be very serious and frequent in your meditations upon GOD's governing the world: fleeting thoughts make either none, or but slight and short impressions. The burning glass will not fire any combustible matter, unless it be held some time with a steady hand in the beams of the sun; so it is here: dwell therefore in your thoughts upon this subject; consider it, and return to consider; repeat the work again and again. "Mine eyes are ever towards the LORD;" (*Psa.* xxv. 15;) that is, often and often, at all times, and upon all occasions. Was he in straits? he looked to GOD. Was he in danger? he looked to GOD. Was he in fears? he still looked to GOD; and that supported him, as you may gather from the next words: "He shall pluck my feet out of the net:" though mine enemies have got me in their net, and I am so entangled in it, that I cannot make my own escape, yet GOD shall pluck me out. And in such cases we should specially look to GOD, under the notion of the supreme Governor of the world. Are there confusions and distresses up and down in the world? Are foundations out of course? Yet

comfort yourselves: GOD sits at the helm, and he is "our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble."

Secondly, I exhort and beseech you, evidence it to the world, that your belief of GOD's governing the world doth really support and cheer you in the midst of all distractions. The truth is, the day in which Providence hath cast us is a day of distraction; the world is stark mad: wicked men are mad upon sin and vanity, and superstition, and idolatry, and mad against religion and godliness. Well, if they will be mad, let them be so; GOD knows how to tame them, and how to chain and fetter them too: he hath hooks for their noses, and bridles for their jaws.

When there are that make it their business to destroy and confound all things, do you rejoice in this, that GOD governs all wisely, powerfully, graciously, so that those things which have the most frightful aspect, shall at last (it may be ere long) issue in a happy close. However affairs go now, GOD hath bid us "say to the righteous, it shall be well with him." Do you evidence the powerful and comfortable influence that GOD's government hath upon your spirits, by these three things:—

1. By the keeping up your spirits. "Cast not away your confidence, for it hath great recompence of reward." "We will not fear," saith the Church, "though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;" let the wicked fear where no fear is, but let the saints be fearless in the midst of fears. "Why are ye fearful," said CHRIST to his disciples, when the ship was almost covered with waves. He sets men above GOD in his thoughts, whose fear of man prevails against his faith in GOD.

2. Evidence it by your perseverance in godliness. Hold on your way; make not use of any sinful means, neglect not any part of your duty to secure yourselves and avoid danger; be not beholden to the Devil for your liberty and peace. What though there be lions in the way, go on, and proceed boldly, so long as it is the way of GOD: you may

live by faith, while you walk by rule; you may walk believingly and cheerfully, while you walk regularly. The wound that a man gets by sin, will put him to far greater pain, than all his sufferings for GOD and godliness would have done. He that purchases the favour of men with the frowns of conscience, will find he hath made a very hard bargain. Every step from GOD is a step to ruin: "If any man draw back," GOD's soul will have no pleasure in him; whereas, "he that walks uprightly, walks safely."

3. Make it to appear by the raisedness of your expectations. So the Church did in her low condition: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; though I fall I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me." (*Micah* vii. 8.) At midnight she looked for the dawning of a glorious day, and so do you. GOD will do great things, such as shall outdo all that his enemies have done. GOD's last works in the world will be his greatest works, and by them he will get himself a glorious name. "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." Therefore, encourage yourselves in the LORD your GOD; do your duty, and quietly wait, for your expectation shall not be cut off.

SERMON II.

THE HINDERANCES AND HELPS TO A GOOD MEMORY IN SPIRITUAL THINGS.

1 Cor. xv. 2.

By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

There is no complaint more common among religious persons, than the weakness of their memories; thinking, perhaps, that defect doth imply least guilt; or it may be, mistaking their carelessness for forgetfulness; or else, there is really some special frailty in that faculty; to heal which is the design of this discourse.

The Apostle Paul, in the verse foregoing, begins to recite and prove the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, which he doth there declare to be a great point of that Gospel which he had preached unto them, which also they had received, and wherein they did stand. And then he adds here, "By which (Gospel) also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain."

In which words we may observe,

The influence which this (keeping in memory) hath upon all the rest. And this expressed, 1. By way of condition, "ye are saved," if ye keep in memory. Our salvation in some sort depends upon it. For without the Gospel, no salvation; without faith, no benefit by the Gospel; and without hearing, and retaining what we hear, no saving faith. 2. By way of exception; "unless ye have believed in vain:" your hearing is in vain, and your believing is in vain, if ye do not steadfastly cleave to the

Gospel, and to this material doctrine of it, the resurrection, and "keep in memory" what I have preached unto you concerning it.

The lesson that we may learn from hence is this, *viz* :—

If men would be saved by the Gospel, they must keep in memory what is preached unto them.

And under this proposition I am to handle the causes and cures of a bad memory, or the hinderances and helps of a good memory in spiritual things. And in order hereunto I shall show, I. The ordinary impediments thereof. II. The proper helps unto it. And, III. make application to all. And the good LORD help us now to remember what is preached to us.

I. I am in the first place to show the ordinary impediments of a good memory, or the causes of a bad one; which as ever you desire better memories, you must beware and seriously strive against. And they are these:

1. A weak or dark understanding. Such indeed may have a great sensitive memory, as we see in children, yea, in some brute creatures, but a sound rational memory they cannot have; for except a thing be clearly known, it can never be clearly remembered. If reason be weak, and the mind be poor, what can the memory be stored with, but from the senses? And you shall observe that your ignorant people have the worst memories, especially of spiritual matters. "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." (*Matt.* xiii. 19.) Words will be remembered to little purpose when things are not understood; and therefore labour for more knowledge and a clearer understanding. Beg it of GOD, and according to your capacities, use all means to increase it.

2. A carnal careless heart, that is mindless of good things: for those things which we little heed, we never remember. According to the impression on the heart, is the retention of the memory. Such a heart as this can retain abundance of a play or a song, but of a chapter or

sermon, next to nothing; for every thing keeps what is connatural to itself. Nay, a good man's memory, at a time when he is more remisss, quite differs from what it is when he is fervent in spirit. And some scriptures which were utterly insignificant to him at one time, read and heard and forgotten, have been quite new to him at another, when his heart had been rightly disposed. As you know, wax when it is hard receives no impression, but soften the same wax, and then it receives it: and nothing can be retained in the heart, if it be not first received by the memory. And therefore many of you that complain of your bad memories, have more reason to lament your dead and hard hearts, and to be restless till they be renewed.

3. A darling sin. Any bosom sin, as it fills and employs every faculty, so it debauches, monopolizes, and disorders them all. Grace, though it rule over every faculty, yet ruffles none; it composes the mind, and employs the memory in a rational manner: it rules like a just King, orderly; but the serving of any lust breeds a civil war between one faculty and another; and that distracts the whole soul, whereby every power thereof is weakened. And particularly the memory being pressed to serve the stronger side, is so stuffed with the concerns of that tyrant lust, that it cannot intend any spiritual matter. And therefore, whatever "right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee," (*Matt.* v. 29,) or else thy memory will never be cured. A table-book that is written and blotted all over, must be wiped before you can write any new matter upon it; and so must the lines of thy darling sin be effaced, before any good things will abide legible in thy memory.

4. Excess of worldly cares is destructive to the memory. Our SAVIOUR hath plainly told us, that "no man can serve GOD and mammon." The memory is but finite, though capacious; and a superabundance of worldly thoughts, must needs shoulder out better things. Especially these thoughts being more natural to our depraved hearts, will so stuff the memory, that there will be no room

for spiritual matters. Hereupon we find that young persons, that have few worldly cares, have better memories than others. Cares and thoughts crowd in; therefore, if you would heal your memories, moderate your cares; considering that immodérate care is justly blasted of God, so that it doth no man any real good. You would not overload a beast, why will you overload your own spirits? Particularly be sure that if possibly you can, you settle and digest your spiritual matters in your mind, after reading or hearing, before they be disordered or confounded with worldly cares.

5. Surfeiting and drunkenness are great enemies to the memory; these disorder the brain, and disable it from its functions. Excess of meat doth this more insensibly, but yet really; a full belly seldom hath a clear head. But that of drink is most evident: "It is not for Kings, O Lemuel, it is not for Kings, to drink wine, nor for Princes strong drink; lest they should drink and forget the law." (*Prov.* xxxi. 4, 5.) It is plain that a drunken man forgets what he said and did; and too many sad instances are apparent, of many that have drank away not only their estates, their health, their credit, but their very souls and brains, and all, and are grown very sots; therefore, keep a strict watch over yourselves, and if you despise those Christian rules to which you have sworn, yet do not abhor morality, do not renounce humanity.

6. Violent passions spoil the memory; such as of anger, grief, love, fear. Passions we must have, but constitution and education allay them in some, reason moderates them in others, and grace regulates them in all. Where these bridles are wanting, they shake all the faculties, as an earthquake doth a country. For example: Anger, when it rages, manifestly inflames the blood, and consequently the spirits, and melts off the impressions in the brain, just as the fire melts the wax, and the impressions that were fixed upon it. So excessive grief, fear, or love. You cannot but perceive in yourselves and others, how your poor memories have suffered by some or all of them.

And therefore, labour to mortify your passions; and to that end, endeavour for strength of grace. Strong passions had need of strong grace; as you know a heady horse had need of a strong bridle. For you will find, that as there is much guilt in them, so much harm comes by them.

7 A multitude of undigested notions. If a man have a stock of methodical and digested knowledge, it is admirable how much the memory will contain; as you know how many images may be discerned at once in a glass: but when these notions are heaped incoherently in the memory, without order or dependance, they confound and overthrow the memory: As the scholar that has read abundance, but digested nothing, knows not where to find any thing; it breaks his memory. As excess of meat cloys the stomach, so an immeasurable heaping of things in the memory confounds it.

Thus many read or hear much, too much perhaps for their capacities; they have not stowage for it, and so they "are ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth." Therefore look that ye understand and digest things by meditation. Run not on too fast: he that rides post can never draw maps of the country. When one is impatient to stay on things, they leave but a shallow impression; as greediness of the appetite hinders digestion. When a thing is well studied and clearly apprehended, it will be much better remembered.

And thus I have showed the hinderances of the memory, or what are the common causes of a bad memory.

II. The second thing to be handled is, the proper helps to it; and they may be ranked under three heads:—1. Natural helps. 2. Artificial. 3. Spiritual.

1. As to natural helps, two things I would recommend:—

(1.) A sober diet. For if excesses in meat and drink disturb the brain, and consequently weaken the memory; then certainly a sparing diet preserves the blood and spirits in order, and so by consequence, are a certain (though not so sensible) help to the memory. And therefore

"take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life," and so you quite forget "that day" that comes on men "unawares." (*Luke* xxi. 34.) The Heathens went far in this moderation; how far then should Christians go! And what a base thing is it to destroy our reason by gratifying our appetite!

(2.) A quiet mind. For if all passions that are violent, weaken, then a sedate and quiet mind greatly strengthens, the memory. As in a pool of water, when it is clear, you may see the fishes, and every thing easily in it; but when it is troubled, every thing disappears: so it is with our reason and memory; as long as the mind is quiet, we may tell where to find any thing in the memory; but when it is distracted, every thing is hid from us. Let faith, therefore, stand fixed upon Almighty God and his promises, and then that word is fulfilled: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee."

2. Artificial, or outward helps, are,—

(1.) The repetition of those things which we would remember. Revolving them in the mind makes the impression deeper, and the audible repeating of them greatly fixes them there: "Ye shall lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." (*Deut.* xi. 18, 19.) Upon this account, some great orators have used to pronounce their harangues in their studies, to fix them the better on their memories. And it is recorded of Pythagoras, that he appointed his scholars to recollect every night, before they went to bed, what they had heard or done all that day. How much more should you on the Lord's Day at night revive what you have heard, confer of it with others, repeat it to your family; by all which you will relieve the weakness of this faculty.

(2.) Writing what we would remember is a great help to the memory. So the Holy Ghost teaches: "And

thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thine house, and upon thy gates;" (*Deut.* xi. 20;) yea, "the King" himself "was to write him a copy of the Law in a book," (*chap.* xvii. 18,) that he might remember it the better. The very writing of any thing fixes it deeper in the mind. Alas! how many excellent doctrines and directions have you heard that are quite forgotten, which a discreet use of writing might have preserved unto you.

(3.) Custom, or using your memories, is an excellent way of improving them. Thus many wise persons charge their memories at the present, and thereby strengthen them, and then commit what they have remembered to writing when they come home, that no time may wear it away; for every faculty is improved and strengthened by employing it. We say, Use legs, and have legs; and so, use the memory, and have a memory. So if you oblige your children and your servants to bring you away an account of a sermon, you will see that use and custom will make that easy, which before they thought impossible. I have seen an old man's girdle, who could not read a word; yet by the only help of a girdle which he wore, which was hung about with some knotted points, he could bring home every particular of a sermon.

3. The spiritual helps for memory are these:—

(1.) Bewail your forgetfulness. There reformation and amendment, when it is found, begins. The Jews say, that when ADAM looked toward Paradise, he wept in the remembrance of his fall. I am sure we have cause to mourn and weep, and weep again, at the remembrance of it; to consider not only the great guilt, but the sad fruit of that apostasy; and that as in other particulars, so in respect of our memories, which have borne their share in that convulsion. And we have cause to mourn also for all excesses and follies, which have concurred to make them worse; so that, though you may reckon a sorry memory but a small fault, yet you will find it is both the effect, and the sign, and the cause of much evil, insomuch that idolatry and the worst sins are in Scripture styled, "the

forgetting of GOD." Few of us would reckon it a small fault, to have a servant frequently neglect his business, and run into errors, and still to excuse all by saying, I quite forgot it; for generally such forgetfulness is the effect of supine negligence, and therefore we have the more cause to be humbled seriously for this sin.

(2.) Prayer is a second help; for "every good and perfect gift," whereof this is one, "is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights;" (*James* i. 17;) and therefore is to be sought by frequent and earnest prayer, which is the golden key to unlock the treasures of heaven. O beg it then of Him, that as he sanctifies the soul, He would sanctify this with the rest. And you have a ground for your prayer, in that our SAVIOUR hath said, that "the FATHER will send the HOLY GHOST, to teach us all things, and to bring all things to our remembrance." And this SPIRIT you may have for asking: "Your heavenly Father shall give the HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him." GOD will grant your prayer herein; there being joined with the same, a due use of all other means. And you must not only crave this in your solemn prayers, but also when you are reading or hearing, you should dart up a holy ejaculation, or short desire,—LORD, write this truth in my heart, and bless it to me! This is like the clenching of a nail. And when you have heard a sermon, lock the chest with DAVID's prayer: "O LORD, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of my heart." (1 *Chron.* xxix. 18.) And be assured, that GOD will hear the breathings of his own SPIRIT, and give thee a memory to retain his truth.

(3.) Diligent attention. If the mind wander in hearing, the memory will be weak in remembering. Confine, therefore, your thoughts to the holy work you are about, and fetch in your straggling fancies with a hearty sigh. Remember that Almighty GOD speaks to you by every good book or sermon that you read or hear; every chapter and sermon is a letter from the GOD of heaven, and directed in particular to you; and you know we read with

attention the meanest letter that is directed to us, and observe every period of it. The Gospel is our SAVIOUR's will and testament; and how carefully doth every child attend to every clause of his father's will! Now the more diligent your attention is, the better you will remember: as you know the greater weight we lay on the seal, the deeper impression it makes. Holy DAVID could say, "I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me." (*Psa.* cxix. 93.) The Scripture, the sentence, that hath "quickened" us, we shall not easily forget: when all the heart is engaged, then all the head is employed also. And it is no marvel that divers remember so little, when they are so palpably careless in hearing, and their wandering eyes plainly discover their wandering minds.

(4.) Due estimation. The more we love and admire any thing, the better we remember it. This is the reason given of children's remembering things so well, because they admire every thing as being new to them; and of old people, the saying is known, That they remember all such things as they care for; for when we esteem any thing, the affections work upon the spirits, which are the instruments of the memory, and so seal things upon it. Why is it that a woman cannot forget her sucking child? Because she doth vehemently love it; and the like affection in us to good things, would keep us from forgetting them. So MR. GREENHAM: 'The best art of memory is to be humbled at GOD's threatenings, and comforted at his promises; for great griefs and joys leave great impressions on us.' And therefore, apprehend spiritual things to be very excellent, and receive the truth in the love of it, and you will remember it; but when we have a mean and low opinion of heavenly truths, they are easily forgotten.

(5.) Serious meditation is the last help I shall mention. When people read or hear, and presently plunge themselves into foreign business, then generally all is lost: "for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and

straightway forgets what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh," (the word signifies, to penetrate into a thing with his eye,) "and continueth therein," (that is, so considering,) "he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of this work; this man shall be blessed in his deed." (*James* i. 24, 25.) By which is not meant a speculative and fruitless meditation, but that which digests the things we read or hear for use and practice: "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." (*Psa.* cxix. 11.) Here is a truth, or a duty, or promise, for such a time or case. Such rolling good things in our thoughts, doth habituate and familiarize them to the soul, and they abide the longer. This is clear in other cases: for if one hath received an unkind word, if it go out at one ear as it comes in at the other, it leaves no great impression; but if you set yourself to ruminate upon it, then it is a long time ere you can forget it. And so in some measure it would be in good things: give them a little heart-room, bestow second thoughts upon them, shut the book when you have read a little, and think of it, and it will abide. It is the soaking rain that enters deepest into the earth, when a sudden shower slides away. But herein ordinary hearers are strangely negligent; they read, they hear, they forget; for they never meditate of it. They turn down leaves in their Bibles in the congregation, but they seldom turn them up again in reflecting upon what they heard, and so their labour is lost, and ours also. And so much for the helps to a better memory.

III. I come now to the last thing, which is some short application.

First, Magnify God for your memories, especially you that have good memories; be not proud of them, but be very thankful. I have somewhere read of Simon Tharver, a Cornish-man, that would so boast of his skill in philosophy and divinity, that he could, on a sudden, answer any problem that was proposed to him; and the historian says, that his parts and memory were so smitten, that he could not repeat the Lord's prayer. O give God the

glory of this faculty, and say, "Fearfully and wonderfully am I made;" and if your memories have some strength and faithfulness in them, praise him the more, for you have a great advantage beyond others, you have a treasure which others want. Many a poor Christian would be content to forget all his earthly concerns, so that he could but remember the things of eternal life. Be sure then that ye be truly thankful.

Secondly, Let all God's Ministers that preach or that write, labour to consult people's memories; and to that end, observe some proper method in their books and sermons. A confused or cryptical method confounds the memory, and a multitude of naked heads overpresseth it; but a clear connexion and a proper method greatly assist it. The Holy Ghost himself hath in several places particularly stooped down to us herein; in divers of the Psalms, in one chapter of the Proverbs, in the whole Book of Lamentations, he hath proceeded alphabetically for the relief of the memory. That matter, manner, and method, surely should be used by us, which is most proper, not only to inform people's understandings, but to prevail with their wills, to awaken their consciences, and also which may best stick with them when they are parted from us; for the work of conviction, conversion, and comfort, are generally perfected by after-thoughts. And seeing people's memories are so weak, let us do what we can to relieve and help them.

Thirdly, Labour to improve your memories, to have them cured and strengthened. Content not yourselves with such treacherous memories; satisfy not yourselves with fruitless complaints of them, but proceed to a vigorous endeavour to amend them. Consider,

1. This is possible, and this is proved by experience. Many have come by the help of God to remember more and better than they did before; and why should not you increase the number of such proficients? It is not fit for a Christian to despond, in any such case, but to be up and doing. When a ship leaks, it is not presently cast away;

'for,' says the Master, 'this vessel may yet do me service.' You have leaking memories; yet being careened, they may be much more serviceable than ever they were.

Despondency spoils all endeavours. Neither do you sit thus down in other cases. If your body or brain be weak, you will try experiments; you will go to one Physician after another; be not then more careless of your noblest parts. The cure is possible, at least in some good measure.

2. It is reasonable that your memories, which have been sinks of sin, should become helps to heaven. All our faculties are given us for this end, and is it not highly reasonable that they should be so applied? It is apparent that our memories have been grievously perverted; and therefore "as we have yielded our members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so we should yield our members servants to righteousness unto holiness." (*Rom.* vi. 19.) Seeing God hath given us a noble faculty, should we neglect or abuse it? Can others remember the world, and their lusts, and shall not we remember the holy things that refer to a better world? Nay, can we remember a thousand unprofitable, hurtful, and sinful matters, and not those things that most nearly and highly concern us? It is intolerable.

3. This is necessary: It is an unquestionable duty. That fundamental law propounded in the Old Testament, (*Deut.* vi. 5,) and confirmed in the New, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," (*Matt.* xxii. 37,) doth oblige us to strain every faculty to the utmost in God's behalf. One end also of Christ's coming into the world was, to repair our depraved faculties; and shall we suffer him to die in vain? The text I am upon, shows how necessary it is as a means of faith and salvation. We find by experience that this faculty is miserably corrupted, and therefore it is undoubtedly necessary that it be renewed.

Do you object, We can do but what we can, let it be never so necessary?

And I pray, how far have your endeavours travelled in this business? Have you carefully used the forementioned means, and continued in the use of them? No, no; your impotency is wilful; you cannot, because you mind it not; or else certainly, if you were ever so weak, grace would be ready at your service.

4. A good memory is very helpful and useful. It is not a vain thing that is thus pressed upon you. For,—

(1.) It is a great means of knowledge. For what signifies your reading or hearing, if you remember nothing? It is not eating or drinking, but digesting your food, that keeps you alive; and so it is in this case: "My son," not only "attend unto my words, incline thine ear unto my sayings," but "keep them in the midst of thy heart: then they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh." (*Prov.* iv. 20, 21.)

(2.) It is a means of faith, as is plain in my text, "unless ye have believed in vain;" for though faith doth rest purely on the word of God, yet when the word and works of God are forgotten, faith will stagger. Hence our Saviour saith, "O ye of little faith, do not ye understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand?" (*Matt.* xvi. 9.) The word of God is "the sword of the Spirit," whereby Satan is foiled; but if the sword be out of the way, by reason of forgetfulness, how shall we conflict with this enemy?

(3.) It is a means of comfort. If a poor Christian in distress could remember God's promises, they would inspire him with new life; but when they are forgotten, his spirits sink. Our way to heaven lies over hills and vales: when we are on the hill, we think we shall never be low again; and so when we are in the valley, we fear we shall never have comfort again. But now, a faithful memory is a great help: "I said, This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High; I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old." (*Psa.* lxxvii.

10, 11.) So also, "I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD, and have comforted myself." (*Psa.* cxix. 52.)

(4.) It is a means of thankfulness. We are all wanting in this duty of thankfulness, and one cause thereof is forgetfulness of the mercies of GOD. Hence ungrateful men are said to have bad memories. What abundant matter of thanksgiving would a sanctified memory suggest to every Christian! Hence holy DAVID calls upon himself: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." (*Psa.* ciii. 2.) By which forgetfulness, and such other means, it comes to pass, that praise and thanksgiving hath so little, which should have so much room in our daily devotions.

(5.) It is a means of hope. For "experience works hope;" and the memory is the store-house of experience; therein we lay up all the instances of GOD's goodness to us heretofore: "This I recall to mind, therefore have I hope." (*Lam.* iii. 21.) Hence they who do not trust in GOD, are said in Scripture to forget him. And one reason of men's impatience and dejectedness in trouble is assigned by the Apostle: "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the LORD, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." (*Heb.* xii. 5.)

(6.) It is a means of repentance. For how can we repent or mourn for what we have forgotten? As, therefore, there is a culpable remembrance of sin, when we remember it in kindness; so there is a laudable remembrance of sin, when we remember it with displeasure: "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth more." (*Ezek.* xvi. 63.) But, alas, we write our sins in the sand, and foolishly imagine that the eternal GOD forgets them just as soon as we; though in such cases he hath said and sworn, "Surely I will never forget any of their works." (*Amos* viii. 7.)

(7.) It is a means of usefulness. No man should, nor indeed can, be singly religious. When one spark of grace

is truly kindled in the heart, it will quickly endeavour to heat others also; as we are born, and much more we are new-born, to be helpful to others. Now herein a good memory is exceeding useful; out of which, as out of a store-house, a wise Christian may bring forth matters both new and old. Such may say, "We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us" this and that observation. And likewise, "as we have heard, so we have seen," what may be very useful to many a soul. So that you see a good memory is useful many ways.

5. The want of memory is a great defect and loss: when we cannot remember what we read, or hear, why time is lost. I will not say, quite lost; but it is not improved: whereas when God's word is remembered, then "when thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, and when thou awakest it shall talk with thee." (*Prov.* vi. 22.) But a broken memory hath heard of God's famous acts of providence, but forgotten them; hath read rare examples of God's mercy, justice, power, and goodness, but they are slipped away and lost.

In a word, so far as thy memory fails, so far will meditation fail, delight fail, and practice in a great measure fail. And therefore set yourselves in the use of the means prescribed, and all the other good means to heal and strengthen your memories; "and give the more earnest heed to the things which ye have heard, lest at any time ye let them slip." (*Heb.* ii. 1.) And so far in the third use.

Fourthly, The fourth exhortation is to young people: Store your memories in the time of youth: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." (*Eccles.* xii. 1.) Now your memories are fresh and strong; hereafter they will be shattered with cares and business. A new ship, or any vessel that is new, is free from leaks; but time and travel will batter it: so it will be with you. Care will batter you, grief will batter you; and therefore now store yourselves: now a dozen chapters, a good Catechism, a collection of useful texts and doctrines, will take no room,

nor make you go the heavier, nor sleep the worse; and therefore it concerns parents both to have such things in their hearts, and to teach them diligently to their children. Perhaps they may not understand the sense of them at the present, but these will be ready in their minds until grace and understanding come, and then they will help them exceedingly. Yet a measure must be observed with both old and young. A ship may be laden, but must not be overburdened, lest all the cargo be sunk and lost. A just discretion will best determine the measure herein, according to the capacities of the subjects.

Fifthly, Let us all labour for more holiness; for that raiseth all the faculties, and reduces them to their right frame and proper objects. The more grace we have, the better we shall remember, and especially better things. Grace strengthens the memory always for practice, though it serve not always for discourse. Thereby we love truths and duties better, and it is easy to remember that which we love; and therefore let it be our daily prayer, that "the God of peace would sanctify us wholly, spirit, soul, and body." It is not for Christians to inquire just how little grace will serve our turn for salvation, but rather, how much may be attained and improved to the glory of God.

Lastly, Reduce into practice that which you do remember. The end of all true knowledge is practice. Remember his commandments to "do them." If it be a doctrinal truth which you read or hear, consider what influence it hath upon the heart. If it be a duty which is set before you, immediately set about it. If a sin be exposed, presently root it out. If sincerity or hypocrisy be deicphered, try thy spiritual state thereby without delay. For, as a treasure in the chest is in danger of the robber, but when it is laid out on a good purchase it is safe; so while spiritual notions swim only in the memory, you may easily lose them, but they are safe when they are once incorporated into your real practice.

But, alas! there are too many that are like those chap-

men, who come to the shop, and lay by a great many rich wares, but when all is done buy few or none. So these cheapen and bid for the pearl, but will not buy it; they will talk over all the points of religion, before they will seriously practise any one of them. Then you remember the Sabbath aright, when you so remember it before it comes, that when it comes, you keep it holy; then you remember God truly, when you fear, and love, and trust in him; then you remember your neighbour as you ought, when you remember to "do good and communicate;" then you remember yourselves best, when you remember to have always "a conscience void of offence towards God and men." In a word, then you remember your latter end rightly, when you keep your oil ready in your lamps and in your vessels, that your Master may find you so doing.

But I conclude. It is worth observing, that holy David, among all the rest of his blessed Psalms, hath one, which is the thirty-eighth Psalm, which he styles, "A Psalm of David to bring to remembrance." His memory, it seems, had need of help, as well as ours.

Now the Lord grant that this sermon may, by the blessing of God upon it, be herein at least useful, namely, to preserve better sermons in your mind; so shall I have my end, God the glory, and you the comfort. Amen.

AN EXTRACT

FROM AN

INQUIRY AFTER HAPPINESS,

BY

RICHARD LUCAS, D. D.

IN THREE PARTS.

TO THE READER.

It has pleased God, that in a few years I should finish the more pleasant and delightful part of life, if sense were to be the judge and standard of pleasure; being confined, (I will not say condemned,) by well-nigh utter blindness, to retirement and solitude. In this state, business (wherein I could never pretend to any great address) gives me more trouble than formerly; and that too without the usual despatch or success. Study (which is the only employment left me) is clogged with this weight and incumbrance, that all the assistance I can receive from without, must be conveyed by another's sense, not my own; which, it may easily be believed, is an instrument as ill fitted, and as awkwardly managed by me, as wooden legs and hands by the maimed.

But the vigour and activity of my mind, the health and strength of my body, (being now in the flower of my age,) continuing unbroken, I found that if I did not provide some employment that might entertain it, it would weary out itself with fruitless desires of, and vain attempts after, its wonted objects, and so that strength and vivacity which should render my state more comfortable, would make it more intolerable.

Being likewise abundantly convinced, that I am not released from that duty I owe that body of which I am still a member, by being cut off from a great part of the pleasures and advantages of it; therefore, like one that truly loves his country, when no way else is left him, fights for it on his stumps; so will I, even in the remains of a

broken body, express at least my affection for mankind, and breathe out my last gasp in their service.

I have had so much experience of the pleasures that prosperity can afford, that I am sufficiently capable of setting a true value upon them, and of judging their subserviency to true happiness. And I am so well acquainted with affliction, that I am sufficiently sensible, as of the weakness of human nature, so of the necessity and power of virtue: and after all, my mind lives now in the body, (like a soul in a separate state,) retired as from the pleasures, so from the troubles of the world, and is therefore the more able to pass a free and dispassionate judgment upon both.

I should not think it any crime, were I master of such talents, if I mingled with necessary truths, all that variety of thought and fancy, which might render them as delightful as useful: the example of God himself in the great work of creation, would justify this liberty, who has created as well leaves and flowers, as herbs and fruit; and in the variety and beauty, in the colours and figures of all that he has produced, appears plainly to have made provision not only to feed the appetite, but even the fancies of his creatures.

AN INQUIRY AFTER HAPPINESS.

PART I.

SECTION I.

OF THE MOTIVES TO THIS INQUIRY, AND OF THE OBJECTIONS WHICH MAY BE FORMED AGAINST IT.

CHAPTER I.

The Importance and the Necessity of it.

THE desire of happiness is the first, most powerful, and most universal principle of human actions. This moves the Prince and peasant, the learned and idiot. Revelation and reason take this for granted; all laws, both divine and human, proposing our happiness as the sufficient motive to our obedience.

But all this while, though all sorts of religion and government unanimously consent in the proposal of this general end; yet so great is the diversity (I may say contrariety) in the methods in which they pursue it, that it seems to imply the discovery of happiness a matter of no less uncertainty than importance; there being as great a variety in the opinions of men about it, as in their lives and actions, or in the forms of religion and government in the world; since all these seem, according to the different judgments of men, so many different parts which lead to it.

And yet, until I have fixed the notion of happiness, and found out in what it consists, it is impossible I should live rationally. How shall I steer the course of my life aright, when I know not what port I would make? How shall my actions tend to any wise or noble purpose, when

I have no mark prefixed them? Till then, I must live extempore, and act at random; I must abandon myself to wind and tide, to time and chance:

Quo me cunque rapit tempestas, deferor hospes.

Tost by a storm, for my retreat I take
Whatever shore the unguided bark can make.

In a word, until I know what to aim at, business will be but a mechanic drudging out of life, and study but a vain amusement: whereas, when all my inclinations shall have one uniform tendency, when every desire of the soul, and every action of life, shall be a step advancing in a direct line towards happiness; when the vigour and activity of my mind shall not be suspended and frustrated by uncertainties and fluctuation, nor deluded and lost in wandering errors and deviations, but shall ever carry me straight forwards towards my journey's end; then certainly all my labours will prosper, and my progress will be great, though my motion should be but slow. Thus plants, whose native vigour mounts straight upwards, though their bulk be less, yet their height and beauty are greater than theirs whose luxuriant nourishment wastes itself in knots and distorted branches.

Having considered this, I resolved, that I could not spend my time better than in an inquiry, What the happiness of man is, and how attainable? Every advance towards this, is an accession to my life and being; and all travail which doth not lead me on towards this end, is but so much of life mis-spent and lost: what a silliness were it to load my memory with terms and words, with numerous instances of matters of fact; to talk of unknown seas and distant shores; to tumble over each page of nature's system! What trifling cunning to skill the gainful mysteries of trade; what solemn foppery to penetrate into all the subtleties of government; if, after all, I have no receipt for a troubled mind, no cure for distempered passions; if I have no principle to support my mind under a sinking fortune, or govern it in a rising one; if I have nothing to

arm me against my fears, or to disperse my griefs; would any one think I had spent my time well, or stocked myself with useful knowledge?

But to find out what would make me happier, what would free my mind from the slavery of uneasy passions, what would make it serene, steady, great, and manly, in all the accidents of life: this every man sees, at the first blush, to be a wise, generous, and serviceable employment of my reason. This,—

Æque pauperibus prodest, locupletibus æque,
Æque neglectum pueris senibusque nocebit.

This occasioned St. Augustine's ingenious reflections on the polytheism of the Romans. When he considered that they worshipped Felicitas, (by which they meant that deity that could confer happiness upon men,) he could not but wonder why this was not the most ancient of all their gods; or why, when this deity was found out, they did not presently discard the other idle multitude of superfluous and unnecessary gods; since this alone was sufficient to supply all the necessities, and gratify all the desires of mankind.

But though happiness should be a project too great, too ambitious for a poor silly mortal; yet, sure the redress of those evils which oppress our state and nature, is such a design as may well become the meanness of men; and therefore, if I could not excuse the presumption of this inquiry, by pleading the innate desire of happiness, yet sure I might by urging the multitude of those evils which infest human life, which it is not only irrational but impossible so far to yield and submit to, as not to struggle to lighten their afflicting weight. This I confess was the first, and none of the least prevalent arguments that engaged me: I would be, if not happy, at least not miserable; and I am neither insensible nor fearless; I know the common portion of man, and I cannot so far flatter myself as not to apprehend approaching evils; nor am I naturally so hard as not to shrink under the weight of them, and I

suppose most men are of the same nature with me; and consequently, this consideration of human misery ought to effectually oblige us to this study.

However, let others do what they will, I will never abandon myself; I will not tamely renounce my hopes of happiness; whatever calamities assault me, they shall find me ready armed from head to foot, nor shall they ever gain an easy victory; death itself, whenever it comes, shall find me struggling to the last for life, eternal life, and happiness. Nor can I entertain so unworthy a thought of the most perfect Being, but that he loves this resolution wherever he meets it, and will be most ready to assist his creatures in so just and rational an endeavour.

CHAPTER II.

Objections against this Inquiry.

But it is objected, 1. Happiness is too divine a state for man to aspire after.

2. The utmost happiness of this life is so trifling, that it cannot recompense our time and travail.

3. There is no need of study or inquiry after happiness; nature and custom being the best guides to it.

4. The great variety there is in the nature of men, and consequently in their happiness, demonstrates it impossible either to frame one uniform notion of happiness, or to prescribe any general rules for the attainment of it.

And, 1. they that pretend to be wise above the vulgar, look upon happiness as too divine a state for so mean a creature as man to affect; it was the sinful ambition of our first parents to aspire to the likeness of God, and what can be more truly the prerogative of God than happiness? Or what can make us more like God? To affect this, therefore, were the folly of those earth-born

creatures, which sacrilegiously invaded heaven; let us rest satisfied with those easy and obvious pleasures which best suit this imperfect state.

I confess, it were, if not a sinful, yet a vain ambition for man to affect any other happiness than what is suitable to his nature; we readily grant, happiness is a state of pleasure, and pleasure is the result of the proportion and agreeableness of the object to the capacity or appetite; so that he that aspires to a state of happiness, that infinitely exceeds his nature, foolishly doats on contradictions, and affects a happiness devoid of pleasure; or, which is all one, covets a pleasure which he cannot enjoy. But when it is remembered that we propose no happiness, but what the frame of our nature qualifies us for, and consequently the God of nature designed us; it will be easily granted, that God does not only allow of, but direct and delight in, man's endeavours after happiness. Those faculties and capacities with which he has endued him, being the fairest declaration of the divine will in this point.

2. There are others of that sluggish and brutish temper, that, being unable to raise their conception above sense, seem to despise that happiness the wise and religious part of mankind profess to seek after, and to think all the pleasure man can enjoy so little, that it is scarce worth the while to take much pains for it.

It is true I am but man, that is, a little atom in the vast bulk of matter; and my life is but a short moment in an endless stream of time: but then I feel a strange kind of comprehensiveness in my soul; it stretcheth forth itself to times past and to come, it enjoys things that are not seen, by faith and hope, and sometimes things that are not at all, by memory and fancy; and though my life be but a moment, pleasure hath its degrees; and therefore if I can possess it in its height and perfection, I shall live much, though not long; I shall enjoy eternity in a moment. Nor is this mere fancy and romance: for when I find Cicero, in surely a holy ravishment of soul, preferring

one day spent according to the precepts of virtue, before a sinful immortality; and the Psalmist declaring almost in the same words, "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand;" I cannot choose but think there are irresistible charms in virtue, pleasures as ravishing as they are pure and sacred: and who then can restrain himself from the glowing desires of, and resolute endeavours after, a share in them? When I have read of SOCRATES, dying with a generous charity and serene hopes, and, with an undisturbed mind, easily parting with all here below; when I have read of SIMEON waiting for and expecting death, as weary labourers do the evening shades; when I read ST. PAUL, with humble impatience expressing his devout desire of death and dissolution; when I have seen some (as some I have seen) sitting in calm, and majesty, and triumph, as if they had attended death as the old Romans once did the barbarous Gauls, in their chairs and robes; when I have seen men die, not only with content, but almost in an ecstasy, and the soul breathed forth not in a groan, but an ejaculation; I must needs say I could not choose but wish, "That I might die the death of the righteous, and that my latter end might be like his." These are degrees of happiness which I should judge it reasonable to purchase at any rate, whatever there be hereafter; a smooth, contented, delightful life, such as would not only bear, but invite reflections on it, a cheerful, lightsome death, able to make the living in love with it.

But after all, whether this present life be all my portion; whether I die, all of me together, with my body; or whether this life be only the time of our probation and preparation for another, and death be nothing but the rough passage from one shore to another, or the horizon that parts the hemisphere of darkness from that of light; is a question I will not now determine: it is sufficient to propose it here as a doubt, whereof one side or other must be true. If, therefore, this life be in order to eternity, it nearly imports me to consider my present relation to a future state; if it

be not, then this life, call it what you please, a span, a dream, or a bubble, yet is it my all, and I must make the most of it. But,—

3. Are not nature and custom the best guides to happiness? What needs there so much poring to find out that which instinct leads us to? We do not see that the most learned are always the most happy men: let such demonstrate the truth of their philosophy by their own success.

As to the former part of the objection, were it but once truly determined what were to be understood by nature, this objection would vanish: I think our souls within us, may be justly supposed to constitute a part of our nature, as well as our bodies; and therefore, I cannot be content that the body, much less vicious habits, should usurp the name and authority of nature; nor, consequently, can I be content to allow the mere sensual appetites of the body, much less the dictates of vicious habits, for the laws of nature. The body indeed is an essential part of our nature, but then it must be remembered, it is not the governing part; and therefore its instinct cannot arrogate to itself the authority of a law. It remains therefore, that though the rational soul be but a part of our nature, yet being the better part, the ruling part, its dictates must have the force of laws; so that the law of nature will be nothing else but the commands of right reason. I shall be most ready to grant, that we ought to follow the conduct of our nature, taking it in this sense; he indeed lives happy who follows the conduct of that part to which belongs the undoubted right of sovereignty and dominion in man.

As to the latter part of this objection, by custom is commonly meant those principles and practices which are generally received in the place we live; I have a just veneration for whatever is the sense of mankind, but I think their suffrage is not to be taken by number, but by weight: nor are we to follow the opinion or example of the most, but of the best: nor indeed is it possible to understand what is the sense of mankind in this point; for we have

custom against custom, nation against nation, and religion against religion.

It ought farther to be considered, that principles taken upon trust, have seldom an equal influence upon us, with those which we take upon strict examination and mature deliberation; that men will easily be tempted to desert those for which they have no better authority than the vote of a multitude: nor can any thing tend more to the disparagement of any persuasion than this, that it is not the result of our judgment, but our fortune. And so I take it to be a credit to the christian religion, that it did not force assent, but gain it by irresistible arguments; that it is so far from shunning the trial of impartial philosophy, that it did always invite men to a sober examination of its evidences; and commanded its disciples, "Be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."

Lastly, To trust to others, who themselves with like rashness trust to others in the matter of highest moment, seems to be inconsistent with common prudence, with the very constitution of a rational nature: For what use can reason be of, if I slight its service in so important an affair as this?

Yet it is true, temper, fortune, and education, have so great a share in the happiness or misery of some kind of men, that I must not yet dismiss this objection, until I have taken a little notice of such for whose defence it was at first found out. These are,—

(1.) The stupid and brutish part of mankind: these seem to have met with happiness whilst they seek it not. Their fancies flat, their prospect short, and their desires few and easy, and consequently if their pleasures be not raised, neither are their troubles deep; stupidity in them outdoes philosophy in others, and want of sense makes them laugh more loudly, live more securely, and die more unconcernedly, than the most thoughtful of men can.

Were the incapacity of these men great enough to justify

their contempt of reason and religion, I should almost be tempted to call them happy: but at the same moment I should despise their happiness; for I cannot call those happy, whose souls are too sluggish and drowsy to understand or reflect upon their happiness: or, if I must call this happiness, it is the happiness of a beast, not of a man. With me, to live is somewhat greater than to feed and rest; and to be happy, must be much more than to live. The extreme to these are,—

(2.) The gay, the gaudy, the modish part of mankind; these too pretend to happiness: and if their pretence be well-founded, their way to happiness is a more ready, plain, and compendious one, than any that ever was, or ever will be, discovered.

But, alas, shortness of sight cannot pass with me for wit; nor an unthinking confidence for wisdom: I have seen most of those dreams the world can present the gayest fancy with, and, upon trial, I have perhaps found something that could divert my fancy, nothing that could satisfy a rational soul. I will not here examine what is the employment, what the pleasure proper to a rational being. Nor will I now go about to show, that *that* mind can enjoy no sober or lasting peace, much less pleasure, which is engaged in such a method of life as it cannot rationally justify to itself; both which considerations would be plain refutations of this gay objection. It is enough in this place to say, that this sort of life is repugnant to those principles which religion reveals, and which are backed by all the authority which the unanimous approbation of the wisest and best part of mankind can give. It behoves us, therefore, not to abandon ourselves to this kind of life, until we have narrowly tried these principles; for if they should prove true, then will this sensual, careless life betray us to a miserable eternity: and though they should be false, yet until we are upon rational grounds convinced that they are so, we have little reason to commit our happiness to so great a hazard.

It remains, notwithstanding all these objections, that it

behoves every man to pursue his happiness by a rational inquiry after it; neither undervaluing human nature or its happiness, nor giving up himself to the guidance of the brutish and blind part of him; but seriously and thoroughly to examine whatever end be proposed to him as his happiness, or whatever method be proposed to him as the way to it. But when we have blown off these objections, there are others that seem by a fairer show of reason to deter us from it by the difficulty and unsuccessfulness of the attempt.

4. Happiness, say they, is like PROTEUS in the Poet; it puts on so many different forms and shapes, that it seems impossible to circumscribe it within general rules, or to represent it under any one fixed notion: it deserves to be examined, what weight or truth there is in the vulgar notion of happiness, that for a man to be happy is nothing else but to live according to his fancy: and it seems no less absurd, to invite every man to the same heaven, or gratify every humour by the same kind of happiness, than to entertain all appetites with one and the same dish.

But in that great variety of complexion, feature, shape, and motion, and in that great diversity of endowments which we behold in men, there is yet one common nature wherein they all agree, whereby they are constituted creatures of the same species; just such accidental varieties may the happiness of man be capable of, and yet the life and being of it may be one and the same, and consequently may be comprehended under general rules. And if this answer were not sufficient, it would not be absurd to say, that happiness, like beauty, may put on various dresses, and yet be still charming and delightful in each; or that this bread, like that of heaven, (for so the Rabbins tell us of manna,) has that in it, which gratifies every palate; there are blessings, which take with every appetite, and are universally welcomed to all the sons of men. Or I may truly say, that happiness must not only be prepared and fitted for man, but man for his happiness; he must become a rational creature ere he can enjoy a rational

pleasure: it is from this want of preparation, that diversity of opinions concerning happiness springs.

But there is no reason why we should take up with these answers: we may now boldly say, the difficulties that former ages met with, are of no force to deter us; we can now free ourselves from the distracting terrors of an invisible power without banishing him out of that world which himself created; we can now prove a judgment to come, without the assistance of poetic dreams; and the existence of souls after death, without their pre-existence before our birth. To be short, we have now Revelation for our rule, and every good man a Divine SPIRIT for his guide; nay, every man, if he be sincere, in such inquiries as these. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask it of GOD, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." So that now we may rationally conclude, that fatal ignorance, or fatal error in this point, must be imputed either to a sottish contempt of that knowledge we are most nearly concerned in, and the means conducing to it, or to an obstinate resistance of that conviction which GOD endeavours to beget in us by his word and his SPIRIT, or at least to the want of that just consideration we ought to allow to revealed truths, or of that necessary preparation which fits us for divine assistance, and enables us to understand the divine will; and for this reason, the dissensions and sharp contentions of Christians ought to be no prejudice to the authority or perspicuity of revelation, or to the assertion of the SPIRIT's conduct and assistance. For, besides that unity of faith is an unity of fundamentals not of fancies, it must be confessed that our sects and divisions have their rise and propagation from these and such like causes; men's tempers and complexions, and educations, and interests, and passions, give a bias to their judgments, and a tincture to their opinions. The errors of some are the dreams of drowsy carelessness; of others, the wanderings of a wanton confidence; of others, the crooked windings of designing interest, and so on. For it may with much

truth be affirmed, that all erroneous philosophy in matters necessary and fundamental, is the result of some unworthy lust and passion.

Let us not therefore so far undervalue human nature, or dishonour the Author of it, as once to fancy that happiness is too great for us, or we too little for it; or that God should disallow, as a sacrilegious ambition, the most rational attempts of a rational creature: since we seek no other happiness than what the frame and the God of nature appear plainly to design us to; the greatness of which nothing can so well express, as the transports and raptures of happy men.

But let us not think this happiness so easy a purchase, that it will run into the lap of the sluggish. No, no; nothing but industrious reason, pure and vigorous philosophy, can ever attain it. The sluggard or the wanton, the fool and vain, may have some fits of ease and mirth; only the rational, only the philosopher, can possess true and lasting happiness. Nor let the endless quarrels, the numerous contentions, of vain and proud pretenders, discourage us from following the conduct of reason and Revelation; these are the contentions of lust, not philosophy. Truth and happiness inhabit a palace, into which none can enter but humble, sincere, and constant lovers.

SECTION II.

OF THE ATTAINABLENESS OF HAPPINESS IN THIS LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

The Notion of Happiness stated; granted imperfect, compared to that of another Life, yet in itself considerable and desirable.

Having removed such discouragements as were less considerable, I come now to examine that which attacks my

design with the rudest violence; I mean, the impossibility of obtaining happiness in this world. It is true, if our endeavours after happiness here could succeed no further than to secure it to us hereafter, none could deny them reasonable upon this sole account. Yet because this persuasion would blunt the force of one of the most powerful motives to religion, which is, "That its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths peace;" and consequently, very much abate our vigilance and industry in pursuit of it; I judge it indispensably necessary to enter into a full discussion of this point. In managing which, I will, *First*, Assert the possibility of obtaining happiness by plain, and, as I think, unanswerable arguments: and, *Secondly*, I will endeavour to give full satisfaction to all objections to the contrary. But, before I do either of these, to obviate mistakes, it is fit I should explain my notion of the happiness I propose; I must therefore acquaint my reader, that I do not promise him the happiness of angels, but of men; and that I do not understand happiness in this proposition of that which is every way perfect and absolute, to which fancy itself can add nothing; but of that which is like our nature, incomplete and imperfect, speaking comparatively, and yet truly great and excellent too.

I am content to call a building beautiful, though there be something in it which doth not answer the test of the strictest art; I am content to call it day, though flitting clouds and showers do now and then obscure the light; so can I not choose but call him righteous, whose life is bright and exemplary, though not utterly void of blemishes. And so am I content to think him a happy man, not who is utterly exempt from all disturbances in mind or body; not who lives in constant ecstasy, but him whose pleasures are more and greater than his troubles; one whose enjoyments though they do not transport, do satisfy him; one whose serenity and calm of mind, though it may suffer interruptions, suffers but few and slight ones. Now as we are not to lay aside any advice of being virtuous, because we cannot arrive at the height of angels; so neither are

we to cast off all thoughts of happiness, because we cannot equal theirs: for if we are happy in such a degree as this inferior state will permit; if we can free ourselves from those miseries which involve the foolish and vicious part of mankind, if we can possess ourselves of those humble joys that human nature is here capable of, it will be worth all the time and travail we can spend upon the design: and that we may advance thus far, the following considerations will, I think, render it more than probable.

CHAPTER II.

The Possibility of attaining Happiness asserted.

It cannot be denied, but that some men are more happy than others. Who will deny Titus to have been more happy than Nero? Titus, whose government of the Roman people was not more mild and gentle than the impartial reflections of his conscience upon himself and actions? Nero, that guilty wretch, whose conscience was no less a plague to him than he to Rome? Who will compare the pleasant retirements, the modest contentments, the regular and virtuous enjoyments of Atticus, with the fatal luxuries of Catiline, or the proud cruelties of Sylla and Marius? What, then, shall we attribute no share of happiness or misery, to the virtues or the vices of the one or the other; or no part of their virtues or vices to themselves, but to I know not what fatal and irresistible causes?

If we assert the former, we contradict unquestionable matters of fact; if the latter, we rob the virtuous of that which rendered them beloved in their lives, and ever since has preserved their memories sacred and honourable; and we acquit those from all blame or guilt, whom the laws of their own country, and the common sense of mankind, have ever condemned and detested. What gross and

monstrous absurdities are these? Shall we now, after the improvement of so many ages, dispute whether vice or virtue be the better guide of human actions, or the more serviceable to human life? Shall sloth and luxury be thought to conduce as much to the prosperity of our lives, as industry and frugal temperance? Shall ambition, pride, and choler, be now judged as instrumental to promote or preserve the peace of our minds and states, as modesty, meekness, and charity? Or, if this be too daring a defiance to sense and experience, shall we contend that the slothful and luxurious, the unjust and cruel, are as blameless and innocent, nay, if we will extend principles to their just consequence, as commendable and worthy of praise, as the industrious and temperate, the meek and gentle, the just and charitable? For this must inevitably follow, if neither men's virtues nor vices be in any degree to be ascribed to themselves. Wretched and desperate is that shift that equals the just and unjust, the industrious and sluggard! Wretched the shift that equals the tyrant and most gracious Prince, the loyallest subject and the traitor, the faithful friend and the perfidious flatterer! And all this we must be driven to, or else, as we cannot deny that some are happier than others, so we must not deny that the happiness of one, or misery of the other, is owing, in some measure at least, to their virtues and vices, and these to themselves. And if this be true, it is evident we may be happy if we will; and though we may not equal the most happy, (for I will not exclude temper, education, fortune, from all share in men's misery or happiness,) yet, since every degree of happiness is truly valuable, let us with all our might endeavour to be as happy as we can.

Nec quia desperes invicti membra Glyconis,
Nodosa corpus noli prohibere chiragra:
Est quiddam prodire tenus

2. It is a great absurdity to confound or equal virtue and vice; but it is not the greatest they commit, who deny

the possibility of attaining happiness; for he that banishes happiness out of the world, does at the same time banish good and evil out of it too: for good being nothing else but the subserviency of some things to our true interest, and evil the tendency of others to our trouble and injury; it must needs follow, if there be good and evil in the world, that he who has a greater share of good than evil, is a happy man; and he that denieth good and evil, may with as plausible a confidence deny all human passions, and assert that there is neither love nor hatred, neither joy, nor grief, nor hope, nor fear, nor pity, nor envy; for good or evil are the objects or causes of all these. I may then, I think, take it for granted, that no man will say, there is no such thing as good or evil in the world; and consequently all men must be obliged to acknowledge such a state as happiness in the world too, unless they will affirm one of these three things:—Either, *First*, That evil grows up every where in thick crops; good thinly scattered, and rarely to be found: that, consequently, there are none whose share of evil doth not infinitely outweigh that of good. Or, *Secondly*, That evil hath so much of venom and malignity in it, that a little evil contributes more to our misery, than a great deal of good can to our happiness; so ripe and full grown is evil, so lank, under grown, and every way imperfect, is good. Or, *Thirdly*, That we ourselves can contribute nothing to that good or evil which is our portion; it is the product, not of reason or industry, but of time, or chance, or of some other principle which is not in our power. All these deserve to be weighed, not only because the examination of them will tend to cheer and encourage the minds of men, and to render the great Creator and Governor of the world more dear and venerable to us; but also, because it will be of some use and service to the whole inquiry.

First, therefore, let us examine what truth there is in that fancy which supposes the weight and number of evils in the world infinitely to exceed that of good things. I know it is natural to some to blaspheme God and the

King, to quarrel with and reproach Providence, and their government; while loaded with good things they stretch themselves on silken couches, under roofs of cedar, and loll at ease in their gilt coaches; and yet at the same time the honest countryman, who with security, though much drudgery, ploughs, and sows, and reaps, a few acres, eats his plain meals with cheerfulness, sleeps without disturbance, blesses God, and magnifies the goodness of his Prince. The contentment of the one is an evident proof of God's bounty and goodness, whose provision doth far exceed the necessities of his creatures; the discontent of the other can be no disparagement to it, since he has dealt liberally with them, though they enjoy not what they possess.

We are not therefore to judge of the world by the clamours and invectives of such as are always mutinous and dissatisfied, but by the suffrages of those humble, modest, and grateful souls, who know how to value the favours of Heaven, who do not mar every blessing by peevishness, or envy, or pride, or wantonness; but can weigh their enjoyments, their hopes, and their merits, in just and equal balances; and, discerning how much the one exceeds the other, cheerfully praise the world's Author and Governor. If this controversy were to be determined by such, we should find these, even under uneasy and tyrannical governments, and in the more barren and niggardly countries, confuting this objection by their cheerfulness and contentment.

But let us decide the controversy, not by votes, but reasons; let us consider the state and nature of the world: Is there one in a thousand who is left utterly unfurnished of all means of wise and wholesome instruction, which is the good of the soul of man? Or is there one in a thousand maimed and defective in the powers and faculties of the soul, or senses and members of the body? Is there one in a thousand, that cannot by industry, or virtue, provide himself a comfortable subsistence? Survey the world, examine and consider man, and then tell me whether there

be any room for those reproaches and spiteful reflections, by which some men have so outraged nature and Providence? PHILO JUDÆUS tells us a Rabinnical story to this purpose: 'That when GOD had created the world, he demanded of a Prophet, whether he saw any thing wanting to complete the glorious work? Who told him, nothing but an intelligent being to praise the wise and gracious architect. GOD approving the advice, created man.'

The Hebrew philosophers (it seems) thought the world exactly perfect, such a work as might bespeak GOD the author of it: and no wonder, for they were inspired by MOSES, who brings in GOD reflecting upon his own Creation, thus: "And GOD saw every thing that he had made; and, behold, it was very good." If we look up to the heavens, such is the beauty of those bodies, so uniform and regular their motions, so exactly are they disposed both for ornaments and service, that the speculation exalts the mind, and insensibly raises it above the body; nay, it has tempted some to think every star moved and acted by some understanding spirit. If we look upon the earth, so wonderful is the variety, so inconceivable the plenty of it, that it is not only sufficient for the needs and desires of the sober and temperate, but even for the luxury and wantonness of the fanciful and intemperate: every place almost is a paradise; there is no country almost which cannot afford us *Tempe*, or *Campania*, *opus gaudentis naturæ*, a work which nature seems to have created when in the gayest and the kindest humour.

Let us now consider man, and we shall find with the Psalmist, "that he is wonderfully made; he is but a little lower than the angels; he is crowned with glory and honour; and all the creatures are put under his feet; all the fowls of the air, and all the beasts of the field." How infinitely wise as well as kind does GOD appear in his contrivance? So modest are his appetites, that a small portion of nature's good is a full meal, or feast; and yet so various, that there is nothing in all the provision, in all the joys of nature, which he is not capable of tasting and enjoying.

If we regard the mind of man, it is capable of a most surprising satisfaction, in the contemplation of the hidden powers, the secret laws and operations, of nature; nay, it rises higher, it passes the bounds of mechanic nature, it entertains itself with moral perfections, and the spiritual excellencies of an invisible world, and gazes on those charms and glories which are not subject to the bodily eye: *Vultus nimis lubricos aspici:* such is the nature of the soul, that, when it pleases, it can retire within itself, withdraw from sense, and be secure and happy in its own strength and wealth, *Ipsa suis pollens opibus:* and, when it pleases, it can walk forth, like DINAH, to see the daughters of the land; those beauties that sense presents it with; and that too, (if guarded by awful virtue,) without the danger of a rape. To say all of it in a word, it is capable of a share in all the good, and not necessarily subject to any of the evil, of this world.

Fatis avolsa voluntas.

There are no fates that can controul
The sovereign freedom of the soul.

If this be a true account of man, and the state of the world which he inhabits; if the one be filled with all things necessary and delightful, and the other be endued with all those capacities that fit him to enjoy them; nay, if his soul can raise itself above the pleasures, and exempt itself from the changes and revolutions of it; nothing is more manifest, than that the evil in life cannot be greater than the good, unless it be owing to ourselves.

And to leave this matter beyond dispute, no man pretending to receive revelation, should admit the contrary opinion: for no texts of divine writ are more plain than those which proclaim to us GOD's love of mankind; that "he doth not afflict or grieve willingly the children of men:" that the book of Creation and Providence is writ all over with the legible characters of love; so legible, that it renders the idolatry and wickedness of the Gentiles inex-

cusable: and finally, that "he gives us richly all things to enjoy;" where the Apostle excellently expresses at once the bounty and design of God: his bounty, in that he gives us all things richly; his design, not to enkindle, and then delude our desires, but on purpose to be enjoyed by us. So then the Christian cannot believe the evils to outweigh the goods of life, without contradicting revelation; nor the Atheist, or Epicurean, as shall appear from what follows, without contradicting himself.

If nature has contrived the world so ill, if it has scattered good things with such a sparing hand, whence are all those transports and ecstasies we meet with amongst these men? What is the ground? What is the matter of them? Whence so rich a crop of sensual pleasures? Whence so much dotage on, and fondness for, the world we so complain of? Whence are the charms and irresistible temptations which the generality of mankind is vanquished by? Whence is it that men are so willing to set up their rest on this side Canaan?

Again: If nature has been such a step-mother to man; if it has frowardly designed him little else but mischief; whence that sagacity and penetration of mind, searching with delight into all the retirements of nature? Whence that comprehensive and almost immense capacity of pleasure? Whence that strength, and greatness of soul, enabling not only to confront, but to despise evils, and to be happy in despite of them? These are advantages so incomparably great and good, that no evils can be balanced against them: and it is evident that no writings were ever more stuffed with boasting accounts of the nature of man, than those of the Epicureans. And thus, from all put together, whether we consult the nature and state of the world and man, the testimony of revelation or reason, the suffrages of the good-humoured and grateful part of mankind, or the confessions of the voluptuous and atheistical, it is evident that good does outweigh evil in the design of God or nature. But have I not myself, in the beginning of this treatise, acknowledged the weight and number of

evils great? Yes, but evils not of God's creation, but our own: for the truth of the whole is, ταράσσει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, οὐ τὰ πράγματα, ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων δόγματα. Not things themselves, but the shades and fantasms, wanton, superstitious, or froward minds raise about them, disturb the quiet and repose of man. So then, if we ourselves do not multiply the number of evils, our share of good in life may be much greater than our share of evil; and if we be not accessary to our own misery, we may be happy, unless,—

Secondly, Evil hath so much of venom and malignity in it, that a little evil contributes more to our misery than a great deal of good can to our happiness. We may judge of the force and energy of good and evil, either by that influence they generally have, or that they ought to have upon the state of mankind. If we consider what impressions they ought to make upon men, the question will come to a speedy and happy issue; for then we must either reckon nothing an evil, but a moral one, that is, sin and vice; or at least we must acknowledge that the venom and malignity of other evils is not comparable to that of moral ones. This latter opinion is an unquestionable truth: for who will not make a wide difference between a misfortune and a crime, between an affliction and a punishment, between those inconveniences, which we suffer as guilty criminals, and those we suffer as unfortunate innocents, or afflicted saints? For notwithstanding the evils or pains should be in the matter of them the same, yet there is a vast difference in the suffering; the one make man much more miserable than the other; for our misfortunes only reach the body, not the mind: but when we suffer for our crimes, the whole man suffers, the soul as well as the body: misfortunes, when the storm is passed, leave no deformed ruins, no wounds, no scars behind them; but our crimes leave stains and guilt behind, which haunt the mind with perpetual horror. From this distinction of the nature and effect of evils, we may infer this comfortable conclusion, that nothing can make man wholly, truly miserable, but himself; nothing can oppress him by the weight of

moral evils, but his own choice, for nothing can compel or necessitate him to be wicked; the wounds of natural evils (so I will call all the rest distinct from moral) are faint and slight; the mind of man ought not to suffer itself to be too deeply and sensibly affected by them. It is the work of reason and religion to fortify the mind against the impressions of these evils: and that mind that is furnished with true notions of things. with a rational and solid faith, with steady and well-grounded hopes, may bear the impetuous shock of all these waves and storms, calm and unmoved: nay, I may boldly affirm, not only that virtue checks and controuls these evils, blunts their edge, and abates their force; but what is more, that their own force is weak and contemptible, unless our own vices be combined and confederated against us. Our pride must aid our enemy to render his affront provoking; our covetousness and ambition must assist fortune to render it destructive to our tranquillity. Falsehood, under a disguise of friendship, could never have abused our confidence, by betraying our infirmities, or forsaking us in affliction, had not our own folly and self-conceit first betrayed us, exposing us a naked prey to flattery and treachery. The storm that snatcheth away a relation or a friend, could never overthrow me, if I stood upon my own bottom; if I were not guilty of one of the greatest weaknesses, of placing my happiness in any thing out of my own power, and so making myself dependant upon another man's fancy or fortune. Finally, death itself must derive its terrors from the mournful solemnities we dress it in, or else it would prove but a very inconsiderable evil, or none at all. Thus it is evident, that if we distinguish evils into natural and moral, we shall have little reason to think the influence of evil so malignant and deadly, since it is in our own power to avoid moral evils; and natural ones strike one but half way; they wound not the soul that is armed and guarded with reason and religion.

I think it is now sufficiently evident, that natural evils are not of that mighty efficacy, that it should be thought a

little evil doth more contribute to our misery, than a great deal of good can to our happiness: it is apparent how slight the impressions are which they ought to make upon us. It will now be time to consider what impressions they do generally make upon us, what their real effect commonly is. It is true there are some that mix heaven and earth upon every slight occasion, that will receive good but no evil at the hand of God, most insensible of blessing, but extremely sensible of any evil: but this speaks not the nature of the evil, but of the man; it speaks him ungrateful, but not the evil intolerable. Nor is human nature to be measured by the humour of a few, but by the sense and temper of the generality; amongst whom it is easy to observe, how instinct teaches us to elude the stroke and force of evil: nature opens its arms, and enlarges itself to receive good, and all the powers of the mind greedily strive to share in it; but it contracts and shrinks, retires and stands upon its defence at the approach of evil: it is apt to flatter itself, and apt to hope, apt to lessen evil, and magnify good; apt to put off the thoughts of approaching trouble, and to anticipate its pleasures; it is full of great designs and gaudy projects, and easily prone to delight itself with airy and imaginary schemes of good: this and much more is evident in a thousand daily instances of human life; by which it is plain, nature, in the contrivance of man, kindly designed to fit and dispose him for happiness, by giving him such inclinations as might serve to lessen the evil, to increase the good, to supply the defects of this imperfect state. Is it not manifest, that whereas evil looks less to us, good looks bigger at a distance? We are willing to help fortune, and call in the aids of fancy to adorn and enrich her gifts. Nor is it easy to defeat man of this humour. He dreams of a bottomless abyss in every good, in every pleasure; and notwithstanding the daily confutations of experience, he still desires to repeat his enjoyments again, as if he still hoped to find some new untasted sweet, some pleasure undiscovered before. How apt are we to flatter ourselves, and willing to be flattered!

Every man represents himself and state under the fairest idea that he can possibly frame of it, and turns away his eye and thought from every thing that may offend him: beauty, strength, health, understanding, wisdom, reputation, power, wealth, and whatsoever future good he can form but a slender pretension to, make up the gay idea; nay, and even long life and undisturbed security, are there drawn as two pillars to support the building, the daring but kind confidence of man, that makes himself the master of fate and fortune! If you should mark this tablet with ever so curious an eye, you would not be able to discover either deformity or folly, or dishonour, or poverty, or disease, or death: for these, man, kind to himself, banishes far from his thoughts. Nay, so easy to be imposed upon are men, that they make even those things which are the trophies of death, and the monuments of man's frailty and vanity, minister to them some comforts against mortality; they divert and entertain themselves with the mourning and pomp of their obsequies, with blacks and tombs, with the dying echoes of surviving reputation, and with the grandeur and felicity of their posterity; as if they fondly persuaded themselves they should be concerned in all these things. And if this kind, as well as obstinate hope, do in some measure break the force of the greatest evil, that is, death, we cannot but expect that it should be highly serviceable to man, in moving him to despise, or enabling him to vanquish, less evils: I examined not what is here the office of philosophy, or the work of virtue; I have barely represented the inclinations of man, only that you may see that he is not such a defenceless, shiftless creature, but that his reason dares confront, and can vanquish, evils in open battle, and by downright force, and his instinct elude them by various arts. It doth therefore manifestly appear, that as the number of evils is not greater than that of goods, so neither is the vigour and energy of the one so much greater than that of the other, that a little evil should outweigh a great deal of good; that a little evil should contribute more to a man's misery, than a great deal of good to

his happiness. There remains nothing further to be examined, but,—

Thirdly, That fancy which ascribes man's portion of good and evil to time or chance; to any thing but to himself: and he that can with confidence affirm this, may with as good grace assert, that there is neither wisdom nor folly in the world; for if there be, this imagination must soon vanish; since wisdom is nothing else but the choice of true good, and rejection of evil; the pursuit of our true happiness, by the most rational means, and a declining all those things that are repugnant to it. And though success do not always attend wisdom and virtue, yet you shall never persuade any but madmen or fools, that it is in vain to be virtuous, or irrational to be wise. SOLOMON has indeed observed, "That the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill:" but notwithstanding, I must ever think with him, that "wisdom excels folly, as much as light doth darkness;" not only because more delightful in itself, but also, because it is the happiest guide of human life, blessed generally with success; success in things necessary, not superfluous: for I cannot see how it can be any disparagement to Providence, to turn that plenty another way, which would not, like soft distilling rains and dew, cherish, refresh, and increase the tender plants, wisdom and virtue, but like a flood, wash away the earth from their roots, and either utterly extirpate or leave them oppressed and buried in rubbish. If this were not true, if the experience as well as reason of mankind did not confirm it, men would not serve apprenticeships to trades, study arts or sciences, strive with toil and hazard to make their point, but lazily and securely stay till fortune ran in golden showers into their laps.

By a recapitulation of all that has been hitherto discoursed, it may easily appear how far I have advanced in the proof of that assertion, that happiness may be attained in this world. I have showed, that some are happier than

others; and that difference is to be imputed to the virtues of some, and the vices of others. I have proved that the world abounds with good things; that there is no appetite or capacity of man, that may not find objects proper and agreeable, and such as in a great measure may delight and satisfy; and that man is endued with such a variety of faculties and senses, that there is scarcely any thing in all the variety of beings the world contains, which he is not capable of enjoying. From whence it clearly follows, that man may be happy in the enjoyment of these good things, unless the evil of life sour and embitter the good, or the attainment of the good be out of the power of man. To remove all suspicion of both which, I discoursed briefly of the nature of evil, and of the nature of man, evincing plainly the impotence and feebleness of the one, and the strength and preparations of the other; and for the close of all, I have endeavoured to make it manifest, that good and evil are not so much the result of time or chance, as the necessary consequence of wisdom and folly. From all which the conclusion that naturally arises is this: That if man be miserable, it is his own fault; or, which is all one, a man may be happy if he will; which was the thing to be proved.

Let us try now, by a close application of all that has been said to the wants and necessities of mankind, what the evidence, what the conviction, what the real use and force of this discourse is. I am unhappy, I am miserable; whosoever thou art that sayest so, thou must needs mean one of these two things: Thou dost enjoy no good, or art oppressed with evil: if the latter, I demand what evil? Speak out, speak plainly. There are three sorts of evils: The evils of the mind, the evils of the body, the evils of fortune. Which of these art thou oppressed by? The evils of the mind? These are either sinful passions, or, what is the effect of them, guilty fears. Nothing can compel thee to be wicked; and if thou wilt cease to be wicked, thou wilt cease to fear. The evils of the body?

They are generally the effect of unruly passions and a disorderly life; and where they are not, the pleasures of the mind will outweigh the pains of the body. The evils of fortune? It is in thy power whether these shall be really evils, or no; they befall thy possessions, not thee: the foolish and vicious mind only suffers in these; the wise and virtuous one is above them; it is therefore thy own fault if thou be oppressed with evil. But wilt thou say, I enjoy no good; no satisfactory good? Why, is there no good to be enjoyed? I have already proved the contrary; and if I had not, how easy were it here to do it? There is truth to entertain thy understanding, moral perfections to delight thy will, variety of objects to treat thy senses, the excellencies of the visible and invisible world, to be enjoyed by thee: why then dost thou defer to live? Why dost thou not begin to enjoy? Here it is evident that thou must be forced to say one of these two things: Either that thou art not capable of enjoying the blessings; or, that they are out of thy reach, out of thy power. To say that thou art not capable of them, is to renounce the faculties of thy soul, and the senses of thy body: to say they are out of thy reach is, in effect, to say, that virtue and vice, wisdom and folly, are all one; or, which is every jot as absurd, that thou art wicked and sottish, and canst not help it. And this is that indeed, which, in effect, all do say that accuse Fortune, or Fate, or Nature, or any thing but themselves, as the causes of their misery: and yet as absurd as this is, it must be now examined, because the minds of men are perverted and discouraged by such notions. I will therefore now proceed to the next thing, that is, to answer the objections against the attainment of happiness.

CHAPTER III.

God is not the Cause of Man's Misery.

Would men talk coherently, the assertion of my former chapter would meet but few opposers; none can be rationally allowed to deny the possibility of happiness, but such as assert fate: for he that leaves to man his liberty, leaves him in a capacity of happiness; it being hardly possible to conceive, that a man should be free in his choice of good and evil, and yet necessarily or unavoidably miserable: besides, few of those who are fond of fate, are willing to extend its empire over the liberty of man's mind; it being as easy to confute their fancy, if they did, by some instance of a free choice, as it was by moving or walking to confute his who denied motion.

If it be in the next place considered, that none can rationally maintain fate, but such as deny a God, since the belief of a God does naturally include his creation and government of the world; and this again as naturally infers either vice or virtue, rewards or punishments. All this put together amounts to thus much: That none should exclude happiness, but such as exclude God and liberty out of the world; and since very few I hope are guilty of this, I ought to have very few antagonists. But when I am to answer objections, I am not to consider so much what men should say, as what they do: since therefore men are wont to impute their misery one while to God, and another to chance, I must examine what justice there is in these complaints.

In this chapter, therefore, I shall not only vindicate God from all aspersions and calumnies, but also fully assert the love of God to mankind, whereby I shall not only baffle all the poor pretences of such as charge God directly or obliquely with their misery; but also, more strongly establish my own position, by demonstrating God's readiness to contribute all assistance that is necessary to our attainment of happiness. In prosecuting this, I shall,—

First, Evince the importance of entertaining right notions of God.

Secondly, Because of all God's attributes, his goodness and holiness have the most direct influence on the present question, I shall particularly confine myself to these two.

To begin with the *First*. The chief thing in religion is, to have true notions of God; it being otherwise impossible that religion should serve the great interest of God's glory, and man's happiness; for false and unworthy notions of him must needs bereave God of the honour and worship due to him from his creatures, by alienating the minds of men, and betraying them into superstition, idolatry, or atheism; and thus that religion which was designed to glorify God by the manifestation of his divine excellencies, and to advance man in a state of blessedness, by influencing his life, and filling his mind with cheerfulness, shall be perverted to ends directly contrary, and prove instrumental to dishonour God, and render man miserable. The truth of this has been too evident in those visible effects of ignorance, or misrepresentation of the divine nature, amongst the Gentiles; the want of conceiving aright his omnipotence and immensity, joined with the numerous necessities of mankind, did bring forth, or at least confirm, polytheism. Groundless apprehensions of cruelty in God, brought forth superstition; and the absurdities of polytheism and superstition, gave birth to atheism. And at this day, there are many mischiefs which I must impute either to false notions of God, or want of just consideration of the true ones, or at least to not arguing clearly and truly from them. For from one of these reasons it proceeds, that the worship of some men is so slight, empty, and trifling; the religion of others so melancholy and uncomfortable, and truly superstitious: and I am afraid there is too much of atheistical looseness, carnal presumption, and wretchless despair, owing to the same cause. Would not a right notion of God easily convince a scrupulous trifler, that God were not to be pleased but by sincere

and substantial holiness, nor displeased but by voluntary wickedness? All things else weighing nothing in the balance of the sanctuary, and not deserving the notice or regard of the Governor of the world.

It is evident therefore, of what importance it is to settle in the minds of men a right understanding of the divine nature; and of all the attributes of God, there are none that have a more immediate and powerful influence, either upon the conduct of man's life, or the comfort of his mind, than these two,—His holiness and goodness. These make us willing and desirous to believe that there is a God; these make us love him and depend upon him, as one from whom we may rationally expect all that is good. "He that comes to God," saith St. Paul, "must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of all those that diligently seek him." These words do not only assert the being of a God, but also his holiness and goodness; both which may be clearly inferred from three propositions couched in those words of the Apostle, That "he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." 1. That all men may seek God diligently if they will. 2. That it is the desire of God that they should do so. And, 3. That God will reward all that do so.

On these principles is religion founded; on these principles the honour of God and the happiness of man must be established. I will therefore discourse here, first of the goodness; and secondly, of the holiness of God; which I distinguish from one another only for method's sake.

Treating of the goodness of God, I will, *First*, Prove it by undeniable arguments. *Secondly*, I will show that it extends itself to man. *Thirdly*, I will explain the nature of divine assistance; I mean, that which God vouchsafes man in order to happiness.

First, therefore, To begin with the proofs of God's infinite goodness.

Cruelty was the property of the Gentile gods, and not of the true God: human blood, in which the Canaanites,

Carthaginians, and others, sacrificed, was an oblation fit for Baal or Moloch, that is, for devils, not for God. Innate wrath and cruelty is inconsistent with a happy nature or a happy state; for these are furious and tormenting passions; nor can we imagine that such a being should make its residence in heaven, a place of peace and love, or be delighted with hallelujahs and adorations of angels: this were no pleasure, no music to a being in whom wrath and cruelty were predominant, nor were those good, those holy, those charitable spirits, fit attendants, fit ministers, for such a being. No; could we suppose that there were an evil god, one in whom cruelty and wrath were his beloved attributes, we must necessarily conclude that he would make hell his court, that his guards and courtiers would be fiends and furies, and that the shrieks and torments of wretched creatures would be the pleasure, the harmony, he delighted in. This were a god fit for a Hobbist; one who can discern no difference between virtue and vice, between good and evil. And yet I cannot but retract and condemn this thought; for O! no other God is fit for him, but He whom he denieth: no other God is fit for such a wretch, but the God of love and mercy; to whom I recommend him.

This notion of the Deity, which represented that Being which was kind and benign, as terrible and dreadful; which was gracious and fatherly, as tyrannical; which was friendly and careful of us, as injurious and hurtful; which was mild and gentle, as fierce and savage; always gave such a distaste to all ingenuous tempers, that they thought atheism a much more excuseable impiety than superstition. Hence is that of Plutarch: "I had rather men should say of me, There neither was, nor is, such a one as Plutarch, than that they should say, that he was a man of fickle, inconstant, froward, revengeful, and implacable temper." Let us not, therefore, entertain such an idea of God, as human nature would recoil from, and start back, pale and scared at the sight. Let us not fasten those characters upon God, which a good-tempered man,

if charged with them, would look upon as the foulest reproaches and most injurious accusations; especially since a defect is not only more conspicuous, but more reproachful, where there is nothing but perfection; and peevishness and cruelty are infinitely more mischievous in an almighty, than an impotent, being. I might shun POLYCRATES, DIONYSIUS, PERIANDER; but how should I shun GOD? I might leave Samos, Sicily, or Corinth, and where clemency and justice made their abode, I might make mine; but whither should I go, what place should be my refuge, if the Governor of the world were but an almighty tyrant?

Thus it is manifest, such kind of representations of GOD tend not to enamour man with GOD, but to alienate and estrange him; they tend not to advance religion, but superstition; they tend to make men dread GOD, but not love him; they are therefore to be banished out of the world, and GOD is to be represented such as our dear LORD, who lay in the bosom of his FATHER, has revealed him,—a GOD of hope, a GOD of love, a GOD who "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This is the dictate of nature, this is the dictate of the SPIRIT: "GOD is love."

Nor let GOD's dealings with the Gentile world before the revelation of Christianity be alleged as an objection against the goodness of GOD, and his tenderness and compassion for mankind. It is true, "GOD in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways; and the times of this ignorance he winked at;" he published no revealed law to the Gentiles from heaven; he deputed no Prophets to them, as to his people the Jews, with a commission to restore, by signs and miracles, that natural religion, conformably to which they were to worship GOD; which is the import of those places of ST. PAUL. And it is true that the belief of the living and true GOD, and the natural law of good and evil, were strangely effaced amongst the Gentiles; but notwithstanding all this, it must be remembered too,—

1. That GOD "left not himself without a witness" in

any age of Gentilism: the heathens were never destitute of so much light as might have conducted them to God, and that happiness he designed them; for besides the traditions transmitted from Noah to posterity, the Book of Nature and Providence was ever open to them, and this did in most legible characters assert the being of one supreme God, and instructed them in the knowledge of his power and goodness. Thus St. Paul: "Nevertheless he left not himself without a witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." Nor was this testimony so unsuccessful, but that in all ages there were some who did ascribe the original and government of the world to God, and gave such an account of his holiness and goodness as was sufficient to have founded a rational and excellent worship upon. These were so many lights shining in dark places, as so many justifications of divine providence, and reproaches of man's wilful stupidity.

2. It is not in the least to be doubted, but that the nature of their duty, and consequently the condition of their happiness, was proportioned to those manifestations which God made them, to those obligations which he laid before them, and to that strength and assistance which he vouchsafed them. For God is not a hard master; he will not make good the accusation of the wicked servant: he will not "take up where he laid not down, nor reap what he did not sow." In a word, if God doth at the last day deal with men according to those several economies of his providence which they are under; and if he has afforded all nations means proportionable to those duties he required of them, and to those degrees of happiness to which he designed them, then he was always the God of the Gentiles, as well as once of the Jews, or now of the Christians; and there is no one part in the whole series of providence, which can give us any colour to call into question the care or goodness of God towards mankind.

The barrenness of some countries, the servitude and poverty of some people, is a much slighter objection; for

until it can appear that poverty is an enemy to virtue, or that wealth, the nurse of sloth and wantonness, is absolutely necessary to man's happiness, it will weigh but very little against so many demonstrations of divine love, that he has not heaped on all nations so many temporal blessings as might put them into a capacity of being lazy, wanton, and insolent.

Now give me leave to make a stand, and like a traveller when he has gained an ascent, look back upon the way I have gone. My undertaking was to demonstrate the love of God to mankind; thus far I have advanced towards this with undeniable evidence; I have proved that peevishness, malignity, and cruelty, cannot belong to God, because this were inconsistent with the perfection of his nature, or the happiness of his state; nor can it rationally be supposed, that the same properties should belong to those evil spirits which for a long time deluded the world, and that God, who has done so much to destroy that kingdom of darkness, to rescue man, and to restore him to a capacity of happiness; how could it be, that God should have done so much, as it appears he has, in the contexture of our nature and the contrivance of our state, to make us in love with goodness, and irreconcilable enemies to tyranny, cruelty, arbitrary revenge, if he himself were passionate, furious, and arbitrary in his cruelties? Nay, I have advanced further, and have proved, secondly, That boundless love and goodness are the unquestionable attributes of God. Nor doth the inconceivable majesty and eminence of the divine nature only, but also the indigence and weakness of human nature, require this; since without it, he could not be the object of our love or dependance, nor consequently of our worship.

Having proceeded thus far, and proved that tyranny or cruelty are utterly repugnant to the divine nature, and boundless love and goodness the essential and inseparable properties of it,—

I must now, *Secondly*, take notice, that the goodness of God extends to man, and has a particular regard to his

happiness. The world being now created, and mankind formed after God's image, (τοῦ γὰρ γένος ἐσμέν,—"We are his offspring," saith St. Paul, out of the Poet,) unactive and unconcerned love seems to me a contradiction, and infinite boundless goodness confined within heaven, cannot but seem as gross a one. Let it therefore remain an unshaken truth, that God is good, and that his goodness doth exert and express itself towards mankind, and we shall from hence gain these two points,—

1. That God is not the cause of man's misery; and, what is more yet,—

2. That he is most ready to further and assist him in all his endeavours after happiness.

1. The first of these is apparent: for if God be infinitely good, then every thing that came out of his hands must, in the state of its creation, have been exceeding good; the end of the creation must have been something extremely kind and gracious, and the law he prescribed his creatures, for the attainment of that end, must be as good as wise. This must have been the glorious state of things when God contrived this wonderful frame of nature, when he erected this vast work, the world; and in all the continued progress of divine providence, we are to expect no other acts of government than what may become the most gracious Prince, the most tender Father; for the same immense goodness that once created, doth ever continue to rule the world. Let us not therefore accuse God, but ourselves, if we be not happy. Blessings, indeed, and mercies, like fruitful seasons, descend upon us without our importunity; but evils and mischiefs come not until our sins and provocations have pulled them down upon us. God may indeed, like a kind parent, train up a son through a strict discipline to virtue and glory; he may throw difficulties in our way, on purpose to reward our conquest; he may, like a wise Physician, restore us to our health by bitter potions; and he will, like an excellent Governor, punish, if need be, our wanton contempt of love and mercy, by severity; but he will never, like a savage tyrant, delight

in the sufferings or ruin of innocent subjects; he will never prescribe impossible laws, that he may enjoy the pleasure of bloody executions; he will never make the groans of wretched people his music, nor think misery and death the best marks of his absolute power, or fairest ornaments of his throne. No; we shall never need any other proof to clear the divine majesty from any such imputation, than to examine ourselves, and reflect upon our own behaviour; we shall soon find that we alone are guilty of our ruin, and that God is utterly free from it; our excessive enjoyments create the diseases of the body, and our excessive passions the pains and torments of the mind, and most of the changes in our fortune derive themselves from both. A languishing body, and a languishing reputation, a broken estate, and a dejected mind, are the common effects of a disorderly life; and such a life is the natural effect of a mind enslaved to the body, and estranged from God, not only by a neglect, but by a contempt, of all those means by which a good God designed to bring him through virtue to glory; and then at last a guilty conscience, a distracted mind, and a miserable death, are the consequence and end of all. This is the progress which our sin and folly make: we cannot think that a good God can direct or necessitate us to these courses; they are as repugnant to his laws as to our interest; and the same time we forfeit our happiness, we disappoint his love and goodness. All the ways and methods of God are kind and gracious, and wise and rational; inanimate bodies do not desert those offices he has prescribed them; animals move regularly by those instincts he has implanted in them, and so both the one and the other necessarily serve those excellent ends for which they were created; but man having liberty woven into the constitution of his nature, and having no compulsory, but only a directing law prescribed him, has perverted his own ways, and abused his liberty, and made that his ruin, which, if well used, had enhanced his reward. This is the account which the Scripture gives us of man's

misery; it imputes it wholly to himself, and represents his obstinacy as displeasing to God as it is fatal to himself: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." "As I live, I delight not in the death of a sinner; turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

But this is not all we gain from the assurance of God's infinite goodness, that we have no reason to apprehend any harm from him, that he cannot be the author of our misery; but we may confidently persuade ourselves on the other side,—

(2.) That he is most ready to further and assist us in all our endeavours after happiness. And now, methinks, I am so far from questioning the possibility of attaining happiness, that I begin already to feel and enjoy it; I see the day breaking in upon me from above. How can he choose but be happy, who is the love, the care of God? I may walk, like Peter, on the waves, and bid defiance to the storms; I know I shall never sink, whilst that God upholds me who calls me this way to him; I can now easily believe that my temper may be transformed, my corruption put off, and I be made partaker of a divine nature; since the Spirit of God will dwell with me, the light of God will shine upon me, and the power of God will succour me. Can I imagine as much as any colour why I should not now be able to attain to an excellent state of virtue, or why this virtue should not be able to vanquish all those difficulties that oppose my happiness, since I am assured that God will not refuse me his Spirit, if I ask it, and that his grace will be sufficient for me?

You see of what vast importance this truth is, that God will be always ready to assist every man in his endeavours after happiness; and therefore, though it stands here as a necessary and undeniable conclusion from the foregoing

discourse; though the perfection of the divine nature amounts to little less than a demonstration of it; for beneficence to his creatures is necessarily included in the notion of perfection; yet I will dwell a little longer on the confirmation and illustration of it. There are three eminent acts of divine assistance: The first is such a direction of the events of secular affairs, that they may tend to our good; the second is, his assistance of us in the attainment of virtue; and the third is, his recruiting us by fresh supplies of strength in all our hazardous conflicts and extraordinary trials. Now though I could not give an account of the manner how God performs this kind of work of his providence, yet ought not that to dissuade me from the belief of it; because we know that our comprehension ought not to be the standard of divine perfections, nor the narrow bounds of our imagination the utmost extent of the Almighty's power. However it is not difficult to explain this assistance of God in such sort as may free it from the least suspicion of implying a contradiction.

For, *First*, as to his direction of temporal events: how easy will it be for us to conceive this possible to God, if we consider, first, That God can form what impressions he pleases in the minds of men, and inspire them with what affections he shall think most serviceable to his designs? For there is not the least colour to imagine that the soul is any more exempt from the sovereignty of God than the body, or that God cannot do that which the great, or the cunning, or the eloquent, nay, the popular and ambitious, seldom fail to do,—raise what passions he pleases in the mind of man. Or if we consider, secondly, That the power and efficacy of nature is wholly in his hands; that life or death, plenty or poverty, every thing depends upon his will; for the winds and seas, earth and air, fire, hail, and vapours, obey his voice, and are all of them, as often as he pleases, the instruments and executioners of his will. He that stills the ragings of the multitude, and calms the passions of the mighty; He at

whose command new creatures enter upon the stage of the world, and the old leave it; what is impossible for him to do? Nay, what is it this Almighty Governor cannot do, without moving one step out of the common road of his providence; without employing any extraordinary instrument, or exerting any extraordinary power? For what secular interest can there be imagined, whose success or disappointment depends not upon some or other of these natural causes? And yet we must acknowledge further, thirdly, That the ALMIGHTY has not set himself such immutable, unalterable laws, but that he has reserved to himself the prerogative of suspending or overruling them when he pleases; I mean with respect to the motions of natural bodies, or revolutions of secular affairs; and if such an interposal of divine power cannot be conceived to be other than a miracle, I must confess I do not look upon one age only, but every age, as an age of miracles; nay, I believe such as these are wrought every day, for the protection or relief of those who depend upon this Governor of the world: for I know not to what purpose I should, like JONAH or his mariners, call upon GOD in a storm, if it were never to be laid until it had spent its force and fury; I know not to what purpose I should implore the ALMIGHTY's direction upon all my deliberations in perplexed and entangled affairs, if I could expect no other light than what my labouring mind could give itself; I know not why I should address myself to GOD in the pains and danger of an unsupportable disease, if the medicines will be the same, and their virtue the same, if the fever will abate, and its flames be extinguished, or extinguish life in the same degree and manner, if I pray, or if I do not. All these ways of divine providence are very plain and intelligible; and therefore it is manifest that we may, without any absurdity, ascribe to GOD such a superintendency over human affairs, as may render the issue of them most serviceable to the true interest of those that worship him.

As to the second part of divine assistance, which consists

in aiding us in the attainment of holiness, I readily acknowledge, as far as this is performed by the internal operations of the SPIRIT, by the influx of divine light or heavenly vigour, I do no more understand the manner of sanctification, than that of the creation of the soul; this I know, that virtue is a rational work, which implies the knowledge of our duty, and a power to perform it; and therefore this I know, that this aid must consist in the improvement of my rational faculties, in some accession to the reason of my understanding, and to the power of my will. Now, though I cannot comprehend how GOD does this, yet how easily can I believe it possible for him to do it, since it is natural to imagine, that He who created my understanding can improve it, and he who invested me with liberty, can confirm or enlarge it; or, (if you please,) rescue it from that diseased and servile condition, into which it was degenerated, and restore it to the health and soundness of its first state.

The third act of divine providence does not imply a new manner, but a new degree of assistance, and therefore contains in it no new difficulty: and as to the truth and certainty of this sort of assistance, no man who believes the Gospel can question it, since this every where ascribes, as well perfection as conversion to GOD; as well the finishing as the beginning of sanctification, to his grace; it every where promises us the might and power of GOD'S SPIRIT, to "strengthen and establish us," and exhorts us to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in the time of need."

But it doth not so nearly concern the happiness of man to be instructed in the manner, as to be thoroughly persuaded of the truth, of divine assistance; and therefore, choosing rather to be tedious than defective in the proof of it, I will add to those arguments taken from the nature of GOD, whatever force and strength can be derived from the consideration of divine government, which is the expression of the divine nature, and the image of its perfection visible in its effect.

The Gospel contains this doctrine in almost every page, and the lives of apostles and martyrs are so many illustrious instances of the divine favour and love, performing those promises which he had made them by his SON. The Jewish polity was a theocracy; GOD did for a great while preside over them immediately, and govern them, (if I may so speak,) without a substitute or viceroy; repeated miracles, repeated prophecies, extraordinary manifestations of himself, and extraordinary revelations, were the illustrious proofs of GOD's affection and care for that people; so that it were to insult over my reader's patience, if I should go about to confirm this truth from the Old and New Testament; it is therefore only necessary to examine what the Heathen thought of the necessity of this divine assistance, and what instances of it may be found amongst them.

Whether the Gentiles had any notion of the fall of man, is not here necessary to be inquired; but this I am sure, they were extremely sensible of that opposition which virtue met with from the world and the body; they were extremely sensible that the inclinations of the one, and the affluence and troubles of the other, did naturally tend to engage them in vice; and therefore, though they sometimes magnify human nature, yet they were not so forgetful of their own infirmities, or the condition of this life, as not to judge the assistance of GOD indispensably necessary to render them virtuous and happy. Hence it is, that PYTHAGORAS, SOCRATES, and PLATO, were eminent in that part of religion which consists in prayer and invocation. The life of SOCRATES was a life of prayer.

And hence it was, that they generally ascribed their laws to those gods from whom they received their oracles; the Cretans, Romans, &c., not more confidently believing that they received laws from MINOS, or NUMA POMPILIUS, than that these received them from JOVE, ÆGERIA, and other gods. And I wonder not that CICERO should say, *Nunquam vir magnus sine divino afflatu;* 'There never was a great man enjoyed not some divine impulse;' since

it did so generally obtain through the pagan world, to attribute all the surprising excellencies, or extraordinary exploits, of their eminent men, to the immediate favour and patronage of their gods.

Nor let any one think that this was usual only amongst the barbarous people. Athens itself, Athens, the very abode of wit and philosophy, attributed the perfections of Eleusinian MELESAGORAS and Cretan EPIMENIDES, to the instruction of some divine being, and those of SOCRATES to his guardian angel, as well as the Scythians those of their ZAMOLXIS, or they of Proconesus those of ARISTEAS, to the peculiar favour and assistance of their god. Nor ought it to seem strange that the works of HESIOD, HOMER, or other poets, should be ascribed by the Heathens to divine inspiration, since those of AHOLIAH and BEZALEEL are by MOSES himself ascribed to the SPIRIT of GOD; for the poems of the former could not but seem to the Heathens as a rich piece of fancy, as the embroideries of the latter did to Jews: and this puts me in mind of an excellent argument MAXIMUS TYRIUS makes use of to prove virtue to be derived from the assistance of GOD: 'If arts, (saith he,) less excellent in their nature, and less useful in their end, be owing to GOD, how much more virtue, the divine guide and comfort of human life?' If there be no good that descends not from above, much less surely the chief and sovereign good of man.

Thus far I have proceeded to show you, what the Heathens thought of the necessity of divine assistance, even in the attainment of virtue; for as to secular matters, and temporal events, their sense of the overruling power and influence of divine providence was so notorious, that it is not to be called in question; the being and providence of GOD (in this sense of it) seemed so inseparable, that the Epicurean who denied the latter, could never find belief when he professed himself to own the former: nay, even those very men who could not be convinced of a providence by the bounty, were convinced of it by the severity,

of God in his chastisement of sins. Such is man's disingenuous temper, that he is more convinced by the wideness and fatality of a wound, that it was inflicted by an Almighty arm, than he is by the greatness of the benefits he receives, that they are distributed by a divine munificence; though the number and infinite value of the good things we receive, be in itself a much clearer proof of a divine providence, than the evils we suffer can be; for these we can create ourselves; those none but God can bestow.

And this opinion of the necessity of God's assistance, sprung not only from the experience of the weakness and corruption of human nature, but also of the power and goodness of the divine nature; for I cannot think that the order, beauty, and greatness of the creation, the fixed and constant returns of fruitful seasons, the filling men's hearts with food and gladness, were the only testimonies which God gave the Gentiles of himself, and his care for mankind. When I read that "angels are the ministering spirits of God;" when I read in Daniel, of the Princes of Græcia and Persia, and find that provinces were committed to angels as the viceroys and lieutenants of God, I cannot think that these devout and charitable spirits did with less zeal, in their provinces, labour to promote the honour of God, and the good of man, than evil spirits did the dishonour of the one, and the ruin of the other: and unless the frequent appearances of angels in the beginning, had possessed men's minds with a firm persuasion that there was a constant commerce maintained between heaven and earth, and that spirits did very frequently engage themselves in the protection and assistance of men, I cannot imagine what foundation there could be for the numerous impostures of oracles, or upon what ground the custom of putting themselves under the patronage of some tutelar spirit, could so generally have prevailed in the pagan world. Without this superstition, the poetry of Homer had been so far from being entertained as sacred and inspired, that it had been universally contemned as an idle rhapsody of unnatural, incredible characters of their gods.

How could any man, who had never heard of the appearances of spirits, nay, who could not conceive any other notion of such fancies than as absurd and impossible, ever digest the gross confidence of a Poet, bringing in a god upon the stage at every turn? I do not therefore doubt, but that the gentile world received very many good offices and advantages from good angels, as well as suffered many mischiefs from evil ones: and I think I might with good probability believe, that every good Heathen, as well as SOCRATES, had the assistance of a good spirit.

Nor was the ministry of angels, the only assistance that GOD afforded the gentile world; but in every age he raised up wise and good men, to be his Prophets, or interpreters of nature's law, to the Gentiles. It is true, their faith differed from that of a Christian, and no man could expect it otherwise; for how vast is the difference between the light of nature and that of revelation? But if we look upon those motives by which they were acted, they were such as a Christian need not be ashamed of: they looked upon it not only as the perfection of human nature, the bond and support of society, the delight, the guide, and comfort of every particular man's life; but also as the image of GOD, as the only thing that could unite man to GOD, that could raise man above the pollutions of sensuality, that could enable him to outbrave the fears of fortune, and of death; as that which could fit him for the conversation of heaven; and lastly, they looked upon it as the gift of GOD.

Who sees not now, that GOD by raising up such men, and assisting them with the spirit of wisdom and courage, which the constancy of many of them in suffering for these truths, and the lustre of their writings, in those dark times, abundantly testified, was an undoubted proof of GOD's goodness to the Gentiles, and of his concern for their true interest and happiness? Why should not this light, which GOD lent the then wandering benighted part of mankind, be as kindly interpreted by man, as it was designed by GOD? Why should not the Philosophers of the Gentiles be looked upon as Priests and Prophets, suited to the

economy of the law of nature? Very excellent use have Christians, even the most learned and pious, made of them; and surely they ought to have proved as much more beneficial to the world they lived in, as they were then more necessary.

I think I have, by this time, said enough, not only to extinguish in any man all superstitious fears, and unworthy apprehensions of the divine majesty; but also to enkindle in him a grateful love of God, and cheerful hopes of true happiness, by establishing this persuasion upon unshaken foundations, That God is a good and gracious God, that he is always ready to assist every man in his endeavours after happiness. But let not that doctrine be perverted to the betraying of us into sloth, which was designed to inspire the mind with fresh vigour, to quicken and confirm us in an industrious pursuit after our true happiness: for we must remember, that God is not only good and gracious, but also,—

Secondly, Holy too: I shall not insist long on this point, because it is already proved; holiness being as necessarily implied in perfection, as love or goodness. I know some have talked, as if God were a mere arbitrary being; as if laws were not the image or expression of his nature, but merely the positive precepts of an arbitrary will. If any man can believe that the most perfect being can love or hate without any reason; or that all the laws and actions of God shall be consonant to the strictest rules of justice and goodness, and all this by chance; for mere arbitrary motion is blind and guided; such a one seems to be as incapable as he is unworthy of instruction. I can as soon believe lightning and thunder, wind and storm, a god, as believe Him to be a mere arbitrary being. If we consult the Scriptures, nothing is more evident than the sanctity of the divine nature: we are there exhorted, "to walk in the light, because God is light; and to be holy, because he is holy;" which holiness doth not regard the declaration of his will, but his nature; this being given as a motive to oblige us to walk according to his righteous

precepts, because this alone is that which can please a righteous God; this alone is that which can make us like and dear to him: from this attribute of God, holiness, we may plainly infer,—

First, That we are not to expect any assistance from him, but then, when that which we enterprise is just and lawful, and we ourselves are not wanting to ourselves; for it is inconsistent with the holiness of God, to make his Providence the refuge of laziness or impiety. God is the hope of virtue, not the excuse of sloth and cowardice. This is a safe rule to guide our faith and reliance by; in all our distresses and difficulties we must have recourse to God, for these are the times wherein human infirmity requires the support of divine assistance: the utmost strength and perfection of virtue is too weak to bear the shock of calamity alone, 'it must be reinforced by power from above.' But then our own courage and industry must be as vigorous as our prayers; for in vain do we beg new supplies of strength, if we use not what we enjoyed before. Divine bounty doth never supersede man's industry; fruitful showers, and enlivening rays, do not prevent, but second, the labours of the husbandman: God observes the same method in the production of a nobler sort of fruit, wisdom, and virtue; the soul, as well as the field, of the sluggard, shall be overrun with weeds: there only shall the divine fruit of happiness grow, where religious discipline tills the ground, and wakeful study sows the seeds of thriving truths among the furrows.

Accordingly, if we consider the lives and practice of excellent men, none were ever so much favourites of heaven, that its gifts grew up in them, like corn and wine in the golden age, without culture and dressing. Inspiration itself did not exempt man from the necessity of industry, but oblige him to a greater. Thus, under the Old Testament, a prophetic life was a life of greater strictness and retirement than that of others; and in the New, not to mention the watchings, the fastings, the retirements, the prayers, of our Lord and Master; that account of himself

which St. Paul gives us, will inform us, not only what his life was, but what it was expected the life of every one should be, that shared with him in the ministry and dignity of an Apostle: "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in labours, in watchings; by pureness, by knowledge."

Secondly, It is easy to infer, from the sanctity of God, that they who expect his assistance, should endeavour to be good and holy: it is virtue that constitutes a man a subject of the heavenly kingdom, and the favourite of God: vice is a state of rebellion and defiance against God, and he that puts off his allegiance, cannot expect rationally the benefits of that government which he refuses to be under.

It is true, the infinite goodness and clemency of God, which are not easily vanquished by man's ingratitude, may pursue such a man with repeated overtures and tenders of grace and pardon, and may leave him in the possession of common benefits, such as health, plenty, friends; but God will never confer upon him the most excellent gifts, the marks of his especial presence and particular favour; he will withdraw from him the aids of his Spirit, and leave him to himself, a blind, indigent, and forlorn creature: "The Holy Spirit of discipline will fly deceit, and will not abide when unrighteousness comes in."

Thirdly, What different rates we are to set upon the different gifts of God: "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, comes down from above:" but every gift is not equally good: wealth, power, friends, relations, health, strength, beauty, wit, discretion, virtue, are all good, but not all equal: their value is different, and therefore the degrees of our importunity, and of our faith, and reliance upon God, must be proportioned accordingly: a confident faith, and an almost impatient zeal, doth well become us when we seek the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness thereof; when we seek of God the divine gifts of wisdom and virtue; but a humble modesty, and a most

profound submission, are the ornament and beauty of those who are petitioners for inferior blessings: for God has promised the former to all that earnestly sue for them, peremptorily, and without any reservations; but his promises of the latter always imply this condition, "If they shall be for our good:" for the perfections of the mind are immutable beauties; but those of the body, and all the gaudy things of fortune, are like the fading beauties of a flower: the heat scorches it, the cold nips it, every little chance cracks the stalk, and the hand of a child will serve to crop it. Nothing, therefore, is more acceptable to God, than the modesty of our petitions for these good things, and the fervency of them for the other; nothing more delightful to him, unless the granting of them.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Influence of Fortune on our Happiness.

A second thing which men charge with the guilt of their ruin, is Fortune. I might pass over this point slightly, because I have already cleared two great truths, which are of themselves abundantly sufficient to defeat this trifling objection; namely, *First*, That virtue and vice, wisdom and folly, are the things to which, generally, we owe our temporal prosperity or adversity; and consequently, that those, supposing the ordinary assistance of God, being in our power, these must be so too. *Secondly*, That we are assured of the assistance of God even in these things, as far as he shall see them truly subservient to our good. However, because the persuasion of the usefulness, nay, absolute necessity, of the favour of Fortune, has taken such deep root in the minds of men, I will bestow a little time on the consideration of this objection.

First, What dost thou mean by Fortune? If mere

chance, then to envy the lot of others, or murmur at thine own, is folly; if Providence, then it is impiety; for whatever goodness, guided by unerring wisdom, doeth, must be so well done, that it cannot be mended; and whatever is merely in the power of a blind, giddy, and inconstant humour, (which is the notion by which men choose to express fortune,) can neither be prevented, fixed, nor regulated.

But what is it, *Secondly*, thou dost put in the power of Fortune? The understanding and liberty of men's minds; wisdom, temperance, industry, courage; and, in one word, virtue? If thou dost not, she has no influence on thy happiness; she cannot prevent thy attainment of it; nor bereave thee of it when attained: if thou dost, thou dost enlarge the empire of Fortune too far. Let her rule and insult over soldiers, courtiers, lovers, and time-servers, but not over philosophers; let those who are her minions, be her slaves; let her dispose of money, lands, honours, fame; nay, if you will, crowns and sceptres too: virtue, and happiness, and souls, are too precious commodities to be the sport and traffic of Fortune. SOLOMON observed long ago, "Wisdom cries out, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she cries in the chief place of concourse, in the opening of the gates; in the city she utters her words." Our SAVIOUR, in the great day of the feast, cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink;" which is an invitation of the same nature with that of the Prophet: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price."

This ever was, and ever will be, true: A great fortune is not necessary for the attainment of faith, hope, or charity; and he that is endued with these cannot be miserable. You may learn the whole system of divine and important truths; you may acquaint yourself with all the beauty and enjoyments of virtue, at a very cheap rate; and you may learn temperance, fortitude, justice, modesty, constancy,

patience, contempt of the world, without the assistance of much more wealth than will serve to feed and clothe you: and canst thou not be content with these possessions? Is not this a sort of merchandise, to be preferred before that of fine gold?

I know the greater part of those who accuse their fortune of their misery, pretend their circumstances of life are so incommodious, that they have not time to attend to the great interest of the soul, or at least not with that application which they should. Alas, thus not the mean only, but almost all, talk, from the porter to the Prince: the circumstances of the one are too narrow; of another, too full of trouble, because too full of state: one complains that he is withdrawn from his great end, by the many temptations to which his rank and quality expose him; another, that he is daily fretted and indisposed, by the rugged conversation which he is necessarily obliged to bear with: one complains of too much business, another of too little; the hurry and multitude of things distract the one, infidel fears and anxious despondencies the other: one complains that his acquaintance and friends are too numerous, and intrench too far upon his precious hours; another is melancholy and peevish, because he looks upon himself either for his meanness neglected, or for his misfortune deserted and forsaken: company is burdensome to the one, and solitude to the other.

Thus all conditions are full of complaints, from him that trudges on his clouted shoe, to him who can scarce mention the manners or the fortunes of the multitude, without some expressions of disdain. Thou fool, dost thou not see that all these complaints are idle and contradictious? For shame, correct the wantonness of thy humour, and thou wilt soon correct thy fortune: learn to be happy in every state, and every place: learn to enjoy thyself, to know and value the wealth that is in thine own power; I mean, wisdom and goodness: learn to assert the sovereignty and dignity of thy soul. It is beneath the dignity of a soul, that has but a grain of sense, to make

chance, and winds, and waves, the arbitrary disposers of his happiness; or, what is worse, to depend upon some mushroom upstart, which a chance smile raised out of his turf and rottenness, to a condition, to which his mean soul is so unequal, that he himself wonders at his own height.

O how I hug the memory of those honest Heathens, who in a ragged gown, and homely cottage, bid defiance to fortune, and laughed at those pains and hazards, the vanity and pride of men, not their misfortune, drove them to! Men may call this pride, or spite in them; as the rabble does usually envy the fortune which it despairs of. But let the contempt of the world be what it will in a Heathen; let it be pride and peevishness, vain glory, or any thing, rather than a reproach to Christians. What say you to the followers of our LORD and Master? Then said PETER, "Silver and gold have I none." None? What hast thou then, thou poor disciple of a poor Master? A true faith, a god-like charity, an unshaken hope: blessed art thou amongst men; nothing can make thee greater, nothing richer, nothing happier, but heaven. You see plainly then, a man may be virtuous, though not wealthy; and that fortune which prevents his being rich, cannot prevent his being happy.

This discourse will never go down: it is not calculated for this age. Go on then; let us try how far it will be necessary to condescend. You cannot be happy: Why? Because you are not rich. Go then to GOD, and beg you may be rich. I have not the face to put up such arrogant requests to GOD: it is plain then, it is not necessary to be rich in order to be happy; for whatever is necessary to this, thou mayest with good assurance beg of GOD. But thy desires are more humble and modest: thou aimest at nothing but what is necessary; a fairer house, another servant, a dish or two of meat more for thy friends, a coach for thy convenience, and a few hundred pounds a piece more for thy children. O heavenly ingredients of a rational pleasure? O divine instrument of human happiness! O the humble

and mortified requests of modest souls! Well, if these things be so necessary, and these desires be so virtuous, if thou canst not be happy, and consequently must be miserable, without them; put up a bill, represent thy condition in it,—Such a one——wants a more commodious house, more servants, more dishes, &c., and desires the prayers of the congregation for support under this affliction. 'You are profane.' I would only let thee see the wantonness of thy desires: if thou thinkest this would expose thee to public laughter, go to thy Minister, unfold thy case to him, let him pray for thee; he is a good man, and his prayers will go far. 'You rally and ridicule me.' Enter into thy closet; shut thy door: thou mayest trust God; he pities and considers even human infirmities. 'I colud even almost in my mind desire it of him; but I am ashamed to do it in a set and solemn prayer; I could almost make the petition in the gross, but I blush to think of descending to particulars.' Well, then, I see plainly that wealth, in any degree of it, is so far from being necessary to our happiness, it has so little of usefulness or conveniency in it, that in thy conscience between God and thee, thou canst not think it fit to complain of the want of it.

But this answer will never satisfy him who complains of want, or of being engaged in continual troubles, and tossed by the daily changes and revolutions of the world: I confess it, it will not; but I must tell such a one, if Solomon's observation be true, "The hand of the diligent maketh rich;" then his poverty is his crime as well as his calamity; he must redeem himself from this his punishment, by industry and prayer. As to calamities, this must be acknowledged, that the mind of a good and great man which stands firm upon its own basis, a good God, a good Saviour, and a good conscience, may remain unmoved when the earth trembles, and the sea roars round about him: changes, indeed, befall things temporal; but he leans not upon them. I may say farther, that he who, upon mature deliberation, and upon necessary obligations of duty, engages

himself in a just cause, may be unfortunate, but he cannot be miserable: his sufferings carry a secret pleasure in them, and his misfortunes are full of hope and glory, if he consider, if he do not feed on vain and airy projects, and suffer himself to be transported by irrational, though seemingly just, passions. I must lastly add, that it is not the necessity of their affairs, nor the iniquity of times, which commonly involves and entangles men in public or private calamities; but some secret vanity, some blind impetuous passion, some ill-laid project, or some dishonourable fear.

I might now presume I had given satisfaction to this objection; but the infection is got into the mass of blood, and has diffused itself through mankind, and it is not a slight medicine that can purge it out.

My design, therefore, is to examine what real good or convenience there is in wealth; and that in such a sober and rational manner, as may be satisfactory and convictive to every unprejudiced mind.

First, therefore, I will give some account, whence it is that men are so intent upon their worldly interest, so wholly bent upon being rich.

Secondly, I will state what is meant by a competency, and what the advantage and necessity of it are.

Thirdly, I will consider what the natural tendency of wealth is. From all which it will easily appear, what connexion there is between our fortune and our happiness.

If we inquire whence it is, men are so intent upon the world; one reason is, a secret infidelity. Men are desirous to lay such a foundation as time cannot wear out, nor winds and tempests overthrow: they cannot trust Providence, till they see, or at least fancy, themselves in a condition to defy it; and this they look upon as a great piece of prudence, to provide for themselves a safe retreat from the storms and changes that generally pursue mankind: I cannot tell which is the greater, the folly or the impiety of this humour; for it is a wretched folly to flatter ourselves with the vain hopes of a security which is not to be found

any where beneath heaven; or to imagine that a great estate is less liable to the blasts of fortune, than a small one: nor is the impiety one jot less than the folly; for what can be more wicked than, amidst so many undeniable proofs of a God, and Providence, to let the same anxious and jealous fears fill and disturb our minds, which would scarce be pardonable, if there were neither? What greater affront can we offer to the goodness, the wisdom, the omnipotence and faithfulness of God, than to refuse to repose the care, the trust, of providing for us, upon Him, when he not only offers, but presses himself upon the employment.

A second cause why we so eagerly pursue wealth, is sensuality: being strangers to the peace and joy of faith, insensible of the divine delight of charity, incapable of the ecstasies, of the full assurance of hope, and in general, of rational pleasure; what can be expected but that both wind and tide should drive us violently on another shore? I mean, the whole force and inclination of our nature should impetuously tend towards sensual, worldly pleasures, and consequently, towards wealth, as the necessary instrument of them. 'You grant, therefore, that wealth is necessary to a pleasurable life?' To a pleasurable one it is, to a pleasant one it is not. The sensual pleasure of a sensual man, *i. e.*, one who is all body and fancy, requires a good fund of wealth, but the temperate enjoyment of a virtuous man does not. I grant, that ease and rest are necessary to the sluggish, state to the proud, variety to the intemperate and the wanton, and to all this, wealth is necessary; but I deny that sloth or pride, intemperance (I will add niceness) or wantonness, is necessary to our happiness: nay, I will confidently affirm, that a vigorous mind and active body, are a much greater pleasure than sluggish ease; that a humble, if contented, state is much more easy than proud grandeur, and the ἀλαζονεία βίου, or "the ostentation of life," in St. John; that sober and thrifty temperance, is a far greater pleasure than variety; and the modesty, constancy, and friendship, of a virtuous affection, is not

only a more calm, generous, and steady, but a more transporting satisfaction, than the fanciful rambles of a wandering lust. And I hope none will be so fond as to judge wealth necessary to the obtaining these virtues; if any are, their silliness is to be exploded, not seriously confuted. For who can believe, that ease is the best nurse of industry; that state and grandeur are the parents of humility and contentment; that affluence and daily delicacies are the most effectual instruments of abstinence; and that variety is the mother of chastity? If not, then it is apparent how far serviceable wealth is; for all that lies in its power is to provide for us these temptations: but though a wise and virtuous man wants no wealth, I deny not but he needs a competency; what this is, is the next thing to be inquired: for this pretext of having what is enough, is frequently made use of to justify avarice and ambition.

The measure of competency is the necessities of nature, not the extravagancies of fancy: a little heap, where frugal temperance and humble industry are the stewards, is a plentiful provision; but wherever wasteful luxury, and wanton fancy rule, plenty itself is a mere dearth. Competency, then, is the provision which the virtuous man needs as the support of life, and instrument of virtue; the modest wish of JACOB: "Bread to eat, and raiment to put on." (*Gen.* xxviii. 20.) The use and advantage of this is not to keep us or our children from being exposed to contempt, (that is too slight an evil for a Christian to dread,) but to the barbarous pity of rich and great friends. A second use of it is, that it helps to keep the mind erect and free; that it puts us into a capacity of employing our reason, and enjoying ourselves our own way; and leaves us not under any temptation to unmanly compliances, or unchristian jealousies and fears: for he whose ambition goes not beyond this will easily trust Providence, if he believe there be any; or his own industry, if he believe none: how he that separates providence and industry will thrive in this matter, I know not; but he that joins his own industry, with GOD's blessing, obtained by prayer, can never miss

of this his aim. Having proceeded thus far, I shall be more easily able to resolve,—

Thirdly, What the value, what the necessity, of Riches is. But I do not call every thing wealth, that is not mere beggary: I have allowed of a competency as very convenient even for a virtuous man. In the next place, I trouble not myself about the grandeur or security of kingdoms, though, peradventure, the Scythian poverty, or Roman virtue, is a stronger bulwark, a better guard of these than the riches of Asia. And in the last place I do not inquire what use wisdom and virtue are able to make of wealth, which can extract pleasure and happiness even out of troubles and afflictions, but what the natural tendency of wealth is. These things being observed, let us come to a trial of the matter. If contentment and security were the natural effects of wealth, if to be rich and to be happy were the same thing, then it were not to be wondered at, that wealth should be the great idol, and ambition of mankind: but if it neither frees men from those passions of the mind, nor those diseases of the body, nor other calamities which imbitter life to the inferior part of mankind, what then is the advantage of it? Let us stand still and consider: Do not hatred and anger, envy and anxiety, ambition and lust, reign more frequently and more insolently in the bosom of the great and wealthy, than of the labouring cottager? Nay, I believe upon a narrow search, we shall find that some passions are the prerogative of a proud and insolent fortune, and are not incident to a mean one; such as haughty anger, irreconcileable hatred, an unlimited ambition, and an uneasy wantonness: the ploughman and the artist, the labourer and the hind, know none of these; ambition does not break their sleep, nor a niceness make them disgust their best meals; nor are they troubled with wild and ungovernable lust bred by excess, and nursed by gaudy bravery, deluding arts, and more deluding fancy.

Nor are the rich more exempt from the diseases of the body than from the passions of the mind. Excessive meals,

disorderly sleeps, much sloth and much wantonness, as they are the privileges of a gay fortune, so are they the sources of innumerable diseases: scurvies, gouts, rheumatisms, surfeits, putrid fevers, and I know not what, are the consequences of proud idleness, and excessive enjoyments, *i. e.*, of ill-governed wealth; whereas a plain table and a sober life, regular and cheap pleasures, and moderate labour, beget and improve an entire habit of health, and prolong life to the utmost period of nature. This is a second great advantage of wealth, that it gives us a diseased body, and a short life.

Sure then, the rich are the minions of fortune, and the disasters which oppress the rest of mankind touch not them: on the contrary, all annals are stuffed with the calamities and misfortunes of these men; rifled wealth, defeated hopes, baffled ambition, blasted honours, broken power, and, in a word, mighty changes, are the argument of tragedies, and the subject of a loud and raving passion: whereas the strokes of fortune are soft and gentle, when they light upon the mean: these are not capable of tragical alterations; their minds are of a stronger temper, their bodies firmer, their senses not nice and delicate, and their little sufferings draw not after them the mournful pomp and state which attend the fall, I may call it the funeral, of a great one. Here envy insults not, malice traduces not, the petulant multitude do not follow the corpse with confused clamours and censures. But to come closer yet: What is it that makes up the comfort of human life? A quiet state, faithful friends, good wives, and good children? If we consider it, we shall find the life of man little beholden to wealth in these points: in all changes of time are not the rich the greatest sufferers? The mark of envy, the prey of violence and usurpation? Have they not more enemies as well as more friends than other men? Friends did I say? They have none. They have dependants, flatterers, companions, and ministers of their pleasures; no friends. Hence is it, that nothing is more common than for those above us to wish for the content, the ease, and

enjoyment of those below them: for the truth of it is, relations, which are the pleasure of men of middle fortune, are the burden and encumbrance of the rich and great: for in all their contracts and disposals, they are servants to their fortune, not their inclination. Marriages amongst these are the matches of estates, not minds; and therefore they attend not the temper or the honour of the families they link with: nay, what is worse, they have no regard to their education, or virtue, or wisdom: but money weighs all down, whatever objections are put in the opposite scale. In the whole method of their lives, they are slaves to their fortune, and to their reputation in the world, judging themselves obliged to live, not according to their reason, but their quality, and the humour, that is, the folly of the age. Nor dare they walk by any other maxims in the government of the nearest to them, or in the education of their children. In all these things they must do what becomes men of their figure, not what becomes true wisdom. Who sees not now, that upon the whole there is in this condition of life more encumbrance, and less true freedom; more of show, and less of enjoyment, than in any other?

If all this be true, you will be apt to conclude mankind is mad: if wealth neither makes us more wise, nor more healthy, nor more free in ourselves, nor more fortunate in our relations, what bewitches men into this extravagant dotage? What makes the world gaze upon, and envy, the rich, as the only happy creatures? What makes us fawn upon them and flatter them, as the only powerful and great things the world has? Something there is in it, and that is this, We see the outside, the pomp, and pageantry of wealth; we see the gilt coaches, the rich liveries, the little town of buildings, gay furniture, and a whole squadron of dishes; and together with all this, the gaudy trappings the happy man is bedecked with; the port, the grace, the confidence, that all this gives to ignorance and nonsense: but if you consider this truly, you will find all this mere pageantry and apparition, nothing solid nor real

in it. As for gay clothing, it is an advantage not worth the speaking of; it is the pride of children and the weakest of women. The little soul that converses no higher than the looking-glass, may help to make up the show of the world, but must not be reckoned among the rational inhabitants of it; serving only as images and ornaments to the stage, not actors on it. As to all the rest, they seem to enjoy some pre-eminence, but do not. The mean man eats his morsel with more pleasure, because more appetite; and sleeps with more delight, because with more ease; neither oppressed in body by luxury, nor in mind by care: "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep." All the rest, as numerous attendants, many dependants, flocks of parasites, and the like, are but mere encumbrance, the unwieldiness of a gross and heavy body. All these serve to increase the noise and hurry, the care and the pomp, but not the pleasure or enjoyment of the wealthy. Hence was that observation of SOLOMON: "If riches increase, they are increased that eat them; and what profit has the owner thereof, saving the beholding of it with his eyes?" A most extraordinary happiness this, To be the host of the neighbourhood; to have one's house the rendezvous of the idle and the gluttonous, of buffoons and flatterers! And yet if the rich live otherwise, presently they grow infamous and stink; they are looked upon as Indian graves, where wealth is not laid up, but lost and buried. They are loaded with the curses of some, with the hatred of others, and the censures of all; and this is almost as bad as to be pestered with impertinence and flattery. This is the whole of the matter: if people gaze and admire, it is their ignorance; if they fawn or flatter, it is their baseness; but still remember, it is the people, it is the crowd that do this. Should a man of letters or of spirit be overawed by the laws of custom or some unhappy necessity into the commission of this idolatry, he could not but despise the idol he bowed down to, and see it a mere lump of wood or stone, not-

withstanding its gaudy dresses; though I acknowledge I comprehend not what can reduce them to this piece of shameful dissimulation. The soul that is great in itself, is so in despite of fortune; he that can live virtuously, can live happily in the lowest state; he that desires but little, has no need of much; he that can despise riches, can despise the insolence and pride of the rich. In one word, he that can command himself, needs be a slave to none.

After all, I think it were possible to evince the mischievousness of wealth as plainly I have its uselessness; but that were to press the point further than my present design requires: for my business was to show, either that fortune was not necessary to our happiness, or as far as it is, it was in our own power; both which I may now presume myself to have sufficiently performed.

CHAPTER V

Of Fate.

Amongst the many shifts and devices men have invented to quiet conscience, and at once to excuse and enjoy their lusts, this is none of the least, that they impute all to fate; not only the events that befall them, but even their crimes and follies; that is, they believe, or would be thought to do so, that all our affections and actions, and all events that befall us, are inevitable; that no prudence can prevent, no industry frustrate, the decrees of fate, against which we struggle but in vain. This is the fate taught first by Democritus, Empedocles, Heraclitus, and Leucippus, and so derived down from age to age.

It is a sign of a desperate cause, to dispute against common sense, and to defy the daily experience of mankind; and yet this the abettors of an universal fate (such

as this is) are guilty of. For they deny that liberty in man which all laws, divine and human, all exhortations and advices, all commendation and reproof, *i. e.*, plainly, God and man suppose; for if the mind of man were overruled,—if his present and future state were fixed and determined by a fatal and inexorable necessity; then as laws, advice, and exhortation, would be useless and impertinent, so all reproof and punishment would be unjust. And yet, though the assertion of fate be oppressed with all these absurdities, it wants not at this day its maintainers. There are who maintain a necessity in human affairs and events, derived from the influence of heavenly bodies; which notion of fate takes in the words of Manilius:—

Fata regunt orbem, certa stant omnia lege,
Longaque per certos signantur tempora cursus.
Nascentes morimur, finisque ab origine pendet.

And there are others, who, though they condemn judicial astrology, do yet maintain such eternal decrees as imply a more inflexible fate than any Pagan but Democritus, and those just now mentioned with him, did ever hold; nay, a fate more impious than that of Democritus; for what he imputed to senseless matter, these do to God; and as much more rigid as it is more impious than his, for he never thought of another life, wherein eternal misery should punish those actions that were unavoidable in this.

Now the reason why this doctrine of fate is so greedily embraced and eagerly defended by many, is very plain: it feeds the vanity and curiosity of some, and the pride of others; it is a luscious pleasure to curious and vain minds, to fancy themselves able to spell out and interpret the laws of fate, and pry into the destinies of future ages; it is a delicious pleasure to the proud, and haughty, and ill-natured, to see themselves caressed and exalted by God as his particular favourites, while the miserable multitude, the rest of mankind, are excluded from the capacity of

happiness and heaven; and in general it is an acceptable opinion to the loose and profligate, since it is a ready apology for all manner of sins; for men might sin confidently and without remorse, if they did sin fatally; or rather, nothing could be branded with the infamy of sin, when whatever men did were the effect, the unavoidable effect of necessity, an act of obedience to those fatal laws which they could not transgress. TERTULLIAN therefore speaks very properly, when he saith,—*Mentis malæ impetus vel fato vel astris imputant, nolunt suum esse quod malum agnoscunt*:—'They impute the heat and sallies of their lust to stars and fate, being unwilling to charge themselves with the guilt of that which they own to be evil.' From this little that has been said, it appears of what importance it is to free men's minds from a persuasion so pernicious to the interest of virtue, the peace of the public, the happiness of men, and the honour of GOD.

To which purpose, that I may contribute all I can, I will consider,—1. On which side stands the advantage of authority, whether for or against fate. 2. What plain reason and as plain revelation dictate in this point.

1. As to the first, there are two things material to be inquired after:—(1.) How far the dominion of fate was generally extended. And, (2.) What kind of necessity, or what degrees of it, were generally supposed to constitute fate.

(1.) As to the extent of its power, this one thing is very remarkable, That the Heathens did exempt the mind of man from its sovereignty. The Poets indeed made the monarchy of fate so universal, that they believed the gods themselves subject to it. Thus Jupiter, in Homer, bemoans the fate of his Sarpedon, which he could not prevent. But it must be remembered, that this dominion of fate, though it limited the powers, did not necessitate the will, of their gods. And no wonder; for I never find that any but DEMOCRITUS extended the dominion of fate over the soul of man. All agreed that the mind of man was free, though events were fatal; they left man's true

happiness, *i. e.*, wisdom and virtue, in his own power. And it deserves to be remembered, that they confined this fatality of events to this life; for such of them as believed the immortality of the soul, did also believe that its misery or happiness in that state, did depend on its behaviour in this.

(2.) The second thing considerable in the notion of fate, is, What kind of necessity, or what degrees of it, are supposed to render an event fatal? The Stoics did indeed think that the necessity of fate was uncontrollable, irresistible, inevitable; but I do not find that others thought such a necessity, and nothing less, sufficient to make up fate; for they believed that evil might be diverted by prayers, sacrifices, and other religious rites, according to that of NEMESIUS: 'There are no influences, no aspects of stars, so fatal and irresistible, but that prayers and expiations may sweeten and mitigate them, or else prevail with those powers which govern them to divert their menaces.' Besides this, the distinction of fate into peremptory or conditional, was very well known to the Heathens. This last was a fate whose necessity depended upon some antecedent conditions, upon some suppositions which might or might not be fulfilled. This SERVIUS discourses largely of upon that place of VIRGIL:—

Nam quia nec fato, merita nec morte peribat,
Sed misera ante diem.

Before her day fell the unhappy maid,
By love, not fate, nor her own crimes betray'd.

Where he that pleases may see many instances of this conditional fate; and to come to an end, the necessity of fate, in the opinion of ARISTOTLE and EPICURUS, was not an inflexible, uncontrollable one, but one subject to alteration, to many impediments, being nothing else but that efficacy in natural bodies, which the wisdom of man did often prevent, the industry and courage of man did often master, and chance did often hinder and overrule.

By all this we see plainly how careful the heathens were, that the necessity of fate might not destroy the liberty of man: how earnestly they contended for such a fatality of events as might not cancel man's obligation to virtue, nor discourage him from the expectation and pursuit of happiness. For now to draw to a point, and to make some use of this recital of the pagan notions of fa te: If we assert a Stoical fate, we yet leave the wise man whatever encouragement he can derive from the rewards of another life, and whatever satisfaction he can derive from virtue in this. And certainly, though temporal events were fatal without any dependance upon the choice and actions of man, yet even on this supposition virtue were eligible, as that which teaches us to enjoy prosperity, and bear bravely that adversity which we could not prevent. But if, with other Philosophers, we believe not only that the success of another life, but even that of this too, depends wholly upon our behaviour, and that events are therefore only fatal, because those decrees of God which award happiness to the virtuous, and misery to the wicked, are fixed and immutable; then we could not desire more powerful encouragements to virtue, or more evident proof that it is in our own power to be happy. If we grant the necessity that makes fate flexible and mutable, or if we suspend a fatal event upon conditions, as it were but reasonable to imagine that all evil ones are suspended, there will be no reason to question whether man's happiness be in his own power. If we make the fate which even wisdom and virtue cannot surmount, extend itself to some few things, and that fate which drags only fools and sluggards in chains after it, more general and universal, we meet with nothing in all this which can rationally deter the industry and hopes of any man. If, lastly, with Aristotle and Epicurus, we attribute no more force or strength to fate than to that efficacy of natural causes, which, as we experience every day, is not irresistible, (for the mind overcomes those inclinations we derive from natural temper, and life may be lengthened or shortened by temperance or

luxury; it being a flame which is not of itself so inextinguishable, but that it requires our care to cherish it,) then nothing is more evident than that it behoves us to act like men, since our reason and virtue have their necessary tendency and efficacy, as well as any other natural causes; and since the concurrence of our endeavours may so much more properly be supposed necessary to promote our happiness, than the influence of stars, as it has a more direct and immediate operation upon our affairs, than the motion of those heavenly bodies can have.

And now, who would expect to find that fate in the Christian, which was banished the Pagan, world? Who would expect that the mind of man should be fettered and bound by a more inexorable and deplorable necessity, now in this age of light and grace, than ever it was in the thickest darkness of Paganism? Who could now believe that man's eternal success in another life, should be as fatal as ever the Stoic believed his temporal one in this? Or who could ever imagine that Christians would charge that upon the decrees of a wise and good God, which the Heathens, out of their honour to him, ever refused to do? For those of them who made fate entirely the decree of God, believed that in the dispensation of evils, God did wholly regard men's crimes and sins; that there was no other fate attended any man than what he was himself the author of. And they who believed a fatality of events, without any dependance upon the behaviour of man, imputed it to matter, not to God; to the deficiency of the one, not to the will of the other.

It is true, such a fate is not to be found in the Scriptures, as we shall see anon; nor is it to be found in the Fathers of the Church. We may find Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Lactantius, and St. Augustine himself, (however accused by some as a fatalist,) zealously disputing against the Pagan fate. What would they have done, had there been then such a notion of fate as has since prevailed amongst some Christians, which is briefly

this: 'That the eternal misery of nineteen parts of the world, (I speak modestly,) and the eternal happiness of the twentieth, is fatal; that the means conducing to these ends are fatal; the one being shut up under the invincible necessity of natural impotence, the other being called and acted by grace irresistible; that this necessity of fate is the result of a divine decree; that this decree proceeded from mere arbitrary will, without any regard to the behaviour of man.' They that cried out against the Pagan fate, that it subverted human life, that it defeated all laws, that it left man no use of his reason, that it left no place for rational hopes or fears, with what bitter invectives must they have assaulted this fate? The Pagan fate left the will free: this bound and fettered; not only bereaved of natural power and liberty, (for we contend not about that,) but destitute of grace and divine assistance. The Pagan fate, in the opinion of a great many, if not most, did not teach a rigid and inflexible necessity: this doth. They amongst the Pagans who taught the necessity of fate inexorable, understood it of necessity in temporal events; but this fate extends itself to eternal ones. The Stoic, the great asserter of fate, acknowledged, nay, eagerly contended, that man might be virtuous and happy in despite of fate; but these men make human happiness and virtue the very object of their fate, making sin and misery, virtue and happiness, as fatal as any events whatever.

In vain now shall any one of them think to excuse their doctrine from the imputation of fate, by telling us (as some do) that fate, in the Pagan notion, did involve God as well as man within the compass of necessity; that what they teach is nothing else but God's voluntary decree. This is a miserable shift; for this doth not at all lighten the weight of that fatal necessity that lies upon unhappy man, to think that God is not subject to the same; nay, on the quite contrary, the Pagan notion was more easy to the mind, and whilst it freed God from the guilt of man's

ruin, it frees man from all hard and irreligious thoughts of God.

> *Numina cum videas diris obnoxia Fatis,*
> *Invidia possis exonerare Deos.*
>
> Since heavenly Powers to curs'd fate subject be,
> The gods you cannot but from envy free.

It was pure piety in the Stoic to impute that fatality of event, which he thought independent of the good or ill behaviour of man, to any thing rather than to God.

But I have done. I have sufficiently considered which way the stream of authority runs, and it evidently appears to be against all such notions of fate, as put it out of a man's power to be virtuous and happy, and determine his sin and misery wholly necessary and unavoidable. I will now proceed to consider,—

2. What plain reason and as plain revelation dictate in this point. Thou dost believe fate, and therefore must despair of happiness; thy sense must be plainly this: All is in the power of fate, nothing in thine own, nothing that can contribute to make thee virtuous or happy. Whence can this necessity, this fate, proceed? There are but two principles that were ever fancied to be the First Causes of all things, God and Matter. Dost thou believe this necessity proceeds from matter, from the motion of atoms, or the influence of stars? This belief, as St. Augustine argues, subverts the foundation of all religion; for he who believes that he depends upon fate, not God, can have no sufficient reason for the worship of that God, on whom he hath no dependance. But this is that peradventure thou wouldest have. Well, when thou art able to prove reason and understanding to derive themselves from endless atoms; when thou canst find out any kind of natural motion of matter or atoms, which can be the cause of liberty or freedom in the will, any motion that can at once be necessary, (for so all motion of atoms must, be it of what kind it will,) and yet free too, for such all my deliberations and all my choices I make, prove the

motion of the mind to be; then will I acknowledge a fate not only independent from, but, if thou wilt, superior to, God; then I will forbear all farther attempts of charity, as vain, and leave thee to thy fate and misery. But these are notions so absurd in themselves, that no similitudes, no arguments, can make them appear one jot more irrational than they do to all men of sense at the first hearing.

But there are who suppose God the author of all things, and yet suppose events fatal too. The former opinion was ridiculous; this is impious: for suppose mankind fatally guided by the influence of the stars, and that these stars have received this power and energy from God, is it not natural for every man to break out into the words of St. Augustine: 'How outrageously do these men reproach Heaven, whilst they believe those crimes and villanies decreed by that august senate and glorious court in heaven, which had any city upon earth decreed, it had deserved to have been damned by the common vote, and rased to the ground by the united arms of mankind.' When I consider that the stars are the work of God; that their order and motion were prescribed by him; that whatever vigour and efficacy they have, they have received it from him; and then remember, that God is a most infinitely kind and good Being, I should easily be persuaded that they could shed no influence upon this lower world, but what were extremely beneficial to it. I could easily believe that all the inclinations they form, (if they form any,) could be no other than innocent and virtuous; I can never believe that lust or falsehood, malice or cruelty, can come down from above, or that our minds should be impregnated with sin and folly by the influences of heaven. No, certainly; if there be any virtue in the stars that extends itself to man, it must rather be the seed of life, and health, and virtue, than of diseases, death, or vice.

But this sort of fate, springing from the influence of any natural bodies, is not only repugnant to reason, but to our sense and experience; for nothing is more plain than this,

that any such influence cannot affect the mind, but through the body; and we frequently find our reason asserting its power and dominion against all the force of the body. Nor doth reason only, but, in every nation, law and custom triumph over the strongest inclinations of nature. Since, therefore, that necessity which our natural tempers impose upon the mind, is the utmost fate that we can imagine to proceed from the influence of natural bodies, it is nonsense to suppose that fate insuperable or uncontrollable, which we see baffled and defeated every day, and in every nation.

The sum of those reasons I have offered against fate, is this: If we make God the author of it, we impiously charge him with what is repugnant to his nature: for a good God cannot be the cause of man's sin and misery. If matter, we ridiculously suppose, that what is itself senseless and inanimate, should produce and govern a being endued with life, understanding, and liberty. If the stars, we run again into the same absurdities; for if they have their fatal influence from God, then, properly speaking, God is the author, they but the instruments, of our fate. If from themselves, then our dependance on, and worship of, God, is vain: and besides, we absurdly subject the reason and the liberty of the mind of man to the senseless tyranny of atoms. If from the consideration of the causes of fate, we descend to examine what our experience teaches us, what common sense informs us, each of them bears witness to the sovereignty and liberty of the mind of man.

If we should come, in the last place, to examine what would be the consequences of a fatal necessity overruling man and human affairs, they are such as are not only grossly contradictious in themselves, but fatal and destructive both to the public and private good of mankind. It is true, were the liberty of doing evil taken from man, we should have no reason to complain; for then there would be nothing wanting to make the state of man happy as that of angels, but immortality; but to bereave man of all

power to do good, to necessitate and compel him to be wicked, how dreadful are the effects which must follow this! He that stains his hands in the blood of his Sovereign or his parent, will accuse his stars, not himself; he that pollutes himself in the incestuous embraces of a mother or daughter, may defend his actions as his fate, not choice; and how readily shall we do all that rage or lust invites us to, when there is an excuse prepared for all we do? For he is no more blameable who commits the evil which he could not help, than he is worthy of praise who did the good which he could not forbear. Were it true, that whatever mischief man did, he were necessitated to do, we might with more justice arraign the stars and atoms than malefactors; and all the instruments of mischief would be every jot as guilty and criminal as the man that used them. Were this true, we might as properly betake ourselves to magic and enchantments, as to advices and exhortations, when we would reclaim the vicious; nor yet could the one be more effectual than the other; for what could alter what is unalterable? And for the same reason we might forbear our sacrifices and prayers, since what will be must be, and cannot be otherwise.

Desine fata deum flecti sperare precando.

You strive in vain with prayers to move
The inexorable fates above.

Repentance and tears then may be, what SENECA calls expiation,—*Egræ mentis solatia*, the deluding dreams of a superstitious mind, but could never procure any real advantage; so that on this supposition, what is now thought to be the only wisdom, would be then the only folly of a sinner,—repentance.

I think I may conclude here; for if it be not by this time evident, whether reason be for or against fate, we may justly despair of discovering what reason dictates in this or any other question. I will now proceed to examine,—

What plain text of Scripture speaks in this point. And

here in the first place we are to expect no other fate than what depends upon God: for the Scripture makes all things derive their original from him, and all things depend upon him. There is but one Creator, and one Lord, and therefore the creature can be subject to no laws but such as he enacts; so that whatever fate we now lie under, must be imputed to the voluntary decree of God. Is then the eternal ruin of man fatal and unavoidable? If we inquire into the original of this unhappy necessity, it must be ultimately resolved into the divine will: When God, then, decreed the inevitable ruin of man, under what notion did he consider his ruin? Under that of misery, or that of punishment? If under the notion of punishment, this implies plainly, that we may thank ourselves for our ruin. For punishment is nothing else but the infliction of that misery which our sin and folly have deserved. But if under the notion of misery, how can this consist with the infinite goodness or wisdom of God? Alas! how contradictory is this to Scripture? There God swears that "He delights not in the death of a sinner:" this decree would suppose him to delight in the death of the innocent. There he is represented, "full of compassion, and slow to wrath," even upon repeated provocations; this decree represents him so addicted to wrath and cruelty, that he made a world on purpose to have whereon to exercise it; and doth exercise it merely for the delight he takes in it. The Scripture finally represents him full of love for mankind, and not only not desirous that they should perish, but extremely desirous that they should be partakers of everlasting life: this decree supposes him so utter an enemy to, and hater of, mankind, that he made the far greater part to no other end, but only to make them miserable.

Let any unprejudiced person judge now, whether this be not as contradictory to the Scripture, as it is to sense; nor is it possible that any one, unless prejudiced, should look into Holy Writ, and not discern evidently that man's ruin is the effect of sin, not only wilfully and presump-

tuously committed, but also obstinately and impenitently persisted in; and that God is so far from being fond of our sufferings and calamities, that he is ever bewailing the disappointment of his love, the defeat of his grace and mercy, by our obstinacy and impenitence. It is the voice of his Son, it is the voice of God: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." If therefore we desire to know what the will of God is, with respect to man, this is a full and plain declaration of it; there can be no other, much less any contradictory to this. If I may not confidently rely upon this declaration of the divine will, there is no revealed truth that I can depend upon; nor can revelation stand us in any stead; for nothing can be asserted with greater perspicuity, or stronger asseveration. But I have no scruples in me about this matter; I have no fears nor jealousies of any secret decree, or latent will, repugnant to his declared one; I am as sure that God is good and true, as that he is eternal or almighty: and were he not, we could reap but very little comfort from all other of his attributes, how great or glorious soever.

But blessed be God, if from examining those declarations of his will, which God has made us, we proceed to examine the manner and method of his government, as it relates to mankind, (which is another, and the only way left us to judge of his will and decrees,) we shall find no instance in the whole series of divine dispensations, which can create in us the least suspicion of lying under an arbitrary and tyrannical fate: nay, if we consider the acts of divine providence, we shall find quite the contrary; that God so governs the world, that the issues of things are not fatal and unavoidable, but dependant upon ourselves; that God is free, man free, and the event of things free from any nevitable necessity: God indeed is ever bound to do what is best, what is wisest, and can do no otherwise;

this is the only fate that God is subject to: but a possibility of different events, is no way repugnant to his wisdom, justice, or goodness.

In a proper sense therefore, there is no fate above him, that can impose a necessity upon him; nor does he impose any upon himself. If there were in any part of his government, a fatal and a peremptory necessity, we should certainly find the tracts and footsteps of it amongst inanimate and sensitive beings: but how great a liberty does God make use of in this part of his government? The sun, whose course seems certain and invariable as the imaginary laws of fate, shall, if need be, stand stock still, or, what is more, move backward towards its east. An instance of both we read of in Scripture, when God thought fit to execute his judgments on the Amorites, and condescended to give Hezekiah a miraculous assurance of his mercy. The fire shall not exert its natural heat, but shall cease to burn and consume, and when he sees fit, (as in the case of the three children,) become as harmless as the morning light: the waters shall cease to flow, as did the Red Sea, when the army of Israel marched through it, and saw with horror and delight, the rolling waves stand fixed and unmoved as the rocks and shores that bounded them; and yet, what necessity, what fate can we conceive more immutable, whatever connexion of natural causes it be produced by, than that which makes the sun move, the fire burn, the water flow? If we consider his government of kingdoms, where, if any where, the periods and revolutions of misery and prosperity should seem fatal and immutable; here again, we shall find the footsteps of unquestionable liberty. Let us for instance consider God's government of the Jews; what are the laws which God obliges himself to observe towards them: "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments and do them; then will I give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase; and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit: And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and your vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the

full, and dwell in your land safely. But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; and if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that you will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant; I will even appoint you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart; and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it." (*Lev.* xxvi. 3—5, 14—16.) Doth not God here lay life and death, good and evil before them? Is not the one and the other to be the effect of their own choice, their own behaviour? Are we not reasonably to suppose the Israelites, at the time of their entering into that covenant, whereof these are the sanctions, as capable of happiness as they were of misery? What was finally the issue of things? The Jews revolted from God, and as he threatened they were harassed and exhausted by continual plagues and punishments.

Well, did this happen so, because it could not happen otherwise? Was this the event, the fatal event of things which God did really will, and immutably and peremptorily resolve from the beginning, notwithstanding whatever professions he might make of his sincere desire of the welfare and prosperity of that people? Let God himself be the Judge, who best understands his own mind: "O that my people had hearkened to me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned their hand against their adversaries: The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him, but their time should have endured for ever." By this, sure, if we can judge of the meaning of God by any of his expressions, we may safely conclude, not only that the obedience and prosperity of Israel were things possible, and consequently their disobedience and ruin were not fatal; but also that their obedience and prosperity were the things which God did most heartily and sincerely desire.

If we come to God's government of particular men, we may be sure that this is of a piece with his government of

mankind or kingdoms; it being nothing else but a more particular application of those universal laws of wisdom, goodness, and justice, by which he rules. An instance of liberty in temporal events we meet with in that voyage which St. Luke describes: (*Acts* xxvii. 10:) We have St. Paul fortelling the fate that was like to attend themselves and their ship, if they pursued the voyage they had resolved on: *ver.* 19, we meet with the accomplishment, in part, of his prediction; darkness and horror invades them, seas break in upon them, and at the same breach had death entered, had not divine Providence interposed in favour, and at the request of St. Paul. Was this their suffering fatal? Was it unavoidable? Had they not escaped the tempest, if they had believed St. Paul, and had not departed from Crete? Or was their obstinacy and unbelief as fatal as the danger and damage which attended it? The expostulation of St. Paul, *ver.* 21, will easily clear this doubt, "Ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, to have gained this harm and loss." What then, shall we think the issues of eternity fatal, when those of time, wherein we are comparatively so little concerned, are free? Shall God not only leave us the use of our reason, but also assist us by the aid of his providence for the avoiding temporal evils, and will he allow us neither for the avoiding of eternal ones? Must temporal ruin be the effect only of our sinful choice and obstinacy; eternal ruin the effect not of folly or sin, but fate? No surely. How often do we find God in the Revelation, respiting his final sentence, and giving men space and time to repent? But they repented not; and this was their obstinacy, not their fate: For if repentance had been impossible, to what purpose did God allow them time for it That they might fill up the measure of their iniquity. An excellent paraphrase! What shall I believe? God saith, He gave the sinner time to repent; thou sayest, he gave him time to sin. God says, he gave him time to make himself capable of mercy; thou sayest, He gave him time only to increase his guilt and punishment. How cruel are

the mercies of some men! This is just such a favour as griping usurers vouchsafe the careless debtor, whose fortune they would swallow up.

I have now, I hope, dispersed those clouds which seemed to hover over our heads, big with storm and ruin; I mean, those melancholy imaginations which terrify the superstitions minds of men. We may now boldly pursue, and possess ourselves of happiness: the way to it is open. There is no cruel deity, no spiteful fortune, no inexorable fate that will oppose us; there is no God but one of love and goodness, which moderates his almighty power, and tempers the severity of his justice; a God who compassionately desires our happiness, and delights in nothing more than in promoting it. All is lightsome and cheerful where he is; perfection and happiness dwell with him. "In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore." He scatters and dissipates evil and troubles by the light of his countenance. Death and hell fly far from before him, and hide themselves in their own darkness. What can we apprehend from such a God as this is? How can he delight in our misery, who is all love? No, nothing but our guilt or folly can raise our fears. We may rest secure of his favour, if we do not despise it; nor can he ever be made our enemy, unless we first become the enemies of virtue and goodness: What then have we to fear?

There is no fate but the immutable law of God, that universal law, which adjudges happiness to the righteous, and misery to the wicked: These is no fortune but his providence, which is nothing but the execution of that one general law, and the application of its several parts, in particular instances: It is plain therefore, we have nothing now to fear but ourselves: if we be but true to our own reason, and faithful to our interest, we may confidently presume, both of the assistance and reward of Heaven; there is therefore nothing left now to excuse us from the guilt of our own ruin, but only that which is wont to be objected by such as are enslaved to some impious lust, and

groan under the weight of those chains which they made themselves; I mean, an incapacity of happiness; which is the fourth objection against the possibility of attaining happiness, and is now to be considered.

CHAPTER VI.

Of Incapacity.

THEY who urge their incapacity as an objection against the possibility of attaining happiness, suppose happiness to consist in virtue, in the pleasure that flows from it, and the bliss that will eternally reward it. They acknowledge, could they but be virtuous, they should be happy; but they despair of obtaining such a conquest over their vices, as may suffice to render their life smooth, equal, and steady: and preserve the peace of their conscience; without which it is impossible that they should be filled with rational joy and peace, or abound in a rational hope.

There may be three kinds of incapacities, which for distinction sake, I call natural, moral, and penal. Penal incapacity is that desperate state wherein man is by GOD immutably rejected both from pardon and assistance. Moral incapacity results from the absoluteness of that dominion which sin has established over men, through a long course of wickedness. Natural incapacity consists in such an unteachable stupidity of temper, or in such violent and invincible inclinations to vice, or in such a slightness, levity, and inconstancy of mind, as render men utterly unfit to receive any lasting impressions of virtue.

I begin with this first; and here I desire to be excused if I do not take upon me to mark out the distinct bounds of nature and grace; these two sisters are not like those Chaldee brethren, ABRAHAM and LOT, that were too mighty to dwell together. No; they delight to mix in

loving embraces; their wealth and power increase by being united; I shall not dispute what power in man is a birthright, what a donative; for, alas! every thing he possesses is a grace, a favour of his Prince: His natural abilities are so many graces he derives from God, and as properly such, as any accession to them which is inspired afterwards: so that whenever I contend that any thing is in the power of man, I desire to be understood of all that power which God has invested him with, whether natural or supernatural.

Did men vilify nature, to beget in themselves the more profound humility, and the more wakeful and solicitous industry; did they magnify divine grace, in order to inflame their importunity and industry in quest of it; this were piety and devotion, not error: or however they might exaggerate the impotence of nature beyond strict truth, yet this would be a safe and pious error, as all humble and modest ones are: but when they endeavour to represent nature vile and corrupt, on purpose that they may the more licentiously pollute and abuse it, when they magnify and exalt divine grace out of a preposterous design to justify their neglect and contempt of it, it is not only an error, but a pernicious and fatal one; for he that abandons the use of his reason, renders himself incapable of a heavenly aid: God gives his grace to men, not beasts; I must therefore oppose this fancy, and endeavour to persuade men, that it is in their power to be virtuous and happy: nor can I think this assertion any ways injurious to the honour or goodness of God, if it be remembered, that whatever power I attribute to man, I acknowledge derived from God. I will therefore proceed, and try whether I cannot demolish this fort which stops our way to happiness.

They who affirm a great part of mankind incapable of virtue, forget that they dishonour God whilst they reproach their nature: for were it so, to what end could we imagine such men endued with reason and understanding? Not to worship, but defy their Maker. And was it

for this end that they were made immortal too? Had God made man only to take his pastime in the world, like the Leviathan in the waves, such a soul as that which moves the fish of the sea, or the beasts of the earth, had been most proper for this end: Then might he have enjoyed himself without reluctancy, without controul, without remorse, without shame. What can be the proper work of a rational creature, to which you allow not a capacity of virtue and religion? Until you can show me this, I can never believe that God should endue man with a rational and immortal mind, out of any other design than such a one as might become such a being created after his own image, which is the practice of holiness and virtue. This also, methinks, ought well to be weighed by all who assert man's impotence and incapacity of virtue; they disparage the Gospel, and reproach grace, as well as man with impotence and insufficiency; and yet both the one and the other is the power of God, and that in order to salvation. Do you consider, that if you suppose man by nature unable to do any thing that is good, and then utterly debar him from God's grace, you introduce fate; for what more fatal necesssity can a wretched creature lie under than natural impotence, utterly destitute of divine assistance? Or if you bereave grace of its sufficiency, do you not understand that the fatal necessity continues still the same? There is no change in the man's condition; only in this hypothesis, grace is dishonoured and reproached as well as nature. And this reflects very rudely too upon God; it calls the wisdom, the goodness, the sincerity, the power of God into dispute: it is inconsistent with the power of God, not to be able by his Spirit and truth to subdue and overpower the corruptions of nature; it is inconsistent with goodness, not to be willing to aid his poor creatures when they call upon him; inconsistent with his sincerity to afford them such aid as must tend to their greater mischief, not good; as grace itself would, if it were only sufficient to increase their guilt, but not to subdue their sin: This were indeed

"when a child asked bread to give him a stone, and when he asked fish to give him a scorpion." It is, lastly, as inconsistent with the wisdom of God to confer grace to no purpose, as it was with his goodness to confer it to an ill one.

These, with many others, are the absurd consequences which attend the denial of the universality, or sufficiency of grace; but if, on the other hand, we grant that God is ready to assist every man who calls on him in his endeavours after virtue and happiness, and that his assistance is sufficient to the end for which it is designed; then we must needs acknowledge that it is in every man's power to be good and happy: for it is no more than to acknowledge that man can do what he can do; or, which is all one, what God has put in his power to do.

By what a crowd of arguments might I confirm this truth? Why are not men good? Why are they not happy? Shall we say that God doth not vouchsafe them his grace? Shall we impute men's misery to God? Shall we charge that glorious and most perfect Being with want of compassion or sincerity towards his poor creatures? How easy will it be for him to appeal to the sufferings of his Son; to the vigorous attempts and endeavours of his Spirit; to heaven and earth, stamped with the impress of his power and goodness, on purpose to teach, invite, and almost compel us to worship and obey him; to the various methods of his providence contriving and pursuing our happiness? How easily, lastly, may he appeal for his purgation to our own consciences? And these will tell us, as they ever do, in the distresses of our fortune, and the approaches of danger and death, to what we are to impute the cause of our ruin.

Thus I think, I have in general given a satisfactory answer to as many as plead natural incapacity against the possibility of being happy; however, that no discouragement, no scruple may remain, I will give a particular, though brief answer to each part of this objection.

There are three things supposed by it to render man

naturally incapable of virtue and happiness. *First*, Violent and invincible inclinations to vice. Against this, as the most considerable part of the objection, the whole force of the precedent discourse was levelled, and therefore this needs no farther answer, only here it will be worth our remarking, That those differences that are in the nature and temper of men, are not essential, but accidental; and, consequently, they may make the way to happiness more difficult to some than others, but impossible to none. The strongest inclination to virtue, (I speak of that which is the result of natural temper,) seems to me but a weaker inclination to vice; every man has naturally a propension to pleasure, and, consequently, the sensitive part of us to sensitive pleasure.

This tendency of the sensitive part is natural to all; but in some it is more, in some less, violent: unless we may say upon one ground, it is equal in all; for the difference of tempers discovers itself rather in the different kinds of pleasure we pursue, than in the different degrees of our inclination to it: we are all equally allured, yet not by the same, but several objects, so that if lust prevail in one, ambition as much prevails in another, and covetousness in a third; and in others, intemperance, or sloth: so that the difficulty of virtue seems much the same to all the sons of ADAM, the strength of temptation consisting especially in our weakness, not in the excellency of the object we are taken with, but in our inclination to it: hence is it as difficult for one man to overcome his covetousness, as to another to overcome his lust; and restless ambition is as taking with some tempers, as lazy and delicious luxury with others. If this were well weighed, it would make us more mild and gentle in our censure of others, and not so soft and easy in excusing ourselves. It is further worth our observing, that every man's virtue derives some tincture from his constitution and temper, so that, generally speaking, it is not difficult to guess a man's natural constitution by the complexion of his religion: however, virtue ceases not to be virtue; nor will that slight allay of the natural constitution

extinguish its vigour, though it behoves every man to keep a strict and jealous guard upon his inclinations; (for nature soon revives even after it has been for some time buried ;) and to labour most after that perfection, which does most contradict the particular vice of his constitution ; for it will be otherwise morally impossible to gain a conquest over it, and as impossible to gain a rational peace and security without this conquest.

A second thing, which is supposed in the objection to incapacitate man for happiness, is an unteachable stupidity, consisting in a slow conception and treacherous memory: it is true, indeed, the heathen philosophers did require in their scholars, the knowledge of many difficult matters, as antecedently necessary to virtue and happiness. All of them did, with one consent, require three things to complete a virtuous and happy man: Nature, education or instruction, and custom. To the first, they attributed the disposition to virtue; to the second, the beginning ; to the third, the easiness and constancy; and to all three together, the perfection of it. And hence it is, that they did distinguish between perfect and imperfect, social and philosophical virtue, and did not deem every nature capable of that virtue which was perfect and philosophical: but our blessed Lord and Master, the author of the Christian Philosophy, requires no such qualifications in those who will be his disciples; all that he requires is, a humble and an honest mind, freed from proud prejudices, possessed with a sincere love of the truth, and a sincere resolution of obeying it ; accordingly, St. Paul observes, that such were most wrought upon by the preaching of the Gospel: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty: and base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen." Nor will any one imagine, that acute and eminent parts are necessary to render a man

capable of being a Christian, who shall consider the brevity and plainness of the christian faith and law. Doth it require a deep and penetrating judgment, or a firm and tenacious memory, to enable us to understand or remember that plain and short summary of christian practice? "The grace of God teacheth us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present world:" or, that as brief and perspicuous abridgment of the Christian faith? "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent:" or, that excellent abridgment of both by St. Paul? "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." What stupidity of nature can render it an impossible task to us to comprehend the two fundamental reasons of evangelical righteousness; namely, the subserviency of it to the happiness of this, and of another life, and the holiness of the God we worship? I do not write this, as if I meant to represent industry in search of divine truths, as superfluous and unnecessary; but to assure all, of how mean capacities soever, of the success of it. Our duty is plain, and the path of duty is the most direct and compendious, one to the happiness of this life, and of another: for nothing is so taking with God, as a humble faith, devout, pure, peaceable, and charitable religion. As to worldly happiness, I know that a man's own virtue, supported by God's Spirit, and guided by his truth, is the safest and the plainest guide he can follow in dark and tempestuous times; true policy consists not in that address or subtlety of spirit, which furnishes a man at all times with plausible shifts, but in that integrity and virtue that need none: this is that which will make us acceptable to all, and dear to the wise and good; slights, and tricks, and arts, may divert and entertain, but virtues charm and captivate: those may open us the way to men's houses and tables, but these to their bosoms, to their hearts. The sum of all is, great endowments of nature seem necessary for the attainment of unnecessary accomplishments; common en-

dowments are sufficient to make us capable of virtue and happiness.

A third thing, wherein the objection supposes natural incapacity to consist, is such a slightness, levity, and inconstancy of temper, as seems to render men neither fit for any close application, nor susceptible of any deep and lasting impression: it cannot be denied but that some are of such an airy, volatile, and various temper, that they seem to be designed for nothing serious, nothing great, as if they were the sport, not the work, of nature: but I have always observed, that nature makes up defects of one kind, by advantages of another: thus it happens here. Those constitutions which most want strength, most partake of softness and tenderness; so that they are as much more apt to receive impressions, as they are more unapt to retain them than others; like yielding air, which the gentlest stroke doth as easily divide, as it doth easily unite itself again. Now, if this be so, then the disadvantage of this temper is not so great as it is fancied, for though their passions last not long, they are easily raised; and, consequently, if our addresses to such a temper be but a little more frequently repeated, they cannot but prove successful, and such persons, by the frequent returns of holy passions, will grow habitually devout, and their devotion will be as steady, and more elevated, than that of a slower and firmer constitution: but after all, wherever there appears an exuberancy of this humour, this is to be imputed rather to their fortune than to their nature; a wanton fortune, and too indulgent an education, is generally attended with a gay, wanton, and unfixed mind. And it is true, that it is a difficult matter for such minds as these, to attain to wisdom and virtue; but it is not because they cannot consider, but because they will not; let but such exchange their haunts of pleasure, for the house of mourning; let them but intermix the conversation of the wise and serious, with that of the giddy, fanciful, and frolicsome, and they will soon find their humour much corrected, and their minds better fixed: to

all this, if they could be persuaded to add the contemplation of a suffering SAVIOUR, of a holy GOD, and a judgment to come; and to this, the devotion of the closet, made up of serious reflections on these subjects, and their own eternity; this would soon reduce their loose and scattered desires; it would soon recall the roving, wandering mind, and make it delight to dwell at home, in the company of wise, devout, and important thoughts.

And now, I think, I have left no part of this objection, founded upon natural incapacity, unconsidered. Do men complain of their heaviness and stupidity? Acute parts, and a tenacious memory, are not necessary to make us virtuous or happy. Do they complain of their violent inclinations to sin? Reason, custom, faith, curb the most natural, or the most outrageous and ungovernable, appetites of man. Do they complain of the levity and inconstancy of their temper? Let them retire from the flatteries and caresses of a wanton fortune, and a wanton conversation; let them acquaint themselves with the wise or the afflicted, with divine truths and their closets, and this will soon work a happy change upon them: if they are too soft and delicate for the bitterness and severity of these prescriptions, nothing but the much severer discipline of afflictions and judgments, can effect this cure.

Under this head of natural incapacity, that other objection from moral incapacity, has been sufficiently answered; for custom is at most but a second nature. That expression of the Prophet, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also learn to do good, who are accustomed to do evil;" is but a pathetic exaggeration (which is usual in a prophetic style) of the difficulty, not an assertion of the impossibility, of an habitual sinner's change: what has been done, and daily is done, can be done; and it is in vain to prove what no man can deny. ST. PAUL, when he had recited a catalogue of such sinners as should not enter into the kingdom of GOD, afterwards adds, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the

name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our GOD." And TERTULLIAN appeals to the power and efficacy of the Christian Religion, visible in the extirpation of vicious habits, as a proof of its divine original; nor are such instances as these wanting at this day. These, as they do now refute all the idle excuses of sinners, so will they one day be urged in judgment against them, to convince them that they owe their ruin to their sloth and obstinacy, not their impotence.

Whoever shall now reflect upon all that has been said, will easily be able to conclude, that we have no enemy without us, none within us, that can necessitate us to be miserable: misery may be our choice, or punishment; it can never be our fate: our natural corruption may invite and incline us, but can never force and compel us to be wicked: for there is no temptation, no inclination, which GOD's grace and our industry are not able to resist and overcome; so that now there remains no other incapacity of happiness than what is penal, which is the next thing to be spoken to.

Penal incapacity consists in GOD's final and immutable rejection of man from grace and pardon. On this, all that is necessary to be observed here, is, *First*, That this state of final rejection from grace and pardon, is penal; a state to which nothing but men's voluntary transgressions can betray them; and those too, transgressions of the deepest guilt, and most crying aggravations; for surely, nothing less can provoke a GOD, "who delights to exercise loving-kindness and mercy," a GOD of infinite long-suffering and patience, to pass a sentence of eternal ruin and damnation upon any of his creatures. *Secondly*, That no mistaken fancies of the unpardonableness of our state may tempt us desperately to renounce GOD, our SAVIOUR, and virtue; it behoves us to consider what ought to be the proper influence of this persuasion, that there is such a penal state on this side the grave.

First, If they who believe such a state will act consonant to their own opinion, they must not allow themselves

in a course of wilful sin, lest they be insensibly betrayed into that dreadful state.

Secondly, Since impenitence and hardness of heart is an inseparable consequence of that dreadful sentence which excludes men from grace and pardon; no man can rationally conclude himself in this state, till he has made all possible attempts to recover himself from his sin, and that without success: and because,—

Lastly, No man can conclude his endeavour unsuccessful, till death surprise him in an impenitent state; for habitual sinners have become eminent saints, and lapsed Christians, nay, apostates, have not only recovered their former state, but redeemed their crimes by more than ordinary degrees of repentance, devotion, and charity. Therefore, no man must give over his attempts of subduing his corruptions, while God continues him in the land of the living: these rules, if observed, will, I question not, render the persuasion of such a penal state, as the objection supposes, very profitable and useful to some, and not pernicious to the eternal interest of any.

Having thus cleared my assertion, That happiness is attained here, from such objections as seem to derive any countenance from reason; there remain but two more that I can think of; the one whereof presses hard upon me, under a pretended authority of revelation; the other urges the experience of mankind. I will begin with the former, and consider with what aspect revelation regards the happiness of this present life, and whether there be any thing in it that forbids the hopes, or obstructs the attainment, of it.

CHAPTER VII.

Religion is no Enemy to our present Happiness.

If men were not very ingenious in framing excuses of their folly, and in the contrivance and pursuit of ruin, it would seem very strange, that the Gospel, which was designed to be the great instrument of our happiness, should be alleged to discourage and damp our endeavours after it; that the Gospel, whose great end is to fill our minds with joy, peace, and hope, should be traduced as an enemy to our pleasure; but so it is, and therefore, resolving to leave no obstacle unremoved, I will examine this fancy. Religion ever had, and always must have, the character of its Author visibly stamped upon it: nothing that is not infinitely kind, and infinitely wise, can be found in any part of revelation truly divine; from whence we may rationally conclude, that the great aim of God in establishing religion, is to advance the happiness of man; and to advance it in a method consonant to those natural principles he has implanted in him: nor did any one inspired author ever think otherwise: "He that keepeth the law," saith Solomon, "happy is he." "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them: happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding." That this was to be understood of present happiness, is apparent from what follows: "Length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those that lay hold upon her." And though the Gospel, as a higher and more perfect dispensation, doth propose to us as our great end, life and immortality, yet it doth by no means exclude us from happiness here; but rather establishes it upon proper and firm foundations. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be

afraid. Now the fruit of the SPIRIT is joy, peace. Now the GOD of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing, and make you abound in hope through the power of the HOLY GHOST. Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Nor can I, indeed, conceive how the state of a righteous and holy soul should be other than a happy one: The confident expectation of heaven, must needs be more transporting, than the richest fancy of a sinner, and that security both in respect of this, and a future life, which a good man enjoys in the protection of GOD, and the assurance of his favour, must infinitely exceed any thing that a sinner can attain to, and must exclude those uneasy fears which frequently interrupt the sinner's enjoyment, and overcast his hopes: he that loves GOD and virtue, cannot but be happy in the daily practice and enjoyment of what he most delights in: and he, lastly, that hath subdued his passions, and overcome the world, cannot but reap the daily fruits of so glorious a conquest, and be constantly entertained with pleasing reflections, and delightful prospects; and yet, if he should enjoy nothing else, that liberty, magnanimity, divine charity, and enlargement of soul, which he thereby gains, were an abundant reward of this victory. The sum of all is this: A good man has the best title to the blessings of this life, and the glories of another: he enjoys this world with as great security, as wisdom and moderation, and has an assured hope of a far better when he quits this; the anticipations of which, by faith, love, and hope, do at once facilitate and confirm his conquest over all unworthy lusts, and entertain him with inexpressible satisfaction and pleasure.

But what becomes now of the doctrine of the cross? This is a very soft and mild commentary upon that of our SAVIOUR: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." This is not so formidable an objection, as it must at first sight seem; for doubtless, the pleasures even of confessors and martyrs did far outweigh their sufferings whilst they lived;

and when they suffered death itself, the time was come to exchange temporal for eternal happiness. I think, then, the death of martyrs and confessors is rather a great confirmation than confutation of this opinion: teaching us plainly, that in despite of all calamities, it is not only possible to live, but to die, happily. From this little I have said on this occasion, it is easy to shape an answer to what is objected from St. Paul: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." It is indisputably true, that had these Christians been destitute of that hope which was their support, they had sunk under the weight of such sufferings, and so had been most miserable of all men: but since their hopes did not only support them under their afflictions, but also render them more than conquerors; all that can follow hence is, that the resurrection and eternal life are unquestionable truths, and that he who believes them as firmly as the confessors and martyrs did, may, like them, be happy, though a thousand seas of calamities and troubles should break in upon him.

As to mortification, which is a duty of perpetual obligation, (for the purity of religion is still the same,) this did at first signify the renunciation and extirpation of Jewish and Pagan lusts, according to that of St. Paul, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry;" it still signifies the same thing, and whatever difficulty we are to encounter in the performance of this duty, it must be vanquished, for it is impossible to be wicked and happy: a wicked man is his own hell, and every passion, every lust, is a fiend, a fury, that doth outrage and torment him; and all this, the Heathens themselves did not only constantly acknowledge, but also paint out with as lively eloquence as any Christian could ever do: their experience (over whom sin had an uncontrolled dominion) most effectually convincing them of the outrages, tyranny, and unspeakable mischiefs of wicked and abominable passion; nay, so manifest is it,

that the subduing these irregular passions is necessary to our happiness, that even the Epicureans themselves (notwithstanding their confining the happiness of man to this short life) did yet look upon themselves as extremely injured by TULLY, and others, when they represented themselves as revolted from, and enemies to, virtue. It is not my business here to examine what foundation for virtue their philosophy could leave; it is enough that they could not but acknowledge it as necessary to happiness.

To come to a conclusion: The Scripture is so far from denying, that it affirms the possibility of attaining happiness; nor are the sufferings of confessors and martyrs, or the doctrine of mortification, inconsistent with the true happiness of man: that affliction is not, the example of those very martyrs and confessors triumphing over it does sufficiently evince; that mortification is not, is unanimously confessed, even by such as were entirely devoted to the pleasures of this life. I have now spoken to all those objections which oppose the possibility of attaining happiness, with any show of reason, or pretence of divine authority: it is now high time I should proceed to answer those who oppose not reasons, but observation and experience.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of Matters of Fact or Experience.

AFTER all the pains I have taken to show that the search after happiness is a rational undertaking; to demonstrate the possibility of attaining it, and to disperse all objections to the contrary, there remains still one objection, which, if true, were sufficient to discourage the endeavours of the most virtuous. Which is this:—

It is true, happiness may be found in speculation, but

rarely, if ever, in possession: the number of the happy is extremely small; and most men, if not all, when they have worn life to its last period, may give that account of it which the aged Patriarch did to PHARAOH: "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been."

Happiness! What is it? Or where is it? In what distant coasts or unknown regions does it dwell? Who and where are the darlings of Heaven, to whose lot it happens? Shall we, like BAJAZET, think poor, silly, lazy peasants, happy? O happy shepherd, who hadst neither Sebastia nor Orthobales to lose: as if secure beggary, and slothful want, were happiness: happy thus might I call the man born blind; he has no eyes to lose.

Or shall we call the gaudy swarm which (like flies and insects in gleams of sunshine) buzz and flutter in the rays and warmth of prosperity? Shall we call these happy? Ah! these are they which furnish theatres and poets with tragic stories: amongst these, restless passions, contemptible levity, ungovernable insolence, withered and meagre envy, wandering lust, empty pride, loud and senseless confidence, and, finally, shameful and fearful sins, have their abode: and can we call those happy who are infested with such legions of evils? They are their own burden, whilst they are others' envy.

Shall we, then, call the busy, trading world, happy? These would have thought it a happiness not to have needed to trade or toil; they love wealth, but most admire

Res non parta labore sed relicta.

Not gold they labouring dig themselves in mines,
But what the toiling ancestor resigns
To his more happy issue.

If this be so, one would think I might boldly present you with the envied glory of mighty Princes, as an unquestionable instance of happiness: but, alas, the wisest of the heathen gods preferred the happiness of AGLAUS, before that of GYGES! and the wisest of men (in his times

at least) preferred the happiness of TELLUS, before that of CRŒSUS! And this sentence seems not only to deny those particular Princes happy, but also to pronounce the very state of royalty incapable of happiness; indeed this state, when active and glorious, is full of fears, and cares, and hazards; when sluggish and inactive, full of shame. What can be the happiness of a state too big for friendship or for pleasure? For love is the business and enjoyment of equals; obedience is all subjects can offer, or monarchs receive: all higher and nearer approaches to the throne, are but intrusions of ambition and design; nor can I possibly discern what satisfaction the great mortal can take in any expressions of duty or affection, which he can never distinguish from the fawning and flattery of those who in their hearts despise and hate him: how shall he know that any truly love him, when none dare slight him? Or how shall he discern who serves him out of duty, where every man even obtrudes himself upon his commands out of interest? In a word, the passions of a Prince are so much greater than other men's, as is his mind and fortune; his conversation is not with the minds of men, but with faces, or rather masks and disguises. And as to his pleasures, his gust of them is very flat, being cloyed and surfeited by his affluence. And whereas all other men, as the ambitious, the vain-glorious, the covetous, the lover, seem to rise above themselves in the acquisitions of those pleasures they aspire to; the monarch debases himself, descends and stoops below his fortune to meet his. And yet I am not of APOLLO's nor SOLON's mind; I cannot think there is any great happiness in the ignorance and the quietness of a labouring cottager.

I would have my tranquillity spring not from the ignorance, but reason, of my mind; from the right government of my passions, not from the meanness of my education or fortune. For the same reason I do not call men happy, whose slow and easy temper, like the waters of the Dead Sea, is not to be moved even by wind or storm; I do not call stupidity a calm; the soul that is insensible of trouble,

is so of joy too: whoever is incapable of any deep impression, is so of any serious reflection: and what is the state of such a man? I would not have my life pass by like a dream, whilst fleeting or imperfect images of things do scarce awake, and too slightly affect, my drowsy or dazzled sense.

Whom then shall we call happy? Surely if any, the knowing and learned: these are the souls that converse with heaven, that dwell continually in the pure light, and feed upon the bread, the joys of angels. But, alas! if happiness were the inseparable companion of learning, how came the adored CATO to be led by pride, and humour, and vain glory, through burning sands and dreadful deserts? How came he, in a mood of desperate discontent, to die his own murderer? Whence was it that the learned and eloquent TULLY, after so many brave discourses of the contempt of death and pain, and briefly, all human evils, did sink so poorly under the weight of his misfortunes? If learning did put men in possession of happiness, why was our VERULAM so utterly a stranger to happiness in both fortunes, as unable to govern and enjoy prosperity aright, as to bear up under adversity? If learning were so sovereign an antidote against misery, if philosophy were such a paradise, why do the learned leave their sacred shades to haunt the houses of great ones, or the courts of Princes? Why do they fawn and cringe, and with all imaginable assiduity labour to insinuate themselves into such men whose esteem for them is a just scandal to them, and their favours but so many public marks of reproach? O vilest servitude! And yet after all, even this equals not the baseness, the slavery of those who prostitute themselves to the multitude, and make an ignorant and insolent herd, the arbitrary sovereigns of their principles, their liberty, their happiness, for this depends upon their popularity. O how far should I prefer the independent drudgery of an honest mind, before this unmanly servitude!

The men then whom I call happy, are such as are possessed of true and solid goods, and those such as Fortune cannot give nor take away: such were CHRIST

and his Apostles, and such are all those at this day as are transformed into the glory and image of the divine nature, by the energy of the divine Spirit, and divine truths. Let us consider, therefore, what the state of CHRIST and his Apostles was in this life: I will not take notice of those ecstatic pleasures, which they felt when they did those godlike works which we call miracles. What triumph could be equal to theirs, who saw diseases, devils, and death, subject to their commands? What joy could be equal to theirs, when they gave life to the dead, sight to the blind, and strength to the lame? To what a height were wonder and delight raised in each of these performances? For nothing could be more wonderful than the power, or delightful than the charity, conspicuous in them: but this I pass over, because this power is not to be attained by us: let us come to that which is, I mean, the virtues of CHRIST and his Apostles: "He had not a place to lay his head:" it is true; but how truly great was he in himself? How much above the mean and unmanly desires of ambition, covetousness, or lust? He indulged himself in no sensual pleasures, it is true; but how calm that soul, which no angry or envious passion disturbed, where nothing but sacred love dwelled? The love of GOD, the love of man, and the rational and wise love of himself? How happy that soul which was illuminated with divine knowledge, supported by an unshaken faith, filled with joyful reflections and glorious hopes? That soul which in the silence of the night, and the retirements of the mount, did pour forth itself in prayers and hallelujahs; that soul which, full of GOD and full of heaven, had no room for uneasy cares? It is true, our SAVIOUR met death with pale looks and pangs of soul; but it is as true, that his faith surmounted his fears; his agony endured but for a little while; an undisturbed peace, and a settled serenity of mind, followed it, and his trouble and pain in death, like the eclipse that attended, did but overcast the light within, not extinguish it. Who could finish the last act of life with more humble majesty, or with more settled

peace? In the life and death of our dear LORD, we behold that of his disciples, for they were all followers of him, as they desired we should be of them: what can be happier than their state here was? Their life was regular, their joy steady and rational, their love of GOD vigorous, their charity to man fervent and diffused; their desires, as to the world, modest; their minds resolved and brave in afflictions, cheerful and composed in death itself.

Let it stand then as an unshaken truth, that happiness may be attained in this life: for what the followers of our LORD attained to, that may we; their natural passions and infirmities were the same with ours; our trials and temptations are less than theirs; we serve the same GOD, we are guided by the same truths, supported by the same power, elevated by the same hopes; we have the same peace bequeathed us, the same Spirit, the same heaven promised us, and we march under the conduct of the same "Captain of our salvation," who "by his death has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light."

To look back now upon this whole section, and sum up the substance of it: GOD who made us, made us on purpose to be happy: for what other design could infinite Love propose to itself in our creation? And proposing to himself this end, he endued us with faculties and capacities that might fit us for the contemplation and enjoyment of himself and his works. The world provided by him for our entertainment, he filled with all things that could minister either to our necessities or delight: here GOD has planted us, not as inhabitants, but sojourners; for this is but our state of probation. Angels had their times of trial; so have men: here he would have us aspire after that life angels lead in heaven; for we are one day to be equal to them: here he would have us learn and practise those virtues which fit us for the society and enjoyment of that kingdom, wherein dwells righteousness; for the consummation of all our endeavours, desires, and hopes: but when we make heaven the abode, the seat of perfect happiness,

we do not thereby suppose that it is banished from earth; rather, on the contrary, if that state be the consummation of all things, it is necessary to be concluded, that every step we advance nearer to it, we mount and ascend higher, into brighter, calmer, and purer regions: heaven is like a glorious building, whose access is full of delight and beauty; for as that youth which precedes our manhood has its sweetness, its beauty, its natural perfection and pleasure; so has this mortal state which precedes our angelical, its proper degree of perfection and blessedness: and this is no small one neither. When our mind, filled with divine charity, becomes free, generous, resolved, constant, cheerful, meek, gentle, devout, heavenly; when it has so familiarly acquainted itself with heaven, that the sins and pleasures of the sensual part of the world, look like the manners and entertainments, not only of a foreign but barbarous country; and when, lastly, by its frequent retirements from the body, and daily commerce with rational and spiritual pleasures, it not only asserts its sovereignty over it, but begins to live so independent of it, that at the last when it shall in death mount up upon the wings of pure flame to heaven, it shall not suffer as if the body needed to be torn from it, but shall let it fall, as ELIJAH did his mantle. Those complaints, therefore, which we make against our present state, and those reproaches with which we vilify our nature, are false and unjust, for we are by GOD created and designed for happiness; and this happiness, GOD hath been pleased to put in our own power, to place within our reach: we lie under no necessity, no fatality, but what our own vices betray us to; nor do we stand in need of the indulgences of Fortune; the tranquillity and pleasure of a virtuous man is an image of GOD's own; it springs from within, not from without. It is true, there are difficulties which obstruct our progress to happiness; but they are such as all wise and good men have conquered: it is true, nature labours under its infirmities, that is, sensual propensions and inclinations; but it is strengthened and

supported by reason, by revelation, by grace: we may fall, it is true, a sacrifice to God's wrath, but it must be after we have lived long in contempt of his mercy, and obstinate defiance of his grace. Methinks these considerations should raise and exalt the mind of man; they should inspire us with desires and hopes worthy of rational and immortal souls; like the Israelites when they marched out of Egypt, we should dream of nothing but triumph, glory, and happiness.

SECTION III.

THE CAUSES AND REMEDIES OF MAN'S UNSUCCESSFULNESS IN HIS PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

CHAPTER I.

The general Cause of Ill Success. Deviation from Reason, the general Cause of Man's Ill Success. The Effects of which are, 1. *The Proposal of false Ends;* 2. *Coldness in Pursuit of our true Ends.*

But if this be true, that happiness is attainable; and if it be as true, as certainly it is, that there needs no eloquence to enkindle in any man the desires of happiness, or to spur him on to endeavour its attainment, all mankind being carried on towards it by natural, and therefore constant and passionate inclinations; will it not be natural to demand, whence is it that so few are happy? Whence is it that misery and trouble, affliction and sorrow, fill almost every place, and every bosom? Not only no kingdom or city, but no town, no village, no family, being exempt and free; no place or person is privileged against grief and trouble; it invades the tribunal of judges, the thrones

of Princes, and what is almost as sacred as either, the retirements and closets of the devout and learned; nay, scarcely is the church and the altar a secure sanctuary against it.

This will not be difficult to comprehend, if we soberly consider the true causes of man's misery. I shall discourse of them here only generally and briefly, as the nature of an introduction requires.

Many are the particular causes of human misery, but they may all be reduced to this universal and immediate one, namely, That we do not live conformably to our reason.

Quid enim ratione timemus aut cupimus?

When do our affections spring from, or when are they governed by reason? When are our desires or fears, our joys or sorrows, wise, and just, and holy? How frequently are our actions nothing else but the brutish and blind sallies of foolish passions, and our lives nothing else but the wanderings and rambles of deluded imaginations! How commonly do we act what we ourselves condemn? And how commonly doth the whole course of our lives displease ourselves as much as others; and yet we live on in contradiction to our reason, and sometimes to our inclinations too. But in nothing does our deviation from reason more evidently appear than in two things:—

First, In proposing to ourselves false and irrational ends of life. And, *Secondly*, In our insincerity in pursuing the true and rational one; that is, happiness. As to the first, who sees not how the life of man is perverted; the tendency of nature crooked and bowed to designs utterly unsuitable to the capacities and faculties of a rational mind, and to the great end of our creation? Who can look into the life of man, and not easily conclude that his chief aim is wealth and greatness, not happiness? Or, which is something sillier, that his design is some unnecessary accomplishment, not virtue and goodness; or a vain esteem and popular applause, not the peace and wisdom

of his mind? Who sees not how greedily men pursue those sensual satisfactions which naturally tend to enslave the soul, and to extinguish the rational pleasure and vigour of our minds? In a word, wealth, and honour, and power, and pleasure, are the idols of mankind; these are the things for which they live, for which they love and value life; these are the glorious possessions which inflame our industry; these are the things which the unfortunate man envies, and the fortunate honours; these are the things which distinguish mankind into their several ranks and degrees: the contempt or esteem of the world being ever proportioned to the degrees of wealth and power of which they fancy others possessed. To these noble ends the sage and experienced parent trains up his young ones, instilling daily into them all the maxims of covetousness and ambition, and judging of their proficiency and hopefulness by the progress they make towards these ends; that is, the more enslaved they are, the more hopeful, the more promising is their youth.

Nor are men more zealous in pursuing the false, than cold and insincere in pursuing the true, ends of life,—virtue and happiness. This is too evident to any one who shall consider how fond we are of our diseases and errors; how impatient of that instruction or reproof which tends to cure, undeceive, and disabuse us; how sluggish we are in the study of important truths; how listless and remiss in the use of those means which conduce to virtue, to the freeing our minds, and to the confirming our resolutions; and therefore, lastly, how light, wavering, and unconstant we are in the practice of those things which right reason convinces us to be our duty.

CHAPTER II.

The particular and immediate Cause of ill Success.

ALL that I have said in the former Chapter is plain and evident; we see, and feel it, and bemoan it, but yet we live on in the same manner still. Whence, therefore, is this infatuation of our understanding that enslaves us to false and irrational ends? Whence is that impotence of mind? whence is that insincerity that deludes our desires, and produces nothing but feeble and unsuccessful endeavours? Neither is this a difficult matter to discover. That we live and act irrationally, proceeds evidently from three causes:—1. The frame of our nature. 2. A vicious education. 3. Vicious conversation.

1. The first source of irrational desires and actions is, the composition of our nature. Our sensual and brutish appetites have their foundation in our natural constitution, as well as our rational affections; hence is it that there is in man a doubtful fluctuation and indetermination to different objects, the reason of the mind, and the appetite of the body, distracting and dividing him by their different proposals; the impressions of sense and representations of reason successively awakening in him very different desires. Whereas angels by the perfection, and beasts by the imperfection of their nature, are confined to their proper and necessary objects; man is left to a strange uncertainty, undetermined by the reasons of the mind, or the instinct or appetite of the body; moved, indeed, successively by each, perfectly governed and overruled by neither. But it were well for man if the inclinations of these two different principles were so justly poised, that he were naturally left in a true liberty and pure indifference, equally able to follow the dictates of reason, and the appetites of flesh and blood. But, alas, how impetuous are the lusts of the body! How irresistible are those passions which the objects of sense, aided by a carnal imagination, raise in us! On the other side, how cold

are the representations of reason, when we most need its assistance and authority! How faint and feeble the natural inclination of the soul to what is truly good and great! How remote and distant the rewards of virtue, and consequently how weak and cold their influence; and how faint and imperfect is the pleasure that attends it, abstracted from future rewards, in all other minds besides those who are arrived in some sort at perfection! It is true, at some seasons the remonstrances of conscience are so sharp, its reproaches so bitter, the confusion of the mind so insufferable, that they render that which is a pleasure to the sense, a torment to the soul; and its agreeableness to our imagination cannot make amends for its contradiction to our reason. But, alas! these are but short-lived fits; for business diverts, pleasure enchants, and repeated violence offered to our reason, stupifies and deadens the natural conscience; and, what is worse than all this, a silly and vicious education does generally so corrupt our judgments, and prepossess us with vain and foolish affections, that the checks of conscience are extremely seldom and extremely faint, unless the commission of some gross sin awaken it by a deep and deadly wound. This is,—

2. A second cause of that general apostasy from reason so notorious in the world,—a silly and vicious education. How well does it fare with children, when they derive only their original corruption from their parents! Ah, how often are their weak dispositions to vice nursed and cherished by their parents into an absolute, uncontrollable, and settled tyranny! Nay, what is worse yet, how often are those towardly dispositions which many bring into the world with them, choked and stifled, not only by the indulgence, but even by the example and authority of parents!

When corrupt inclination is ripened into a second nature,—when our innate weaknesses and follies are confirmed by those false principles, and that vicious confidence which we derive from education,—then we are sent

into the world, left to our own disposal, abandoned to our own government. Poor creatures! Not only exposed, unarmed, unguarded, to temptations, but, like SAMSON to the Philistines, tied and bound too! Ah, could we so easily burst our bonds as he did his! But whence should we recover our lost liberty?

3. Conversation, instead of being an assistance to us in our endeavours after happiness, doth generally tend to promote our misery; philosophy is not now the business of conversation, nor is friendship any way serviceable to the great end of life. The ligament of society is riot and revelling, or sordid profit and interest, or peradventure folly, trifling, and impertinence. These are the ties and bonds of our confederacies; so that whatever authority our friends and acquaintance have over us, is employed to no other purpose but to recommend and endear vice to us; to render it, if not beautiful, at least less deformed than it is. Hence it is that retirement is so generally recommended to those who design to make any progress in true wisdom, and that such as are truly virtuous so passionately complain of the disadvantages they suffer by conversing with the world; for the truth is, wisdom and goodness are such unfashionable themes of discourse, such unusual, nay, I may add, unwelcome subjects of entertainment, that the company deserves now to be praised, which is only barren and unprofitable, not hurtful, and wherein we suffer no greater loss than that of our time.

It is now easy to imagine what fruit a corrupt nature must bring forth, when not only left destitute of necessary cultivation, but depraved yet more by a vicious education, and vicious conversation; what can all these together bring forth, but a loathsome brood of diseases and vices, such as these: Rashness, precipitancy, heedlessness, and unthoughtfulness; false notions, ungovernableness, and impotence of will; insincerity, levity, and inconstancy; which are the plagues of human life, and the fatal obstacles of our tranquillity? For either they obstruct our true happiness, by preventing our search after it; or

delude our search, by perverting our understanding; or else they frustrate the influence of its discovery, by obstinate reluctances in the body, and an unhappy impotence in the mind. All this is manifest upon the most transient glance we can take of these particulars. To begin with want of consideration. This is a necessary effect of that corruption which I have ascribed to nature, education, and conversation: the body, unaccustomed to obey, is impatient of deliberation when its pleasure is in view, and a taking imagination overrules whatever weak plea reason makes; nay, what is worse, the very disuse of reason in men abandoned to the conduct of custom, and swayed by the enticement of inclination, and authority of example, bereaves them almost of the faculty itself; so that their life and actions are not the effects of judgment and deliberation, but injudicious, unweighed custom; or more rash, heedless, or precipitant passion. And can any man think, that when the meanest art or profession is not learned without right instruction or just diligence, wisdom, the great art of living happily, shall be attained without so much as just consideration? When a man cannot grow rich or prosperous without contrivance and industry, is it probable he should grow happy by inadvertency and chance? It is impossible. For innumerable will be the false and pernicious notions which such a one corrupted and depraved, rash and unadvised, must be betrayed into and confirmed in. There is no principle so false, no practice so absurd, which such do not readily entertain; hence it is that men do so generally live by rote, that men's principles are the fashionable ones of the neighbourhood or nation, that their manner of life takes that shape which their rank and quality, and the chance of their conversation gives it; and their very religion itself is the native commodity of the soil they are planted in: hence it is, finally, that men are unrighteous and wicked, careless and unconcerned, notwithstanding all the calls or invitations, all the rewards and menaces of the Gospel, convictions of conscience, impulses of grace, mercies, threats,

and judgments of God. And covetousness, luxury, uncleanness, profaneness, ambition, are as constantly practised in court and city, as condemned in the pulpit and press; nor is it to be expected otherwise, for false notions give countenance and authority to our follies, and fortify us in all our wretched miscarriages against the assaults of law and reason, of conscience and God himself. No condition is so desperately forlorn as that of sin and folly, backed and authorized by inveterate principles. These render our very industry not only useless, but even fatal and destructive to our happiness; these defeat the very tendency of our nature toward happiness, and, turning it into a wrong channel, make it run with violence towards our misery.

These help to render our passions both numerous and ungovernable, by presenting some things as evils which are not, and by augmenting real evils beyond their natural proportion; and herein consist the very essence and being of human misery, or at least a part of it, when our own folly increases both the number and weight of evils, and our numberless passions exceed all just and natural bounds. And this is a constant truth: the less understanding there is in any man, the more violent is his passion; the passion of a fool being like the zeal of a bigot,—the more blind the more furious.

Insincerity is another fruit of the corruption of our nature, and the depravation of education and conversation. This is that which makes us lazy in our search after truth, and partial in the examination of our opinions and actions; for when the bent of our nature runs towards carnal pleasures, and this is confirmed by education and false notions of things, we shall be apt to take up and caress ourselves with present, easy, and ready entertainment. We shall not extend our care or prospect very far, but be content to enjoy the sweet in every present circumstance and event, without regard to their future tendency. The same distemper prevailing, we shall be apt to think every thing healthful that is pleasant, and easily admit those

principles most true, which are most grateful to our appetites. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if the same humour which makes us greedy of embracing, makes us obstinate in defending, pleasing errors; for the same fondness and partiality render us incapable of instruction, and impatient of advice, though designed by the most faithful affection, and managed with the most prudent tenderness.

It is easy now to judge what must be the state of that man, who is insincere and false to himself in his deliberations, and obstinate in the defence of his errors; who is partial in all his own reflections, and impatient of the faithful reflections of others. How is it probable that *that* man should attain to any rational happiness, who is incapable of using his own reason aright, or enjoying the benefit of others'?

But it is not the only mischief we suffer by these diseases of the mind, that they render us incapable of discovering true happiness; they also disable us to pursue it, when discovered, with that earnestness and vigour which the importance of the thing requires; for they must needs beget in us a slothful remissness in our endeavours, and an unhappy levity and inconstancy in all our purposes. It is very improbable that we should be steady and immoveable in those purposes which are not founded upon clear and solid reason, or zealous in such as are encountered with violent opposition from ourselves; hence it is that the scenes of man's life are so various, so frequently changed; that every man does so often shift his person, and appear a very different actor on the stage. Nor is it any man's wit or sagacity that turns him into all these different shapes, but his vice and folly; for being ignorant of the true good, the true happiness of man, he catches at fleeting shadows, and courts thin airy dreams, and uncertain apparitions; and therefore daily sets up new projects, and those too repugnant to the old; and thus man wearieth out himself by vain and unsuccessful, because inconstant, vanishing attempts. This were

tolerable, did it befall us only in temporal things, whose emptiness makes our success itself disappointment; but alas, we suffer the same thing in the weighty concerns of virtue and happiness. Our religious purposes generally die strangled in the birth, and all our glorious designs dash themselves to pieces against the next difficulty or temptation; and yet relapsed into a state of folly, and sin, and danger, we would again return to that narrow path, whose steep and rough ascent discouraged us; wandering in night, and fog, and storm, fain would we reach the happy region, where calm light and cheerful day do ever dwell: Plainly, when we resolve to be virtuous, we are kept from it by the seeming ease and pleasure of sin, and the hardships necessary to be undergone in the attainment of virtue; and yet the remorse, and danger, and dissatisfaction which always accompany a negligent and sinful life, make us wish for the peace and comfort, the security and rewards of virtue. But O, how seldom do we proceed further than wishes, or some attempts more lazy and dispirited than our wishes! The reason is plain; virtue is more rational, vice is more grateful; the understanding is convinced, but the will is enslaved: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." A sinner cannot purchase the pleasures of the mind, but by some severities of the body; nor enjoy the pleasures of the body, without the checks and reproaches of the mind: and this makes him unsteady and irresolute in all his purposes.

CHAPTER III.

The Cure of the former Maladies.

FROM this account of the rise and progress of man's misery, it is easy to infer what it is wherein the happiness of this life consists, or at least, what the universal or

immediate cause of it is, namely, a conformity of our minds and lives to true reason; this is a state of light and knowledge, of peace and security, of lasting and rational delight. This invests the understanding in its just sovereignty, and restores the will to its true liberty. This makes our prospect of the future, taking and inviting, and our reflection on the time past, easy and comfortable. This lays a solid foundation for our reliance on the merits and intercession of our Mediator, and raises our hope as high as heaven. This prevents our misfortunes and calamities, or, what is more happy, enables us to conquer them. In a word, this makes us great in life, but much more great and venerable in death: righteousness and goodness revealing its beauty and glory most then, when all things else shrink and fade.

We see the happiness that springs from our conformity and subjection to reason: and it is easy for these two things wherein, especially, I have declared the sinner's deviation from reason to consist, to infer, what we must do, if we will live rationally,—

First, We must propose to ourselves a wise and rational end of life.

Secondly, We must pursue this end with life, and spirit, and constancy.

These I lay down as the first and most comprehensive rules for the attainment of happiness: I will therefore say something of each, but briefly, and in general terms, as the nature of this treatise requires.

First, We must propose to ourselves a wise and rational end of life; that is, the true happiness of a rational creature. When we have done this, when our understandings are fully convinced of the excellence and necessity of it, and when we have possessed our minds with a sacred reverence, a firm and devout love for it; this, like the eastern star, will lead us through all the windings and turnings of life, to Bethlehem and happiness: this will soon disengage us from that labyrinth of contradictious desires and wild opinions, in which the fool and sinner are

endlessly entangled. When we have done this, we shall find every place a school, every one we converse with a tutor, and every passage of our life, or another's, full of instruction: not a look, whether cheerful or melancholy; not a word, whether wise or foolish; not a sigh that an oppressed heart vents, not a joy that smiles in the face, but will show us the use and beauty of divine truth, and divine virtue: for in the vicious we shall see what false and fading pleasures, what idle fears, what vain sorrows, fill their minds; in the good, we shall see what true peace virtue creates in the mind, what constancy and majesty in the life, what courage and hopes it inspires in affliction, what magnanimity and humility in prosperity; and in a word, what light, what serenity it diffuses through the whole man. We shall see in many instances every day, what the mischiefs of irrational desires and ungovernable passions are; and, on the contrary, how great the advantages of truth and virtue, of wisdom, and the due regulation of all our passions; nor is the illumination of our understanding the only advantage which we shall reap from the prefixing ourselves a rational end of life, and the possessing our souls with the love of it; for when we have done this, we shall be actually freed from the greater part of the troubles of life; we shall be raised above all senseless, silly desires, and consequently above all senseless, silly vexations: For when we have set our hearts upon true and rational happiness, how unnecessary, nay, how despicable will most of these things appear which we now admire and covet? We shall not then think it reasonable to sigh and toil for this house or that land, for this preferment or that trade, this honour or that beauty; for these are no essential, no necessary ingredients of a rational happiness.

Nor is this all: Thy joys and pleasure will increase upon thee: for by approaching every day nearer and nearer to thy great end, thou wilt be wonderfully surprised with fresh delight, whilst thou dost behold the fruit of thy travel, and the daily increase of thy wealth. Thou wilt

see thyself, like a thriving plant, grow up daily more strong and beautiful. The covetous man grows not richer by heaping up, nor the ambitious man greater by rising higher; or, at least, neither grows happier by being either richer or greater; but thou wilt every day grow wiser by study, more virtuous by practice; calmer and happier by both. O, to what a height will thy pleasure rise, when thy store shall grow big enough to entertain not thyself only, but all men else; when the thirsty shall come and drink at thy streams, and the scorched shall refresh themselves under thy shade; when thou, led by the same spirit with our great LORD and Master, shalt open the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf, shalt cast out devils, and strengthen the feet of the lame; I mean, when thou shalt teach the foolish wisdom, when thou shalt persuade and charm the obstinate, when thou shalt deliver the unclean and the passionate from the evil spirits, the vices that possessed them, and when thou shalt teach the enslaved and impotent sinner how to overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil; thou wilt then indeed, as thou art the image, so do the works of GOD; thou wilt be a heavenly and tutelar, though mortal, angel amongst men; and wherever thou dost, there wisdom, virtue, and happiness will dwell too. But to attain to this state, it is not only necessary to prefix ourselves a rational end of life; but also,—

Secondly, We must pursue this end with life, and spirit, and constancy. It is not a good fit, or a devout passion that will make us either virtuous or happy: there must go more than this to conquer an ill habit, or implant a good one. It is not one brisk sally, or one warm charge, that will subdue the world and flesh, and put us into possession of victory and security: no, when warmth and passion have made a prosperous impression on the enemy, a sober patience must make good the ground we have gained, a steady and resolved courage must urge and press the advantage to an issue; without vigour, patience, and constancy to carry us still forwards, the warmth with which we begin the course of virtue will stand us in little stead:

Ah, how many have marched out of Egypt, and perished in the wilderness! How many have wrecked within sight of shore! How many have lost their reward of repentance by their relapse! How many have fallen by negligence, security, and sloth, into that wretched state, out of which they had once delivered themselves by courage, resolution, and self-denial! Nor is the necessity of vigour, patience, and constancy, in our pursuit of happiness, the only motive to it; the certainty of success, and the greatness of the advantages, which attended it, are sufficient to animate any man that seriously considers it: the labour and hope of the husbandman is lost, unless the fruitful earth and fruitful seed be blessed with fruitful seasons too. The trade of the merchant is properly but adventuring, and his increase depends as much on winds and waves, as on his own skill and diligence; but it fares not thus with man in his pursuit of happiness. The traffic of the philosopher depends not upon winds nor tide; the seeds of virtue, if the ground be well cultivated, will thrive in any weather, and sometimes better in storms than sunshine. Finally, the success of our conflicts against sin and misery, depends not on fortune, but courage and industry.

How unspeakable a pleasure is it now to think, that we cannot be disappointed of our travels, nor defeated of our hopes, while we labour for virtue and happiness? If our endeavours be sincere and persevering, our success is certain and unquestionable. But what an accession doth this pleasure receive, when we consider, what will be the glorious fruit of this success? Tranquillity, cheerfulness, enlargement of soul, pleasure, life, immortality; in one word, happiness. O glorious reward of our conflict, and our victories! What neither wealth, nor greatness, nor honour, nor crowns; what neither blood nor toil, nor cunning, nor fortune, can give! That, rational and sincere endeavours after wisdom and virtue, will give the meanest man upon earth, that is, happiness! O blessed issue of philosophical, that is, truly Christian travel! The rich, the great, the honourable, the mighty, may complain

even of their success, and repent them of the purchase they have made at too dear a rate; but the Christian can never repent of the success of his study, his self-denial, his patience, his prayers: for how is it possible to complain of being happy, or repent of being wise and virtuous? There is nothing empty, nothing evil, nothing mean, nothing uncertain, in true wisdom, in rational happiness.

This brief and general account of happiness, and of the way to it, does naturally instruct us how we are to treat the body, and what it is that a rational education and wise conversation ought to aim at: if our conformity to reason be either the happiness of this present life, or the immediate causes of it, (for I will not trouble myself with nice and subtile distinctions,) then it is plain, that we are obliged to such a kind of discipline and government of ourselves, as may render the body most obsequious to the mind, and may exalt and establish the power and dominion of reason. For whatever tends to obscure our understanding, to enfeeble the will, to cherish our sensual inclinations, and augment their force, doth so far necessarily tend to deprave the nature of man, and to subvert and overthrow his happiness: and from hence it appears, that the excellence of education consists in possessing the minds of youth with true notions of good and evil, and informing and moulding their minds into an esteem and veneration for wisdom and virtue. The first virtue I conceive a child capable of, is obedience; and this is indeed the foundation of all virtue. To this, let him be inured and trained up betimes: he that finds it easy to obey another's reason, will not find it difficult to obey his own; for when the judgment comes to be formed and ripened, when it comes to exercise its authority, it will find a body not used to give, but receive commands. From this virtue of obedience, he is to be led gently on to a rational and voluntary choice of what is good; he must be taught gradually, not only his plain duty, but the motives to it; for it is as necessary to his happiness that he should love, as that he should know his duty. But this we strive in vain to instil by art and in-

struction, if we do not instil it by the influence of wise examples too.

As to conversation, it is plain, that it ought to be the practice of those virtues which a pious education instilled; and that we ought to have no less reverence for our reason when we are under our own government, than we had for the authority of our parents when we were under theirs. What ought to be the tie of friendship, what the rules of conversation, and what the great ends of society, is abundantly manifest from the nature of that happiness which it behoves us to propose as the great end of life? What is the great end of man, ought to be the design of society; and therefore it is plain that wisdom and virtue ought to be the foundation and bond of those friendships which we enter into, and that conversation should be so regulated, that we may grow by it more wise and virtuous.

I have now finished this discourse, which I designed only as an introduction to those which are to follow. I do not think that it is now necessary for me, in a pathetic conclusion, to persuade men to endeavour to be happy. The desires of happiness are inseparable from all beings; at least it is impossible to be rational, and not desire to be happy. If I have therefore sufficiently proved that it is possible to be happy; and if I have showed that a diligent inquiry, a vigorous and persevering industry, is necessary to the attainment of it; if I have pointed out the general causes of human misery, and, together with them, their general cure and remedy, I have done enough to enkindle those desires, and beget those resolutions in my Reader, which if they do not make him actually happy, will, at least, prepare him for a further enjoyment of happiness. I have therefore nothing more to put him in mind of now, but this, That as I all along suppose the grace of God necessary to second and enforce our reason, so I would ever be understood to urge the necessity of our prayers, as much as that of our endeavours, the fervency of the one, as much as the sincerity of the other.

PART II.

INTRODUCTION.

HAVING removed whatever might discourage or frustrate our endeavours after happiness, I am now to proceed to a more particular examination of the nature of it, and the ways and methods that lead to it. In which I am obliged, according to my general design, to treat of *Life, Perfection, Indolence,* and *Fruition ;* accordingly, I here begin with Life ; and, dividing this book into three sections, I will, in the first, discourse of the true notion of human life: In the second, of the right conduct or regulation of it: In the third, of the right husbanding human life, by prolonging and improving it.

SECTION I.

OF THE TRUE NOTION OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

Life a great Blessing in itself; proves a great Evil to some. And why? Happiness perfect only in Heaven.

THOUGH life renders us capable of pain as well as pleasure, yet has it ever been valued as the richest blessing; the love of it is the earliest and the strongest principle in us. Nor does this passion want the suffrage of the wisest and the greatest men, or the approbation of GOD; for one chief design of society and government is the protection of life; and GOD, who best understood the bent of human nature, has proposed, as the most powerful motive to obedience, a long life (I examine not now what it farther prefigured) under the Old Testament, and an eternal one under the New. And for all this there is plain reason; for life, if it be not, when rightly understood, happiness itself, yet is it surely the foundation of it; and the foundation in a building, if it be not as beautiful as the upper stories, yet is as necessary.

But it is with life as with all other blessings: the right use of it is our happiness; the abuse of it our misery. There is nothing in the nature of the thing that implies evil or trouble; nor has it any necessary and inevitable tendency to it. We must not therefore estimate a blessing by the mischief it occasions to such as pervert and abuse it. It is true, when all is said, heaven is the proper region of happiness; there it dwells in its glory and majesty; but what then? Because perfection does properly belong to heaven, is there no virtue upon earth? Because all things are in their maturity there, shall we deny that there is any sweetness or beauty here? Just so must we think of the happiness of this, in comparison of that of another world: it is here in its infancy. We slumber, and are scarce ever fully awake; we see little, comprehend less; and we move very feebly and unsteadily; but all this while we grow up to strength, we advance towards perfection; our joints grow firmer, our stature increases, our understanding dawns towards day, and our affections are gradually animated with a more generous and lasting heat; so that all this while this infant state of happiness is pleasant and promising, and every step in the whole progress towards perfection, presents us with fresh beauties and delights. I will not therefore spend any more time, in endeavouring to prove life a valuable blessing, but rather proceed to show how every man may make it such to himself; which I think I cannot more compendiously do, than by stating the true notion of human life; for as our misery flows from the abuse, and our happiness from the right use of life, so does the abuse from false, and the right use from true notions of it.

CHAPTER II.

Life, what in a Natural Sense, what in a Moral. Life, Perfection, and Enjoyment, inseparably united. More particularly, Life consists not in Sloth, Sensuality, Worldliness, Devilishness; but in the Regulation of all our Actions according to right Reason.

LIFE may be considered either in a natural or moral sense: in the former, what it is, is an inquiry very abstruse and intricate; like the Egyptian Nile, though its streams be visible to every eye, its source or fountain is concealed; or like grace, though we feel its energy, and taste its fruits, yet we cannot discover and define its essence: but to carry our discovery thus far, is accuracy enough in moral discourses, whose end is not speculation, but happiness.

Life then, whatever it be in the fountain, as we can discern it, is nothing else but that force and vigour which moves and acts the man; and to live, speaking in a natural sense, is to exert the powers and faculties of nature: according to which account of life, it is capable of as many notions as are the different offices it performs: it is knowledge in the understanding; and love and hate, with all their train of passions, in the heart or soul.

Now because all morality consists in the right use of those blessings, which our great and bountiful Author confers upon us; therefore, in a moral sense, the true life of man is nothing else but a right use of our whole nature; an active employing it in its due offices, a vigorous exercise of all our powers and faculties, in a manner suitable to the dignity and design, to the frame and constitution of our beings. To live then, in a moral sense, is to know and contemplate, to love and pursue that which is the true good of man: this is the life of the understanding, will, affections, and of the whole man; and whatever acts of ours are not some way or other conversant about truth and goodness, are not properly acts of human life, but deviations from it.

And here I cannot but pause a little, to admire the infinite wisdom and goodness of the almighty Architect, who has contrived an inseparable connexion and necessary dependance between life, perfection, and fruition; every rational act, every right use of our natural powers and faculties, as it is of the essence of the moral life, so does it contribute to the improvement and perfection of our beings, and to the felicity of our state; for perfection is the result of such repeated acts, and pleasure of our entertaining ourselves with proper and agreeable objects. Happy man, to whom to live, improve, and enjoy, is the same thing; who cannot defeat God's goodness and his own happiness, but by perverting his nature, and depraving his faculties; but by making an ill use, or none at all, of the favours and bounties of God.

If we examine this notion of life more closely and distinctly, and resolve this general account of it into several particulars, we shall easily arrive at a fuller and clearer comprehension of it.

1. It is evident from this account of life, that it does not consist in sloth; in the cohabitation of soul and body; in mere continuance in this world. Solomon indeed tells us, "Truly light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun." (*Eccles.* xi. 7.) But if we must call it pleasure, it is but a faint and low one, such as irrational creatures are capable of; it can never deserve the name of life: he that possesses vital powers and faculties, is in a capacity of life, but he only that exerts them, lives. To live, is not to spend or waste our time, but to employ it. It is a lamentable history of life, when it can all be summed up in the few syllables of a funeral ring; he lived too, or rather, as it is wont to be expressed, he died such a day of the month, such a year of his age: for indeed he lived not at all; life is a mere dream, not only on the account of its shortness, but also of its night and lethargy, when stupid ignorance confines and dims the prospect, and sluggishness enfeebles all the powers of the mind. Vigour and activity, fruition and enjoyment, make up life: without these, life

is but an imperfect embryo, a mingled twilight that never will be day; the images which the slothful form of things are faint and obscure, like pictures drawn in watery colours, and vanish as easy as those half sounds and imperfect forms which we take in between sleep and waking; all their passions move drowsily and heavily, and all their entertainments have no more relish than abortive fruit, which can never be ripened into sweetness or beauty. When I have observed any one thus wasting a whole life, without ever being once well awake in it, passing through the world like a heedless traveller, without making any reflections or observations, without any design or purpose beseeming a man: Ah! thought I, is this that creature for which this great theatre, the world, was made; for which it was so adorned and enriched? Is this the creature that is the epitome of the world, the top and glory of the visible creation, a little inferior to angels, and allied to God? Is this machine acted by a wise and immortal spirit? Ah! how much is this useless stupid thing sunk beneath the dignity and design of its nature! How far short is it fallen of the glory to which God had destined it! Shall this contemptible thing ever be admitted to eternal life, who has so wretchedly fooled away his temporal one? No, surely, I could upon the first thought imagine his sluggish soul would vanish like those of the brutes; I could easily imagine that it could sleep, not as some fancy all souls do, to the resurrection, but to all eternity. But upon better consideration, I find this ignorant life is not so innocent as to deserve no worse a fate: For is it a small crime to live barren and unfruitful, endued with so many talents? To frustrate the design of our creation? To stifle all the seed of divine life and perfection? To quench the grace and Spirit of God? In a word, is it a small crime to be false and perfidious to God, unjust and injurious to man? No, it cannot be; and therefore the slothful and wicked servant signify one and the same thing, and must undergo one and the same sentence.

2. Life cannot consist in sensuality, that is, in the mere

gratification of our carnal appetites. The reasons of this assertion are evident from the general notion of life. For (1.) This is not the exercise of the whole nature, but a part of it, and that the inferior and ignobler too. (2.) It is not an employment suitable to the dignity of our nature.

(1.) Sensuality employs only the meaner part of us. The sensualist, though he seem fond of life, does foolishly contemn the better half of it; and as much a slave to pleasure as he is, he chooses to drink only the dregs, and lets the pure streams of sprightly and delicious life pass by untasted; for if there be a sensitive and rational soul, there must be a sensitive and rational life too, and one as much elevated above the other, as the principles they flow from. But whether this be so or no, does not import much; for it is plain, that life, whatever it be, is like seed, which, according to the different soil it is sown in, produces fruit more or less luscious and beautiful; here it sprouts forth like the seven poor lean, there like the seven plump and rich ears of corn in PHARAOH's dream; and should it by way of fiction be supposed, that one and the same soul did communicate life to men, beasts, and vegetables; however life in each would be equal in the dignity of its original, it would vastly differ in its effects and operations; so whether life in man flow from one or two distinct principles, it is evident that its price and dignity vary according to the different powers and faculties which it moves and animates: and by consequence, that life which displays itself in the acts of our rational part, will be as different from that which consists in sensation, and the motions of bodily appetites, as is the light that glitters in a diamond, from that which faintly imitates it in a pebble; the more numerous and the more exquisite our faculties, the vaster is the empire of life, and the more delicate and charming all its functions and operations. How evident is this in all the organs and senses of the body? Let darkness invade the eye, and deafness the ear, and then within what narrow bounds is the bodily life reduced? How few and ignoble are the vital acts and

operations of the body? How vile and contemptible are all the fruits or instances of a sensitive life? If, then, there be no sense or organ of the body superfluous, can we think the rational soul itself can be so? If there be no power, no capacity of a sensitive soul, by which life is not enlarged or enriched, must we not needs conclude, that to extinguish the immortal spirit within us, and, as it were, to discard all its powers and faculties, must needs be to impoverish, mutilate, and stifle it? Since I have a soul as well as a body, since the one is as capable of conversing with God and heaven, with truth, and goodness, and perfection, as the other is of conversing with this world of visible objects; I cannot but conclude, that to be destitute of knowledge and faith, of hope and love, is more injurious to the true life of man, than to be deaf or blind; that stupidity or lethargy in the soul, such as renders it incapable of rational pleasure, is as inconsistent with the true life of man, as lethargy or a dead palsy in the body can be; and to be excluded from commerce with the invisible world, is as fatal to it, as to be debarred the visible one.

From all this it is evident, that whether we consider life with respect to its excellence and dignity, or to its enlargement and extension, sensuality is extremely injurious to it in both respects; so far doth it debase and contract it, that I may boldly conclude, to place life in sensuality is to renounce the much more valuable and delightful part of it, to banish ourselves the much better world, and to rob ourselves of a thousand joys and pleasures which we might reap from the rational powers and faculties, that is, the noblest capacities and endowments of our nature. Though this be abundantly enough to evince, that life consists not in sensuality; yet this being of the highest importance to happiness, I will proceed to the second argument against it; that is,—

(2.) It is not consonant to the dignity of human nature; or, which is all one, to the design of our beings, conspicuous in our frame and constitution. Who, that ever considered what sensuality was, how narrow the extent of

sense, how mean and brutish the pleasure that terminates in it, what corruption and degeneracy it ends in, who, I say, that has ever considered these, and a thousand things more, can believe that sensuality is an employment worthy of a man? Is this the business of a vast and comprehensive mind? Is this consistent with desires of immortality, with unquenchable thirst of truth, with a capacity of discovering spiritual excellencies, and moral beauties and perfections? Was it for this we were endued with propensions to adore a Deity? What can be as much as fancied, the use of wisdom, magnanimity, conscience, sagacity, foresight, and inquiries into future things and times, if sensuality had been the only employment designed man, how much more fit had we been formed for this end, if there had been in us no reason to check and control us; no conscience that could fill us with regret for the past, or fear for the future; no wisdom that could teach us that there were any thing above us; nor greatness of mind, that could reproach us for stooping to any thing below us?

It is almost superfluous to add, that life consists not in worldliness or devilishness: as to the former of these, by which I mean the cares and pursuits of the world, it is plain, that to employ our time and faculties in this alone, is not to live, but at best to provide for life. Necessity may sometimes subject us to the drudgery of the world, but a voluntary choice never should. I know no other difference between a mean fortune and a great one, than this, That the great one sets a man above those cares, which the mean one forces him to submit to; that the one puts us into the immediate possession of all the means and instruments of life, improvement, and fruition, and of leisure and opportunity to make use of them; but the latter obliges us to purchase these advantages with toil and sweat, solicitude and care. It is therefore an unpardonable wilfulness or blindness, whenever that vassalage, which is the infelicity of the mean man, is the choice of the rich one. Nor is it a more pardonable error in any, who con-

tinue the drudgery and care when the necessity is over, and voluntarily suffer all the disadvantages of a narrow fortune, even when they have obtained a plentiful one; who never think it time to begin to live, or to enjoy the success of their cares and diligence. This is an absurdity as gross as his, who after he has ploughed and sowed, should refuse to reap; or his, who having, with much cost and labour, furnished out a plentiful table, should not at length find in his heart to eat.

Life then consists not in the abundance of the things which a man possesses, much less in the vexation or toil of acquiring, securing, or increasing them, which is that I intend by worldliness; but least of all can life consist in devilishness; that is, wrath, strife, revenge, pride; this cannot be called the vigour and activity, but storm and agony of our nature; this is a state wherein the understanding is covered with the darkness of hell, that is, ignorance of good and evil; and the passions are but furies, unchained and let loose.

Having thus, by resolving concerning life, that it consists not either in sloth or sensuality, worldliness or devilishness, pointed out those fatal errors which mislead men from the paths of peace and happiness; it is now time to show, in the last place, what it is wherein life does more immediately and particularly consist; that is, in a vigorous and active employment of the whole man, according to the rules and dictates of right reason.

When I make reason the director and guide of human life, I no more mean to exclude the aid of revelation, and the SPIRIT of GOD, than when I affirm the eye to be the guide of the body, I intend to deny the necessity of light to good eyes, or of spectacles to dim ones. The proposition thus guarded, will appear indisputable to any who shall consider the frame of man. That we are rational creatures, is a truth never hitherto controverted; and that reason is the sovereign faculty in us, appears from the universal appeal of all sides to its tribunal. Not the virtuous and wise only, but the loose and the vicious plead

the authority of reason in defence of their actions; as therefore it is plain, that life consists not in vital powers and faculties, but in the exercise and employment of them; so it is as plain, that in this we are not to follow the conduct of fancy or passion, but of reason. This is the right use of our natural gifts, which distinguishes man from beasts, and men from one another; the philosopher from the fool, and the saint from the sinner: in this consist the order and dignity of human nature, in this the beauty and tranquillity of human life, and in this the inward joy and peace of the mind.

This will be yet more manifest to whosoever will take the pains to inquire what the office of reason is. It is this which teaches us what rank we hold among the creatures of God, what station we fill in the world, what our relations and dependancies are, what the duty and what the hopes, what the benefit and what the pleasure, that result from each; it is this which prescribes all our powers and passions, their order, place, and work; it is this which distinguishes truth and falsehood, good and evil; it is this which fills us with the knowledge, and inflames us with the love, of our sovereign happiness, and judges of the way that leads to it; and, finally, it is this which teaches us to set a true value upon all inferior things, in proportion to their tendency either to promote or obstruct our sovereign good. Happy, therefore, is that life, where reason is the sovereign arbitrator of all our actions, and where all the powers of the soul are servants and instruments of reason: happy this life; for it can neither want pleasure to entertain it, nor business to employ it: happy the soul which thus lives; for it shall never want comfort to support it, hope to encourage it, nor crowns to reward it; for as it grows in wisdom and goodness, so must it in favour with God and man, and its peace and tranquillity, its joys and expectations, must receive a proportionable increase.

CHAPTER III.

Inferences drawn from the former Chapter. 1. *To cultivate our Reason.* 2. *To renounce every Thing that opposes it, as Fancy, Passion, Example, Custom.* 3. *That it is possible to be happy in every State.* 4. *That a long Life is a great Blessing.*

FROM the notion of life thus stated, it is evident, *First*, That our business is to cultivate and improve reason: for this, as you have seen, is to be the guide and superintendent of all our powers and faculties, and the arbiter and judge of all our actions. "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (*Matt.* vi. 23.) Vigour and action, if reason do not steer them, will but prove mischievous and fatal to us; diligence and industry themselves will only serve to corrupt our nature, and embroil our life; every deviation from reason, is a deviation from our true perfection and happiness. The fool and the sinner do, in the language of the Scripture, signify the same thing. This is the true original of all those mischiefs which infest the world,—the neglect or contempt of right reason; it is this which makes our complaints so numerous and so bitter; it is this that makes us so weak and soft in adversity, so restless in prosperity itself; it is this creates all those disasters and disappointments which make us often quarrel at Providence: "The folly of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against GOD." (*Prov.* xix. 3.) Well, therefore, did the Wise Man advise, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding." (*Prov.* iv. 7.)

The necessity of this does easily appear, from the slightest reflection upon the work or office of reason, of which I have given a general account before, much more from the use of it in three great points:—1. The employing our faculties. 2. The enjoyment of good. And, 3. The bearing evil.

1. The employing our faculties. The soul of man,

like a fertile field, may produce either herbs or weeds; the faculties of it are capable of being the instruments of the greatest evil or the greatest good; the greatest good, if regulated and conducted by reason; the greatest evil, if led by any other principle. What is the imagination of a fool, but a shop of toys and trinkets, where a thousand empty ideas flutter confusedly up and down? What his memory, but a sink of sins and follies, of mean and shameful things and actions? not a treasury of excellent truths, laid up like provision for time both of peace and war. What his heart, but the rendezvous of a thousand mutinous, violent, and dishonourable lusts, which rend and tear him, worse than the Devil in the Gospel the man possessed? Nay, what is fancy and wit itself, if destitute of sound judgment and true reason, but I know not what sort of flashes, which dazzle, but do not guide; serve for amusement, rather than nourishment or delight? And therefore the author is very well paid, if he be praised and starved, which is generally his fate. In a word, neither business nor diversion can have in them any thing truly useful or truly pleasing, if they be not conducted by right reason; and all the dispositions and faculties of our nature will be but either lost upon fooleries, or abused to our ruin.

2. The use of reason is conspicuous in the fruition of good. Knowledge is like light shed upon the face of the world, which discovers all its various beauties and wondrous wealth; which, while darkness covered them, were as though they had not been. Without reason we shall not be able to discern or value our own happiness, nor be sensible of our blessings, even though they crowd upon us; without this, our very enjoyments will prove fatal to our repose, and we shall meet gall and wormwood in the bottom of our draughts of pleasure; "for the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." (*Prov.* i. 32.)

It requires no small philosophy, either to render business pleasant, or pleasure innocent; either to discharge

those duties which a great birth or eminent station call men to, or employ that time which an ample fortune makes them entirely masters of; and to husband a life of ease and enjoyment to the best. Ah! how often have I seen the vigour of nature dissolved by pleasure, the edge and fineness of its parts blunted by sloth and softness! How often have I seen men rendered mean and contemptible by prosperity, for which they were not big enough! Whereas, had the mind been enriched with true wisdom, pleasure had refined and recruited nature, and power, honour, and plenty had only placed worth and greatness in a better light. This is true in its proportion from the lowest to the highest station. It requires reason to govern and enjoy prosperity; an obscure and narrow fortune is most convenient both to conceal and preserve a fool; for plenty and power, dignity and preferment, do but expose him to scorn and danger; and it were well if the poor creature could perish or suffer alone; but the mischief is, like a false and sandy foundation, he overthrows the designs and interests that are built upon him, and miserably betrays the confidence reposed in him. But how great soever the use of reason be, as to the goods, it is no less as to the evils of this world; for,—

3. Reason is the pilot of human life, and steers it steadily through wild and tempestuous seas, amidst the rocks and shelves of lust and fancy, fortune and folly, ignorance, error, and a thousand cheats and impostures. It is this alone that enables man to despise imaginary evils, and vanquish real ones; it arms the mind with true and lasting magnanimity, furnishes it with solid comforts, and teaches it to extract life and health, virtue and wisdom, out of the madness and mutability of men and fortune, like antidotes and cordials out of things poisonous and baneful in themselves.

It is not now to be wondered at, after this account of the use of reason, if I have resolved it to be the great business of man to improve and cultivate it. Surely all the great men of the world, and all the inspired ones, have

been of my opinion; for their chief, if not only design, ever was, either to obtain wisdom themselves, or to propagate it amongst others; and it is evident, that God himself has ever carried on this one design of advancing wisdom amongst the sons of men. This is the pre-eminence of his law above those of men, that these restrain the actions, but those enlighten the mind; these punish offences, but those, by informing the judgment and strengthening the reason, prevent the commission of them, and direct and instigate him to the practice of virtue.

This then is the great work that God and man invite us to, that we should make daily progress in knowledge and understanding; "that we should incline our ears to wisdom, and apply our hearts to understanding; that we might seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures." And this is that which our nature and state invite us to; for our perfection and our pleasure, our repose and tranquillity, in one word, our happiness, depends upon it.

Secondly, It easily follows from the right notion of life, that we are to bid defiance to all those things which directly oppose, or secretly undermine the authority of reason, or any way obstruct the free exercise of its power; for it is to no purpose to labour to advance reason, if afterwards we refuse to be governed by it. Reason, if we do not live by it, will serve only to increase our shame and guilt. St. Peter thinks it "better not to have known the way of righteousness, than after the knowledge of it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto us." (2 *Pet.* ii. 21.)

To stifle the sparks of reason by negligence and sloth,—to choke the seeds of wisdom by a lazy and vicious education, is a great crime; but to desert and betray our reason, grown up to some maturity,—to hold it in captivity and fetters,—to defile and prostitute it, by compelling it to serve abominable passions; this sure must be a far greater degree of wickedness, and consequently must needs expose the man to the scorn or pity of the wise and rational part

of mankind, to the reproaches and confusion of his own conscience, and to the wrath of God. Or if none of these mischiefs should attend the contempt of knowledge, yet there is one more of itself sufficient to make man miserable; it precipitates him into all the irregularities and wildnesses imaginable, nothing being so insolent and ungovernable, so savage and untameable, as those passions which are accustomed to overpower and master reason.

It is from all this manifest, That whoever loves life, and would experience it a real blessing, must with all his power set himself to remove and defeat whatever may hinder his ready and entire submission to the dictates of reason. Now the things which enfeeble the strength of our reason, and baffle its authority, are such as these: Fancy, passion, example, custom; these we must ever combat, until we have reduced them within their bounds. Fancy surprises, passion overpowers, custom and example betray, our reason: we must therefore always oppose the giddiness of fancy, and the violence of passion, and guard our minds against the insinuation of custom and example: and to do this well, to do it successfully, is of greater importance than any work of our secular calling, than any attendance upon trade, or a temporal interest. This can only make us great, but that will make us wise; this can make us rich, but that will make us happy: this, therefore, must be the great business of life, To assert the majesty and sovereignty of reason, and never suffer it to be held captive and enthralled by any vicious principle, or impotent lust. Happy the man who succeeds in this! His conscience shall never reproach him, nor God condemn him; and though he may not always hit the next way, he shall never wholly miss of the way to happiness. Therefore from this notion of life,—

Thirdly, We may infer the possibility of human happiness in every state. For since to live, is but to act regularly, to use and employ our powers and faculties rationally; and since life, perfection, and fruition, are one and the same thing, or else inseparably and intimately

united, it is evident that no circumstances can destroy our happiness, unless they destroy our reason; no condition can render us miserable, but that which can render it impossible for us to act rationally; that which obstructs our attainment of knowledge, or our liberty of acting conformable to it. But what circumstances can these be? What condition can we fancy, wherein it shall be impossible for a Christian to know his sovereign good, and pursue it,—to learn his duty, and practise it; wherein it shall be impossible for him to search and contemplate truth, to love and follow after righteousness and goodness, and to be meek and humble, modest and magnanimous, just and charitable, pure and devout; wherein, in one word, it shall be impossible for him to live by faith, or, which is the same thing in my sense, by reason? The fountains of truth and wisdom lie open to all who thirst after them; and God no more denies any his grace than his revelation. Which being so, it is evident, that as God has put it into the power of every man to act rationally, so has he put it in every man's power to be happy; that human happiness is not precarious, or dependant on fortune, but ourselves; for life consists not in the abundance of things which a man possesses, but in the right use of them; and "better is a poor and wise child, than an old and foolish King." (*Eccles.* iv. 13.) For the good estate of the mind consists not in foreign, but domestic possessions; not in the riches of fortune, but of grace and virtue; and fruition cannot subsist, either in the abuse of temporal things, or the depravation of our nature, but in the true cultivation and improvement of the one, and the right use of the other.

From hence, lastly, it easily appears on what account length of days is a great blessing, whether considered in itself, or with respect to a future life.

First in itself. If life did consist in earthliness, that is, the scraping and raking together sums of money, it is plain that life must ebb and flow with our fortune; and whenever the revolutions of times or trades should put a stop to the career of our success, and give a check to our further

hopes and projects, we should have nothing else to do but to break off the thread of life; for what use could we make of the remains of our miserable days? Or if life did consist in sensuality, we should have little reason to desire to survive our youth and strength; and length of days would be rather a burden than a blessing; for we should soon outlive our pleasures, and shrink and wither into dull, impotent, and contemptible things. But if my notion of life be true, the pleasures and joys of it must increase and multiply with our years, since reason ought day by day to advance to a more perfect maturity, and more absolute authority: "With the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days understanding." (*Job* xii. 12.) And "the paths of the righteous are like the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day."

A thorough experience of the emptiness and uncertainty of this world, with a longer and more intimate acquaintance with another, should possess the soul of this man with a magnanimity that nothing could shake, with a tranquillity that nothing could disturb: the custom of doing good, together with the peace and delight that spring from the reflections on it, should make the current of his actions run smooth and calm; his observations on the changes of human affairs, the rise and declension of parties and causes, the secret springs and wheels of the passions of the mind of man, together with the various arts of managing them, fill him with a sort of a divine foreknowledge, and entertain him with a wondrous prospect: and how happy must this man be, the absolute Master of this world, and the immediate heir of another! Which is the second thing.

This is the only notion of life which can render it a blessing in reference to its influence upon another: none but rational pleasures, which are the antepast of heaven, can enkindle our thirst, or qualify us for the enjoyment of those above; nothing but the wise and rational employment of our faculties can prepare us for heaven.

Nay further, if life had not this influence upon another world, length of days would be an injury, not advantage

to us; it would only keep us from our heaven, and put off our happiness: but now, when every act of life perfects our nature, enlarges our capacity, and increases our appetite of glory; when every day that is added to life, by the production of some new fruit, does add new stars to our crowns of righteousness, and new treasures to our heavenly inheritance; it is evident, that a long life is a great blessing, not only on its own account, but also of that life which we expect hereafter. Blessed God, how conspicuous is thy goodness in this whole contrivance! How closely hast thou united virtue and happiness! And how natural is the ascent from a rational life here, to a glorious life hereafter!

SECTION II.

OF THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF LIFE.

Though I will follow the received division of life into active and contemplative, yet I do not use the words of active and contemplative, strictly; but by the first I understand any sort of public life, and any sort of private one by the last; nor do I much concern myself, whether the life of a trader or artisan, be reducible under the one or the other; but accommodating myself to the nature of things, I will discourse, *First*, Of a Civil, *Secondly*, Of a Trading, and *Thirdly*, Of a Private, Life.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Civil Life, or Active Life, of a Gentleman.

Before I go about to set down those rules which may render men of rank and fortune beloved, eminent, and

happy in their station; I think it necessary to convince such of the obligations they lie under to be some way or other serviceable to the world; for it is in vain to talk of the knowledge and virtue necessary to adorn a civil life, to such as persuade themselves that they are born only to follow their own humour; and that it is the prerogative of their birth and fortune, to be idle, ignorant, and loose.

Subsect. 1. This then is the first thing I would fain make gentlemen sensible of, that they cannot, without impardonable guilt, fool away their life and fortune; and I think this would not be very hard to effect, if they would please to make but a slight reflection upon the arguments I here address to them. You owe more to God, and to your country, not to add to yourselves, though that be true too in a proper sense, than any others do. To God, to his Providence, you owe it, that you were born to those fortunes which others toil for; that you are the masters of that time, which others are forced to devote to their wants and necessities, and that you are placed at first in those advantageous heights, which others climb to by slow and tedious steps: your guilt therefore is greater than the mean man is capable of, while you invade the honour of that God, from whom alone you derive yours; while you dethrone him who has raised you, and employ all your power and treasure against that Being from whom you received them: no ingratitude, no treachery or baseness, is like that of a favourite and confident. And as you owe to God, so do you to your country, more than other men: you are they who should be the support and ornament of it; you are placed in higher orbs, not that, like meteors, your ominous blaze should be the gaze and terror of the multitude, but that, like stars, you might lighten and beautify, animate and impregnate, the inferior world; for you, like them, should have an enlarged prospect, a swift and constant motion, a bountiful and benign influence. If your virtues do not more distinguish you from the crowd, than your fortunes, you are exposed, not

honoured, by the eminence of your station; and you debauch and betray your poor country by your sin and folly, which your example, your wisdom, your courage, and your bounty, with all those other virtues which persons of your rank should shine with, should protect and enrich, and raise to the highest reputation of virtue and power. Miserable must that kingdom be, whose rich and great ones are as much more impudently wicked, as they are more fortunate, than other men; when they, whose example should awe the vicious, contribute not a little to corrupt the virtuous part of it, and to debauch the very genius and spirit of the nation. When they, who should be the patriots of their country, instead of being men of travel and reading, of abilities and experience, of honour and activity, are versed only in essence and perukes, game-houses and stews, and have so far lost the qualities of a gentleman, that they are meaner, falser, and cowardlier, than the lowest of the people; those must indeed be strange courts, counsels, parliaments, armies, which are filled and influenced by such as these: that must be a wretched state where men know no other politics, than what an inveterate aversion to religion and virtue suggests.

But if your country move you not, consider yet what you owe yourselves. Idleness is both a reproach and a burden: for what can be more dishonourable than to be good for nothing; or more irksome to an active nature, such as man's is, than to have nothing to employ it? What can be more shameful, than for a wealthy, or well-born man, to be the pity or sport of his country, the inward scorn even of his domestics and neighbours? And what can be a greater plague, than for one who is master of his whole time, and of an ample fortune, not to know how to employ the one or the other, but in such courses as tend to the disgrace of his family, the ruin of his country, and the damnation of his soul? You ought too, to remember, that great fortunes generally mark men out for great troubles, as well as great enjoyments; and were there no other

motive to a vigorous and active life but this one, that it fortifies the courage, and hardens the temper; this should be sufficient to any man, who will but consider to how many changes and revolutions a great fortune renders men obnoxious; so that when men had not yet entertained the opinion of the unlawfulness of self-murder, poison, as appears from LIVY's reflection on MASANISSA's present to his mistress, was a part of the domestic provision of the families of the great.

The sum of all is, gifts of fortune, like those of grace or nature, as they capacitate and qualify, so do they oblige men to suitable duties; and Christianity expects increase proportionable to men's talents. Not idleness and luxury, not ignorance and debauchery, but knowledge and virtue, and a more eminent degree of service to GOD and man, ought to be the distinctive character of the rich and great: these are the abilities that constitute gentlemen truly great; that make them the props of a sinking state, or the glories of a flourishing one: this is that which the safety and glory of your country, and your own happiness and posterity, demand at your hands; and happy were it, if the laws and customs of our country, as one of the best constituted kingdoms and commonwealths, did exact virtue and industry with the greatest rigour, and punished idleness and riot with infamy, banishment, and death.

Nor has one reason to complain, that to oblige the gentleman to an active and industrious life, is, to debase his quality, or to invade his liberty; much less to rob him of all the pleasures and advantages he is born to: on the contrary, an active virtue is the honour of a gentleman; this is the only solid foundation the love and esteem of his country can be built on; all other advantages of fortune do but adorn him as a pageant, to be the sport and gaze of the crowd; and all that have sense enough to distinguish between merit and fortune, will inwardly despise the fool and sluggard, whatever courtship and compliment they may make to the Esquire and landlord. And as business

can be no diminution of his honour, so neither can it be of his liberty: for, not to insist upon that great truth, that the service of virtue is the only freedom or liberty of man; not to mind you, that the business of men of wealth and birth is always a matter of choice, not necessity, they being ever in a condition to retire when they shall judge their privacy and leisure more valuable than their employments; this one single consideration cannot but silence this suggestion, that no man is less master of himself and his time, than the man that has an ample fortune and no business; for he is always exposed to the forms and impertinences, to the humours and sottishness, of a number of people, as idle and ignorant as himself: and I think there can be no servitude so wretched, as that to luxury and vanity, nor any confinement or attendance so tedious, as a compliance with the folly, with the trifling and looseness of the world: but business is at all times a comely excuse, and never fails of putting a man handsomely in possession of his liberty, and the disposal of his own time and actions.

But of all the aspersions with which addresses of this kind are wont to be assaulted, there is none more palpably injurious than this, that to condemn a gentleman to business, is to rob him of his pleasure: for the truth is, it is business and employment that give gust and relish to pleasure; it is this that prevents the disease of pleasure, surfeit and satiety, and makes diversion always new, and nature always vigorous. It is true indeed, a rational and manly employment, so raises and fortifies the mind, that it is above being a slave to sensual pleasure; and so entertains it, that it needs not make vicious pleasure a refuge against the dulness and nauseousness of life. But after all, there is one consideration more important still, which is, that the business of a gentleman, if discharged as it ought to be, is always attended with pleasure; and that a more sensible one than he can find in any thing else: for whether he protect the oppressed, or oppose the violent and unjust by his power; whether he steer the ignorant and the simple to their

harbour by his wisdom, or relieve the necessity of the poor by his wealth; whether he support a sinking friend, or raise a deserving creature; whether he assert the authority of laws, and maintain the rights of his country; in a word, whether he assist the public or the private, by his fortune, his abilities, or virtues; all these have something in them so great, so generous, that I cannot but think the opportunities and capacities of these, the highest privileges and prerogatives of a fortunate birth.

It was the Sabbath, the rest of God, when he beheld all his works, that they were exceeding good; nor can I believe God took more pleasure in the creation, than he does in the preservation and government of the world: how pleasing, then, must be the reflections of these God-like works? For though this be not to create a new world, it is certainly to embellish, govern, and support, the old. There is little reason to imagine why the works of virtue should procure their authors less pleasure than those of fancy, wit, and learning, do theirs: Why the poet should feel a bigger joy arise from a witty poem; the painter from a well-finished piece; the architect from a well-contrived building; the scholar from a just and regular discourse; than a gentleman should from the happy and honourable effects of wisdom, courage, bounty, and magnanimity. These, sure, are the greater excellencies, and as the original is more noble, so is the issue too: for certainly to preserve the lives and fortunes of men is much more than to make them seem to live in imagery; to raise a family, is much more than to contrive and build a house; to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and disperse the clouds and sorrows of the afflicted, by a present and vigorous remedy, is much more than to treat the fancy of the soft and vain: and, in a word, actually to compose the divisions, allay the heats, govern the impetuosities, and restrain the exorbitant passions of men, by the force of laws, by the influence of example, and that authority and ascendant which the fortunes and abilities of the great ones give them over

their inferiors, is, in my judgment, a much more signal service to God and man, than it can ever be to debate a controversy, or write an exhortation.

Having thus demonstrated that persons of rank and fortune lie under many and strong obligations to activity, in their sphere, and confuted those objections which are commonly opposed against it, I will proceed to lay before them, with all due respect, such rules as may guard them against that envy and danger, that toil and discontent, which usually accompany the motion of the great, as dirt or dust that of their chariots; and which, on the other side, may render their activity a great instrument of their felicity. For I would not that such as are the common patrons and benefactors of mankind, should meet with no other recompence but trouble and hazard; as if, like clouds, they could not refresh and impregnate the earth, unless they were themselves dissolved and wasted into showers: I would have every worthy action to be an accession to their greatness, and every honourable performance to carry with it a reward, which should not depend upon the humour of the Prince, or levity of the people.

Subsect. 2. The rules to be observed by the gentleman in a public station, or in order to the happiness of a Civil Life, are, 1. He must be endued with knowledge. 2. With virtues proper for his rank and station. 3. He ought to be constant, resolved, and vigorous, throughout the whole conduct and course of his life and affairs. 4. His time ought not to be so wholly taken up in business, as not to leave vacancies for religion, meditation, and friendship.

1. He must be endued with knowledge. There is no fortune that knowledge better becomes, or that stands more in need of it, than a gentleman's; without it, an estate is rather cumbersome than useful, and the ignorant owner must be the tool of another's ambition or interest, the prey of a menial servant, or the property of an imperious wife, or wanton child; or, which is worse, of some crafty retainer, who grows impudent with the favour, rich with the spoils, both of the honour and fortune of his master: the

best that can befall such a one is, if he have the good luck to light into good hands, and join himself with a right party, he may be the appendage of some other's fortune, the shade of another, who intercepts the smiles and thanks due to him; he may, in a word, talk and act by the sense and reason of his party. But this is a poor and contemptible condition to a man of birth and fortune, to be incapable of employing or improving the advantages he is born to, and to be only the prey or tool of the cunning, avarice, ambition, and impotent passions of others; or, at best, the instrument of a wiser man; for the wise is born to rule the fool.

Nor is this all: the gentleman's ignorance is so much the more worthy of reproach, because he appears to be born to greater opportunities of knowledge; as he that stands upon a more eminent height naturally enjoys a more free and open prospect.

But what is worse than all this, a patrician fortune, joined with a plebeian understanding, renders a man not more liable to suffer mischief, than apt to commit it; for if the man have much passion, and no understanding, as wealth is apt to inspire men with pride and wilfulness, though it cannot with wisdom, what can be expected from such a person, who hath power enough to execute his passions, and no reason to restrain them! Who looks upon it as a contumely to be opposed; and though he hath no sense himself, is too big to hear from another? What can such a man be but a plague to himself and others? And what can his wealth and interest be, but restless instruments of evil? It is then indispensably necessary, as well for the avoiding evil, as doing good, that the great man be endued with a good understanding.

The first thing he ought to be well acquainted with, is Religion, as the only source of solid wisdom: nor indeed, can I see how a man can be considerable without it; for though base ends require base instruments in all other cases, I see not how either Prince or people can trust those men who are false to God and themselves: it is scarce to

be expected, that he who sacrifices his religion and his reason, that is, himself, to any lust or passion, should be nice or scrupulous of giving up a remoter interest or obligation to it. But when I say the gentleman should be acquainted with religion, I do not mean that he should perplex himself with the disputes that have debauched, or subtleties and niceties which have dispirited or enervated, Christianity; I would have him have so much illumination as to be able to distinguish between natural religion and the politics, revealed religion and the fancies and whimsies of man; I would have him thoroughly instructed in the reasons and grounds of our common Christianity; and study and ruminate them until he feel the power of them, and find himself formed and impressed by them. He understands religion well, who learns from it what it is to be just, and derives from it courage enough to dare to be so. I should think it a necessary part of this knowledge, or at least a good accomplishment in a gentleman, to be so far acquainted with ecclesiastical story, as not to be ignorant what influence religion, or the pretences of it, has upon the world, and what use cunning men have ever made of it; by what degrees or what arts the maxims of the world have been incorporated into religion, and the Church hath wound and insinuated itself into the State. Thus you will discern what the true measures of religion are; you will have a just regard for wise constitutions, without bigotry; you will free yourselves from all those doubts and scruples which usher in atheism and profaneness; and, in a word, you will find religion the true standard of discretion, the effectual instrument of private and public good, and the infallible guide to honour and happiness.

Next to the knowledge of religion, follows the knowledge of the world; which may be divided into the knowledge of matters and men; which is so necessary in every part, in every act of life, but especially of a public one, that I cannot but wonder at the vanity of such as can fancy it possible to fill any station honourably or happily

without it. The confidence of other wretched projectors seems to me modesty, compared to the shamelessness of such men as obtrude themselves upon affairs of a public nature, unstudied, unversed in things of men, that is, totally unqualified; which whoever considers the difficulty of managing them well, or the mischievous consequences of miscarrying in them, must confess. Let the gentleman therefore study the laws of the realm; its changes and revolutions in their causes, progress, and effects; its natural and political strengths and weaknesses, defects and excellencies; together with its foreign interests, relation, and dependancies: nor let him be wholly ignorant of the frame and policy of other kingdoms, though he ought to be best versed in our own. He must travel abroad, but dwell at home; for I would have him have a veneration, not superstition, for the laws and customs of his own country: I doubt the wisdom of our own nation is not great enough to justify the neglect, much less the contempt, of that of foreign ones. And because what they call the law of nature, is only the law of right reason, in those great precepts of it which seem immutable and inviolable, and the same in all times and places, he ought not to be a stranger to this, lest, being ignorant of the true grounds of human society, and of the nature and obligation of particular laws, every new emergency, or deviation from the common road, discover his insufficiency; for it is a miserable thing to see how, through the weakness of some, and the subtlety of others, laws which should be the fences and bulwarks of the people, are often made their chains and fetters; and those public and solemn ties which were designed to strengthen the constitution, become the most fatal engines of undermining and subverting it.

After all, that I may not seem to be treating rather of speculation than action, and to have proposed such knowledge, as if I were recommending rather a life of study than of business, I must put you in mind, that the design of this sort of learning ought to make men wise, not subtle; judicious, not disputative; that curiosity or dili-

gence, in matters minute or subtle, has more in it of amusement than use, and that to lay the foundation too deep and broad, does seldom quit the cost; and, in a word, it seems to me to be in policy as in religion,—he is the most prudent who best understands the particular laws of his particular station, as he is the most religious who is best learned, not in the universal scheme of theology, but in the regulation of his own affections, and the conduct of his own life.

But in vain does he study things who knows not men; for man is the instrument of power and policy, and whoever knows how to manage and gain an ascendant over him, is the most considerable in his country, and able to do the greatest mischief, or the greatest good. But when I talk of knowing men, I mean not only such a knowledge of particular persons as may instruct you what to hope, or what to fear from them; what employments or trusts they are fit or unfit for; and, in a word, who are proper or improper instruments in different affairs, times, and circumstances; but also the knowledge of human nature; to be thoroughly read in all the springs and resorts of human actions, in all the various passions and diseases of the mind of man, with all their causes and cures, and to be able to distinguish the genuine and natural, from the acquired and artificial person. And because not single persons only, but times and ages, nations, cities, and lesser bodies and societies, have their particular temper and genius, these must not be neglected neither. This is the knowledge, which, together with a dexterous application of it, is the very life and soul of true policy; but after all, both with respect to the public, and a man's own good, that ought to be a rule for the man of business which St. Paul prescribes for a Bishop: "Let him first learn to rule his own house well." He that will be truly wise, should know himself first, ere he goes about to know the world; and begin the practice of his politics in his own family, and in the due administration of his domestic affairs, in which, if he cannot succeed, I must confess I

cannot see what encouragement either Prince or people can have to confide in such a one; for the disorders of a private fortune are very ominous presages of a mal-administration of public trust. Nor can I see what can induce such a man to undertake it, but the mere hopes of repairing his private dilapidations with the stones and timber of the public.

But after all, how necessary soever I account knowledge in a gentleman engaged in an active station, yet I cannot but observe, that whether we regard the public or the private, wickedness has ever been more fatal to both than ignorance; and all trusts have suffered more in the hands of the false and the base, than of the unfit and insufficient. Therefore,—

2. The gentleman ought to be enriched with virtues, especially those which become his rank and station. Knowledge is but the seed of virtue, and like that it only rots and putrefies, if it grow not up into excellent habits, and bring forth fruits of virtuous actions. There is scarce any station which does not require a particular virtue, either to discharge or adorn it: one patience, another courage, a third vigilance; there being scarce any office or business which is not liable to some particular inconveniences and temptations: but it being impossible for me to prosecute all these, I will only insist on two or three which are essential to all true greatness, and, if I am not much mistaken, to a happy and prosperous despatch of all affairs; I am sure to the security and felicity of the public and private: these are integrity, magnanimity, humanity.

By integrity I mean two things,—justice and truth: the first to regulate our actions, the second our words. Nor do I take justice in a beggarly sense, as if the gentleman had acquitted himself well enough, if there were any plausible pretence to excuse a violation or omission of a duty; as if he were to regard more what the law could compel, than what honour did oblige him to: and by honour, I mean the testimony of his own conscience, both concerning his impartial inquiries after the right, and

sincerity in pursuing it; for I would not have him appear to do right, rather out of the fear of infamy, than love of virtue.

The word of a gentleman ought to be fixed and immoveable as fate, sacred and inviolable as the altar. Contracts, and evidences, and seals, and oaths, were devised to tie fools, and knaves, and cowards: honour and conscience are the more firm and sacred ties of gentlemen. Nor must this honour extend only to private dealings, but much more to public; in which, how noble is it to see integrity triumphing over interest and passion! To see a great man preferring truth and justice to the menaces of Princes, and readily quitting all interest, and all parties, to support the public safety and honour, or fall with it. But as heroic as I would have a gentleman be, I would not have him led or imposed upon by empty noise and names. If he love a good name, much more a good conscience; for I would have him as judicious as resolved, as bright and luminous as brave and inflexible. I admire not an integrity that bids defiance to prudence and right reason; I love a steady faith and immoveable justice, but not romance and fancy; I would have a great man not insensible of a difference between loyalty and slavery, between tyranny and anarchy; and in the same manner he must be able to distinguish between a serpentine subtlety, a stupid insufficiency, and want of necessary address and dexterity. Without such a competency of knowledge, all will be folly, not integrity; vanity, not constancy.

As there is an integrity in action, so is there in speech too, which seems not to consist in bare truth only, but also in an ingenuous openness and freedom; cloudiness and ambiguity being rather fit to disguise ignorance or design, than to express the sentiments of a wise or an upright mind. Yet in words, as well as deeds, there is an extreme: though frankness and openness in conversation, like free and a generous air, become a gentleman, I would have freedom violate discretion; too many and

wide apertures, if they add beauty, certainly diminish the strength of a building.

The next virtue beseeming a gentleman is magnanimity. By which I do not mean an empty tumour, but solid greatness of mind, which ought to discover itself in every instance of his life. I say in every instance; for I count it not enough to bear disappointments with moderation, unless he bear his success so too; I count it not enough to encounter dangers with courage, unless he encounter his pleasures with as great; and, in a word, there ought to be something even in his entertainments, as well as in his business, that may speak the strength, and wealth, and self-sufficiency of his mind. You will easily conclude this with me, if you allow these two or three things to be essential to true greatness of mind: An invincible courage and resolution, a rational and generous activity, and an enlarged and public spirit; which you cannot but allow, unless you think the coward and slave, the sluggard or sot, the sordid and selfish, may be reckoned among the magnanimous. But what principle, what foundation, is able to support so mighty a weight? Natural courage may make a man brave danger, or if that will not, ambition may, while it presents him with a more formidable evil if he turn his back upon the other; but what shall make the man modest and humble in his triumphs, who was gallant and daring in fight? Passion and revenge may make men firm and fierce in their contests; but what can make a man forgive, when he is in a condition to revenge an injury? The lust of power, and honour, and wealth, that is, self-love, may render a man active and industrious; but what is it that can prevail with him to sacrifice his own interest, and his family's, to public good? Nothing but religion. This then is the only basis on which magnanimity can stand. This, as it will secure us against errors, so will it against the inconstancy and injustice of the world; this will minister sufficient motives to generous actions, when we meet nothing but discouragements from all things else; this, if it will not make a public employment

honourable, will always make it safe; this, if it cannot render retirement pleasant, in all the changes of times and humours, will preserve a man steady and calm in himself.

But whilst I recommend magnanimity, I must not forget that there are follies and vices which often usurp its name. I never thought the love of our country implied a neglect, much less a contempt, of our private fortune; that a vain confidence or presumption in provoking dangers ought to pass for courage; nor do I think that a violent intrusion into business, or an indiscreet entangling a man's self in much, or engaging in any that is foreign and impertinent, deserves the name of industry and activity; or pride, stiffness, and savageness, the name of firmness and constancy; for I would have magnanimity rather lovely than haughty, rather revered than dreaded. Therefore,—

Humanity is the next virtue to be aimed at. Nothing can be more fitly joined with magnanimity, than compassion; with courage, than tenderness; nor with the felicity of a great fortune, than charity or bounty. I cannot think that there is a truer character of greatness, than to be a sanctuary to the injured, a patron to virtue, a counsellor to those that err, and a support to the afflicted, the needy, and defenceless. In these things consist the life and substance of humanity; the ornamental part of it is affability or courteousness.

The art of behaviour lies in a narrow compass; the whole skill of it consisting in obliging; which he shall never miss who has once possessed his soul with tenderness and goodness: for then every word, every action, together with the whole air of deportment, will be animated with a resistless sweetness, and will be nothing else but the portraiture and expression of those excellent dispositions. By this means too, the deportment will be natural, not artificial; and though it be generally kind, it will be more particularly so, where it meets with a more moving occasion. To which if it be added, that the carriage of a gentleman ought to be humble, but not popular; courteous,

but not cheap; you will decline all the considerable errors to which affability is obnoxious.

It was the custom of the ancients to deliver their instruction in short and plain sentences, without a laboured exhortation, or passionate enforcement. And certainly there is such a commanding authority in the dictates of truth and wisdom, such a majesty and loveliness in solid virtues, that did the simplicity and probity obtain in these, which is supposed to have done in those times, advice of this sort would easily make its way to the hearts of men, without the assistance of any motives. But I dare not be either so confident of my own performance, or of the times, as not to think it necessary to close the advice of these paragraphs with some arguments and motives to these virtues.

Shall I make use here of the topics of religion? Shall I invite you to integrity and magnanimity, from the omniscience and providence of God? Shall I put you in mind how little sordidness, falsehood, and fear, how little pride and insolence, can become the principles and persuasions of a Christian, concerning the emptiness of this world, or the lasting glory of another? Shall I press you to humanity, to meekness, and humility, by calling to your remembrance the life of Jesus, your frailty and mortality; and, what is worse, your sins and follies? Shall I show you how mutable and inconstant your fortune is; and if it were not, how inconsiderable a distinction this makes between you and persons of lower rank? And that they stand at least upon the same level with you, in respect of the substantial and solid interests of human nature, that is, the favour of God, virtue, grace, and glory? Alas! I am afraid you have generally but little relish of this sort of arguments.

But have you as little value for your country, as religion? Are you as little moved by the ruin of this, as the corruption of that? Behold your country, once formidable abroad, and well compact within; ah! now what reproach

does it not suffer abroad? what convulsions at home? Its wealth has neither service nor defence in it; its numbers are without courage, and its forces have nothing of strength or terror in them. Why all this? It bleeds in your factions and divisions; it reels and staggers under your softness and luxury; it is betrayed by your falsehood and cowardice. Ah! that its reformation might begin where its degeneracy has, and that it might recover by your virtues, the honour it has lost and forfeited by your vices! Pardon me; I do not here suppose that there are none exempt from this accusation; that in the body of the nobility and gentry there are not, even in this degenerate age, some instances of a true English courage and integrity: I only wish that there were more, that there were enough to atone for the rest, and to prop this declining State. Nor is it a petulant humour, but a zeal for your honour particularly, as well as that of the nation, that now acts me; for give me leave to put you in mind at length, that your honour, your interest, and your happiness, depend upon your integrity, magnanimity, and humanity; nor is it possible that the one should survive without the other.

(1.) Your honour. The whole world is possessed in favour of these virtues; and however it hath fared with some other, these have ever been in vogue, not amongst the best only, but worst of mankind. Some have openly defended intemperance and incontinence, but I think none ever yet in earnest, undertook the patronage of cowardice, perfidiousness, inhumanity, or insolence. I have never yet met with any, who have not thought it scandalous and reproachful to find less faith, less honour, less goodness, or, if you please, more cowardice, falsehood, and sordidness, in his lordship, or his worship, than in a groom or lackey. Nor did I ever find, that lands, and scutcheons, and honourable ancestors, were looked upon as mitigations, but rather aggravations, of such baseness and degeneracy: nor could any man ever think it a commendation to be the sink and sewers of a noble family, the ruin of an ancient,

and once stately pile, or the lees and dregs of a rich liq long since drawn off, and evaporated. Nor does your honour only, but,—

(2.) Your interest depends on these virtues. If you want these, I see not what you can possess, that can either gain you the favour of the Prince, or the esteem of the people. This sure is the reason why these virtues have ever been in such credit in the world, because their influence is so necessary, so universally serviceable, whether to the public, or to friends and dependants. That integrity which can give others ground to rely upon you, that generosity and magnanimity which raise their hopes and expectations, naturally give you an authority and ascendant over them, and you become the master of their lives and fortunes, whilst they promise themselves the protection or improvement of them from your virtues. To these then, you must owe the patronage and confidence of those above you; the dependance, love, and esteem of those below you; without which, what can you enjoy truly great and considerable? You are impotent and contemptible as ploughmen and sailors, when solitary and abandoned; your retinue and dependance, your friends and admirers, make you powerful: in short, a man of birth and fortune that is perfidious, cowardly, selfish, and proud, has not, in my judgment, or deserves not to have, half the interest an honest yeoman, or plain dealing tradesman, has in city or country; for what confidence can be placed in such a one? Will he be tender of the honour of his country, or his friend, who has no sense of his own? Or will he ever be a good patron or friend, who is ready to sacrifice all to his avarice? Nor is it a matter of small importance, that reputation founded in virtue, surmounts all sorts of difficulties, and crowns all undertakings with success; and since men are naturally backward when they are jealous and distrustful, but prompt and forward where they are secure and confident; it has ever been observed, that integrity (if not destitute of competent prudence) has in despatch of affairs out-stripped craft and subtlety. But

the weightiest consideration of all is, that these virtues, if they be not the surest foundation of greatness, are doubtless of happiness; for they will make a man find a tranquillity in his mind, when he cannot in fortune. The conscience of a man's uprightness will alleviate the toil of business, and sweeten the harshness of disappointments, and give him a humble confidence before God, when the ingratitude of man, or the iniquity of times, robs him of all other reward.

Having thus given an account of these two things, wherein consists the sufficiency of a man of business, that is, knowledge and virtue, I will proceed to the consideration of the third rule.

(3.) The gentleman ought to be constant, resolved, and vigorous in his motion. Constancy and vigour, whether in the acquisition of knowledge, or improvement of virtue, or management of affairs, are of the greatest importance. I ever prefer a strong before a fine edge; industry and resolution, before wit and parts. He that makes a daily progress, how slow soever it be, will in time reach his stage. Vast bodies and mighty armies, by constant marches, have travelled through those unknown regions, which a single person would almost despair of compassing in his lifetime. To what a height does the tree raise its head, though its root fix in the heart of the earth? Because though it grow slowly, and even imperceptibly, yet it grows constantly, and receives some accession every moment. This rule, as I insinuated before, is applicable to knowledge, virtue, and business. To knowledge: To what would not an ingenious person, furnished with all aids of science, advance his prospect, if he used but moderate industry, and proceeded regularly? What could there be in any science, which were either of any use or any certainty, that could escape him? And other things ought not to stop him; they may be his diversion, but ought not to be his study. I believe there are but few natures but are capable, if not of eminent accomplishment, yet of such improvement as may render them considerable

and useful, if they would apply themselves to the study of knowledge with any tolerable vigour, or exert their vigour with any regularity and uniformity; it is owing to laziness and wantonness, that the slow and heavy attain not to such abilities as might make them show tolerably well: and it is to the same that the quick and witty owe their want of solidity and judgment, while they discover only enough to make the world justly condemn them, as wanting to themselves and their country; being bad stewards of an improvable estate; ill masters of good parts.

Nor is constancy less serviceable in the pursuit of virtue, than of knowledge. Virtue, when acquired, is confessed by all, to be easy and delightful; but to acquire it, this is the difficulty; but it is such a one as constancy and courage would easily vanquish.

Let us suppose man infected in his nature, and, what is worse, overrun by vicious habits; yet even then, the same care, watchfulness, and discipline, that cure a chronical distemper of the body, would heal an habitual disease of the mind; and one may reform and enrich a degenerate mind with as little pains as it will cost to recover a decayed estate.

But let me return to my main subject, that is, the conduct of civil business. Here, I am sure, a uniform constancy and regular vigour is exacted by all. I have seldom observed men of great ability do great things without great diligence and resolution. I am sure I have seen them miscarry foully, when persons of lower talents have succeeded very well. Nay, the truth is, vigour and resolution are such noble characters, that whoever appears endued with them, can never himself miscarry, though his designs sometimes may; he generally appears a great man, even in the most unfortunate accidents, and makes ill success itself attest his sufficiency. But commonly difficulties give way to the diligence and resolution of great men; and if to-day will not, to-morrow will, smile upon their enterprises. There are lucky minutes, when what before had wind and tide against it, moves with the stream.

Whither will not he then carry his point, who never lets slip the lucky moment through negligence, and never fails through cowardice, or laziness, to urge and push on his good success?

But how much soever vigour and constancy be commended, as most serviceable to success in business, as one of the greatest perfections that man is capable of, and the best instrument of attaining all others, yet we must not forget, that the strength of our nature is soon broken if it be always strained, and the finest parts are soon tired, if they be incessantly employed; that man has a design to carry on, far nobler and more important than this of civil business; and that, so far at least, the pleasures of life are to be mingled with its toils and troubles, as to enable us the better to undergo them. Therefore,

4. The gentleman's time ought not to be so wholly taken up in business, as not to leave vacancies for religion, meditation, friendship, and diversion. They are two extremes, fatal to happiness, to have no business at all, or so much as leaves no room for books or friends, for meditation or necessary diversion: for this makes life very barren and very dull; it makes business mere drudgery, and places the great man in a more toilsome condition than the mean one. Nor is this the only evil of an uninterrupted pursuit of worldly business; but what is worse, it extinguishes all relish of heavenly things, and instead of the courage and peace, with which religion inspires men, it leaves them without any rational support or comfort, either consuming with perplexed and anxious thoughts about the event of things, or hardened into a neglect, if not contempt, of religion, proposing to themselves no other or higher end of life, than the acquitting themselves well in the station they are in, and ascribing the issue of affairs to no other providence than such as they are daily wont to employ about them.

When I demand a vacant time for religion, it must not be supposed that I do not look upon religion as the first and greatest business of life; it being in vain to gain the

whole world for him who loses his soul, or to be intent in advancing the peace and welfare of the public, for him whose mind is filled with disorder and guilt. I therefore suppose all the actions of the day so conducted, as to become instances of christian virtue. I suppose justice and integrity, courage and bounty, patience and gentleness, mingling themselves in the discharge of every civil business. And then, the religion for which I demand some vacant moments, is that of public and private devotion, without which it is impossible for the great man either to preserve reputation without, or peace within. Public devotion is not only an act of worship due to God, but in a gentleman, a testimony of the honour which he has for the community which he is of, and an expression of charity towards those who are influenced by his example. Nor is his private devotion less necessary than public, not only because public without private degenerates in formality, into a mere show without the power of godliness; nor yet because every man's reputation flows first from his domestics, who can have no great veneration for him who appears to have none for his God; but especially, because every man has particular wants and particular obligations, and none more than the great one; and therefore, must offer up to God his particular petitions and prayers. I cannot therefore tell how to think, that he who does not begin and close the day with prayers to God, can believe there is one; he that does not invoke Providence, seems to defy it; and he who sacrificeth not to God, sacrifices only to his own nets.

As to meditation, it is so essential a part of religion, and so indispensable a preparative for devotion, that I should not have placed it here by itself, did I not extend its design something further. Meditation is that act, which, of all others, does most delight and nourish the mind, which, of all others, is most fit to raise and strengthen it. In other actions, we seem to move mechanically; in this alone, rationally. In all other, our reason seems confined and fettered by, I know not what prescriptions, customs, and

circumstances; in this alone, it seems to enjoy its native freedom with delight, stretching and dilating itself. In all other things, the mind seems to be impressed and moulded by the matter and business about which it is conversant; but in this, it gives what forms and circumstances it pleases to both: in this it has a kind of creative power, and I know not what sort of despotic sovereignty. In a word, he who is ignorant of the force of meditation, is a stranger to the truest pleasures of human life. The use of meditation consists either in reflection or preparation, as regarding alike yesterday and to-morrow. It is highly necessary that he look back upon his day past, who lies under so many temptations to waste it, that he whose actions are of so much greater importancce than those of private men, and fall unavoidably under a more general and severe censure, do the more carefully scan them over. Nor is preparation less necessary than reflection, for this gives order to your affairs, and forms the mind into a fit and just disposition; it prevents surprises, removes difficulties, and gives beauty and steadiness to your whole conduct.

As to friendship and diversion, I shall speak but a word of them here. It is a hard matter for great men to have sincere friends, but this being a purchase of so great a value, deserves they should lay out all their art and interest upon it. For besides the advantages of friendship in every condition, that it clears our notions, corrects our errors, confirms our virtues, enlarges our joys, and lessens our troubles; it is to men in an eminent station more peculiarly necessary, both as the ornament and support of their fortune.

As to diversion, it ever must be such as may consist with the dignity of the person, such as may not lessen his character, or waste his time; such as may refresh and recruit nature, and from which he may return to his business with new vigour and new appetite, and it were very well, if diversions were so wisely contrived, that they might at once delight and improve the mind: I should therefore

think that physic or husbandry, music, architecture, and such like, might be proper entertainments of vacant hours: but if the health of the body, as well as pleasure of the mind, be aimed at in diversion, it were well to have always ready some wise friends, by whose help and conversation, the time you bestow upon the health of the body, may not be utterly lost to the mind.

CHAPTER II.

Of the Trading Life:—Subsect. 1. *Rules relating to Success in Trade. Subsect.* 2. *Rules relating to his Religion.*

My latter years have been spent mostly among the trading part of mankind, and I have received many obligations from them; and I think myself bound to do them this right, to let the world know, that I have found more honour and gratitude, more clearness and integrity amongst this sort of men, than I ever could amongst others, whose quality and education raised my expectations higher: it will be therefore, no small satisfaction to me, if any endeavours of mine can render them any service.

There is no condition of life free from temptations and difficulties, and therefore neither this of trades. The evils they are subject to may be reduced to two heads: Their miscarrying in trade, or in religion. I will therefore begin with such rules as may serve to prevent the former, and proceed to such as concern the latter.

If we trace the ruin of such as fail or break, back to its original, we shall find it, generally, to be either idleness, or pride. Idleness, the parent of all sottish vices; pride, the parent of expensive follies, and ruinous projects. I will therefore lay down these two rules, as the foundation

of the Trader's secular prosperity: 1. That he must be diligent and industrious: 2. That he must not be above his profession.

1. He must be diligent and industrious. You seem born for industry; and though some pretend to be sent into the world only to enjoy a fortune; it is plain you are first to raise one; and though there may be some fortunate men in the world, that seem to thrive rather by chance than virtue, yet, in the ordinary methods of Providence, diligence and industry are the highway to wealth and plenty. And I know not with what confidence men can promise themselves the blessing and favour of God on any other terms. He has made nothing to be idle and useless: the heavenly bodies never cease to yield their light and influence, nor the terrestrial ones their fruit. We ourselves subsist by a continual motion; and should our blood and spirits grow dull and sluggish, our life must needs expire with their activity. "Man is born to labour as the sparks fly upward;" our capacities and endowments destine and urge us to it, the necessities and wants of this needy state (in which nature, how kind soever it was to the golden age, does not furnish us with any thing, without art and industry) exact and demand it, and the laws of human society oblige us to it; for it is but fit that every one should contribute for the entertainment of the public, and that he should not, like a drone, be feasted and maintained by the labour and travel of others.

And so far, lastly, is Christianity from abrogating the law of nature, that it earnestly enforces it: "Let ours learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful;" that is, that they be not a shame and burden to themselves and families, to the commonwealth or christian profession. Propose not then, (I address myself here to beginners,) propose not to exempt yourselves from that universal law of labour to which the whole creation is subjected; you especially, who lie under more immediate and particular obligations to it.

It is an unaccountable folly for one, who is to make his

fortune in the world, to apply himself to trade, rather as a diversion than business, and to design it only as a support for sloth and luxury: it is madness in any one to propose to be master of his time, ere he be master of his trade, and to indulge his pleasures before he has made provision to defray the expense of them. And yet this, I doubt, is too general a practice; whereas, would young men consider the matter aright, they would find that they do but make their troubles and vexations endless, by indulging their ease and laziness.

2. The trader must not be above his calling. Pride and vanity are generally sworn enemies, both to the content and prosperity of traders. They either tempt him to despise and neglect his trade, or put him upon expenses which it cannot maintain, and engage him in bold or hazardous projects. These I would fain reform; and methinks a few sober reflections should here prevail: what, can it be sense to make a show abroad at the expense of your content and peace at home? Is it not much better to be modest and safe, to be humble and at ease, than to suffer daily anxieties and perplexities, and to have your mind always upon the rack, how to answer the importunities of pride and vanity? It is worse yet, when a short piece of pageantry ends in perpetual infamy, when this impotent humour is nourished by robbery and injustice, by fraud and cheats. I must confess, I am amazed to think that any one should be pleased by a false and fatal grandeur, upheld only by wrong, and resolving in a moment into indelible shame and irretrievable ruin. For my part, I should in this case look upon bravery, not as the mark of greatness, but ornament of a sacrifice; not as the pomp of a triumph, but a funeral. As to those who scorn their profession, I have but this to say, Let them find out a more thriving one before they leave the old one; before they desert the profession they were bred to for its meanness, let them make sure of a more honourable employment, or else the scorn they load their trade with, will be want of sense, not greatness of spirit; a lazy pride, not a

generous ambition; and if so, I am sure there is no profession so mean as that of sloth and looseness.

Subsect. 2. The second sort of rules are such as concern the Religion of the Trader or Artisan; for it is to little purpose that he thrive in his secular, if he run out in his christian, calling. Therefore, 1. He must be sure that his calling be lawful. 2. That it be carried on with truth, justice, and charity. 3. That his attendance on the business of this world, do not extinguish his concern for a better. 4. That he propose to himself proper and rational ends of trading.

1. He must be sure that his calling be lawful; that is, such as is neither forbidden by any law of God, or the magistrate, nor does in its own nature minister to vice. But that I may not perplex men's minds with unnecessary scruples, you must know some things minister to sin directly and necessarily, others only accidentally, not by the intention of the artist or trader, but the abuse of others. The former sort of trades are unlawful in themselves, and no pretence can sanctify the use of them; he that directly ministers to a sin, communicates in the guilt of it, as he that purveys for the lust of others, partakes of the sin of the adulterer and fornicator; but those which minister not immediately, but accidentally, are yet in themselves lawful; nor shall the trader communicate in those abuses to which the lusts and vanities of others prostitute them: thus taverns are not unlawful, because abused by intemperance; nor are all shops of clothing to be shut, because thence people furnish themselves with such things as inflame their immodesty and pride: the reason is plainly this, because the sin may be separated from the trade: that wine, whose full draughts are by some made use of to the defacing reason, and enkindling lust, may as well refresh the weary, and delight the moderate. The inconvenience would be insufferable, if every profession which did but indirectly and casually administer to vice, were therefore sinful: the courts of justice must be laid aside, because, often the bar and bench have contributed to oppress and rob in form of

law: the pulpit must be for ever silenced, because men have sometimes sown the seeds of sedition. Yet here it must be confessed, that the more or less tendency any trade hath to the promoting vice, it is in the same proportion the more or less eligible. And that it imports men, who love their peace and happiness more than gain, not to debauch their callings by prostituting them to extravagancies and exorbitancies, and projecting profit from the intemperances and sins, that is, the ruin of others; for it is not sufficient to the peace and comfort of a man's mind, that his calling be innocent, if his conduct of it be not so too.

2. Trade ought to be managed with truth, justice, and charity; for without these it is only a more cleanly art of cheating, or oppression; sins which I doubt can receive but little excuse or mitigation, from the custom and practice of them: without these, trade cannot be regular and easy, nor gain comfortable and delightful; since no man can have any confidence in the protection of God, when the methods of his thriving are such as merit vengeance, not a blessing. Nor can I see any thing that can betray men into lying and knavery, but the want of true sense, as well as true faith; since though many have enriched themselves, yet it is evident the wealth which is more regularly purchased, is more pleasant and lasting; and that honest and equitable dealing is the surest, if not the speediest way to wealth. Nor are there, I believe, many instances of men, who, if they understood their business, have ever suffered much by their integrity in dealing; it being very hard to imagine, that a trader should be a loser by those virtues which advance credit and reputation: but however this be, I am not now inquiring after wealth, but happiness, to the obtainment of which I am very positive, that the observation of these measures is indispensable, since the contrary must needs pervert the mind, and entangle life; and as they extinguish in the soul all sparks of honour and greatness, so must they its courage and confidence, tranquillity and peace, which can result from nothing but the

due moderation of our affections, and the conscience of our integrity.

3. The trader's attendance on his calling, must not discharge him from his attendance on religion. It is true, that the duty of every one's secular calling is a part of religion; but this ought to be well understood, that so neither a veneration for religion breed a neglect of your callings, nor an overfond opinion of the merit of industry in your calling, as if all virtue were comprised in it, breed a contempt of religion. It is fit therefore to put you in mind, that arts and trades have not in themselves any direct or immediate tendency, either to the improvement of reason, or the production of virtue; they minister to the necessities of this world, not the glories of another. Nor are they so much the works of a rational and spiritual, as of a mortal and indigent, being. From whence it follows, that though they are necessary to the present state of things, yet can they deserve to employ you no longer than either the public benefit, or private convenience, requires it; and that you are then only wisely taken up about these, when neither your endowments, nor fortunes, capacitate you for a life more immediately and directly serviceable to the purposes of reason and revelation. Finally, that the works of a secular profession are then only acceptable sacrifices to God, when consecrated by wise principles and virtues, cleaving to and mingling with them. Do not therefore think, that a pretence of business can cancel your obligations to the duties of Christianity.

If a man could fancy, which I never can, business and religion incompatible, it is evident which were to be preferred; since if the will of God were so, it is much better to be starved than to be damned: but without carrying the matter so far, it is plain, that virtue and religion, with a competency, render men abundantly more happy than wealth can do, if attended with the neglect or contempt of either: it is the riches of the mind that makes men great and happy; the ignorant and irreligious can never be either. Let no man, therefore, think that he suffers any damage, if

he be forced to maintain his religion by the diminution of his trade; though I cannot comprehend that there can be a necessity of this; for I have never yet observed any man so overcharged with business, as not to find time for pleasure, when he has pretended he could find none for religion.

In a word, the neglect of religion is capable of no excuse, not only because your future, but present happiness depends upon it. Modesty or moderation to curb a vain and ambitious thirst of wealth; faith or confidence in the Providence of God, to restrain you from mean, base, and unlawful courses; self-resignation to prevent anxiety, and those fears to which the uncertainties, changes, and revolutions of times and trade make men subject, seem to me as necessary to the peace and happiness of a trader, as a competent stock, industry, or skill, can be to his worldly prosperity: and though men, who allow themselves no time, either for attendance upon public religion, or private meditation, may talk finely of these virtues, it is impossible they should be really possessed of them: "How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, and that glorieth in the goad, that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labours, and whose talk is of bullocks?' which the author of Ecclesiasticus, by a parity of reason, extends further to all traders and artisans, who are, in like manner, wholly taken up in their art. I could therefore wish that those words of our Saviour, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul," were written in capital letters in the most conspicuous place of the counting house, and the shop, that you might ever and anon be put in mind, that there is one thing more necessary, than the diligent management of your trade, namely, religion: for to what purpose is it that your books are well kept, that there is order and regularity in the whole conduct of your trades, if at the same time your neglected hearts lie like the field of the sluggard, waste and open, and overgrown with briars and thorns; or like a confused and entangled stock of an unskilful trader,

which wastes and decays each day? To what purpose is it that you be punctual dealers towards men, if you be bankrupts towards God? To what purpose is it that you have credit and honour upon the Exchange, if you be poor and beggarly, shameful and sneaking, in yourselves; having your souls destitute of any true peace, wealth, or courage?

Ah! while you pursue the world, forget not that there is a heaven; and while you make provision for time, make some too for eternity: let your stating your accounts with men, put you in mind of clearing your accounts with God; and let these two things never be out of your thoughts, First, That it is God who gives man power to get wealth; and next, That it is not a clear estate, but a clear soul, that makes man happy; I mean, a soul freed from silly and vile affections, and enriched with the knowledge and love of God.

4. The trader must propose to himself proper and rational ends of trading: for whoever proposes to himself vain and false ones, will entangle his life in manifold troubles and temptations, and lose his reason, religion, and tranquillity, in the windings and mazes of wretched fancies, and unaccountable projects. The ends of trading I take to be these three:—(1.) A competent and honest support of yourselves and families. (2.) A charitable succour and relief of others. (3.) A timely retreat from a secular calling, to a private life.

(1.) A competent and honest support of yourselves and families. This end is pointed out by the Apostle, (*Tit.* iii. 14,) and called necessary uses; *i. e.*, we must design in trade, the support of the necessities, not lusts, of nature. Nor is your care here limited to your own necessities only, but those also of your children and posterity; but then, lest under this pretence you extend your desires beyond bounds, you are to remember, that in resolving the measures of this provision, you are not to take counsel of your own ambition, or the wanton expectations of your children. That provision for them is wisest, which lays a sufficient

foundation for their industry to build on, and leaves them under an obligation to business and employment. And is not this enough? To what purpose should men toil, cark, and pinch, to make their families rich and great, that is, lazy and wanton? to leave behind them an estate which their own example proves more than necessary? For most of those that do so, have made little use of it themselves. Mistake me not; I do not think it unlawful to be rich, or to leave one's family so; but I think it foolish and unlawful too, to sacrifice the peace of one's mind, and the ease of one's life, to the lust of riches: I think it silly and vicious, to raise a family by meanness and sordidness, or to lay the foundation of children's greatness, in one's own infamy. You may receive temporal good things with gratitude, and enjoy them with moderation; but if you dote upon them, you violate the vow of your baptism, and virtually renounce your faith: for would not this be to forget, that Heaven were your kingdom and country; and Earth the place of your exile, or at best, pilgrimage?

This is a lesson that can never be too often inculcated, not only on the account of that violent opposition it is almost every where encountered with; but also the vast importance it is of, to the quiet and contentment of a trading life. This one thing is the philosophy the trader should be ever studying, the wisdom he should be daily pursuing; that is, a true and just moderation of his desires of wealth. Did man know how to bound his desires by the necessities or conveniences of life; could he regulate his appetites by the modesty and moderation of Christianity, not by custom and fancy; I am confident this one thing would rescue him from the greater part of the evils and incumbrances which infest human life. Vanity and ambition, envy and emulation, wantonness and fancy, create most of those difficulties and necessities which stain the beauty, disturb the peace and order, and destroy the pleasures of life. When men's desires and aims are too big for their callings, they are unavoidably plunged into discontent and doubtful projects; and if they sink not finally

into ruin, they cannot be held up but by such an anxious and restless prosecution of the world, as looks rather like hurry or distraction, than trade or employment. I can therefore never think a tradesman happy, till he has modesty enough to find content in a moderate and easy trade; till he understands what are the bounds which his nature and his station set him; and though he know how to enjoy a great fortune, does never want one; has sense enough to use it, and virtue enough not to let his happiness depend upon it.

(2.) A charitable succour and relief of others. It is confessed by all, that men are born, not for themselves only, but for others too; and God, the dispenser of temporal wealth, commands "such as are rich in this world, to be rich in good works too:" but it is always to be provided, that justice first take place, and then charity. This direction therefore supposes the trader's accounts to stand fair; it supposes him to have discharged the duties which he owes to his relatives and dependants, or else to have none. I will not insist on the obligation or pleasure of charity; I will not press you to it by the interest of your present or future happiness: for the truth is, to do right to the trading world, there is no rank or order of men in the kingdom that is more sensible of the duty of charity, or more inclined and disposed to it; none that give more eminent proofs of it while living, or leave more glorious monuments of it behind them.

One thing only I will take upon me to recommend to you; that is, the advice of Solomon: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest:" that is, whatever good you design to do, do it speedily, and as much as in you lies, be your own executors. How often are excellent purposes strangled in the birth, by an unexpected death? How frequently are they perverted by the corruption or negligence of those to whose inspection they are committed? Besides, this way you shall reap the fruit of your own plantations; you will

enjoy the satisfaction resulting from the beauty and good contrivance of the foundations you have laid, or you will be able to supply the defects, or correct the errors, of your model, and prevent those future miscarriages which such designs are liable to. Though all this be very much, yet it is but the least part of what you will reap from being yourselves the executors of your own bounty; you will be sure that you dedicate it to charity, not to vanity; that you are building alms-houses for the living, not tombs and pyramids for the dead; you will escape the common cheat and imposture the rich put upon themselves, while they entangle themselves in covetousness all their lives, under pretence of designing mighty things after death.

(3.) The tradesman ought to propose to himself a timely retreat; *i. e.*, if the necessities of this indigent state will give way to it. It is natural to finish business ere we finish life; to lay down our burden ere we fall under the weight of it; and quit troublesome employments, before the bungling discharge of them proclaim the decay of our parts and strength, and the increase of our avarice and ambition: nay, the very continuance of the same cares for the world, which looked before like prudence, will, in old age, be reckoned sin and folly. To trade, is but to make provision for life; and therefore since common sense will tell us that we must not be always providing for life, and never live; it is plain, men ought, if they may, at length break off their trade, or at least so contract it, that it may be rather diversion than travail. As SOLOMON sends us to the ants to learn industry, so might he to learn wisdom too: the enjoyment of their treasure in the winter, being no less an instance of the one, than their labour in laying it up in the summer, of the other.

If these motives seem light, there is another of more weight behind, that is, the consideration of your eternal interest. It is highly necessary to leave the world, before you be torn from it; and to acquaint yourselves more familiarly with another world, before you pass into it for ever. Certainly it requires some time to prepare the soul

for death and judgment; and that man will be very unfit for either, who is carried from the counter to the grave, and from the entanglement of secular cares, to the tribunal of God. But besides the benefits which you will find in retirement, the prospect of it has many in it: the hopes of a Sabbatic year in life, will ease the weight of those that precede it; and a design of retreating from trade and business, will be apt to induce men to pass their first years with more moderation and abstinence, that they may the sooner provide the means of an easy or honourable retirement.

These rules, well observed, would free the trading life from all the great evils and inconveniences it is subject to. Business would be, not the curse, but the blessing, of mankind; and trade would be as innocent, if not as pleasant, as Adam's husbandry in his garden: for thus industry would be without drudgery, and care without anxiety; commerce would be carried on without any mean artifice, without tormenting designs, or vexatious disappointments. What need would there be of shifts and equivocations, of fraud and circumvention, if every man had faith enough to believe, that God's blessing upon his industry were the only way to grow truly rich? I mean to get, if not so much as he would, yet as much as would be good for him? What temptation would a man lie under to bondage and drudgery, or to perplexity and anxiety, if he could contain his desires within those narrow bounds which nature and his station have prescribed him? What fears could disquiet the mind, which were formed into an entire resignation to, and dependence upon, God? Or how could the world ensnare that soul which allots a proper time for public religion, and private meditation? In a word, these rules being followed, men would not only avoid the common rocks on which the happiness and fortune of the trader generally dash, but also attain the end of this sort of active life; they would get estates in their younger years, and enjoy them in their riper. Nay,

no portion of life would want its proper and seasonable enjoyments: they would in the midst of business preserve their innocence; and when they retired from it, they would perfect that religion which they could before but begin.

CHAPTER III.

Of a Contemplative Life.

I DO not calculate this discourse for students, but for persons under no direction but their own; for such as make their retreat from the world, tired and sated with it; for those, whose inclination or fortune casts them upon a quiet and private life: to these, I offer myself a companion; I would enter with them into their privacies, and assist them to pass their hours with true pleasure and innocence. I would inspire them, if I could, with wise and excellent thoughts; I would engage them in the most necessary and most delightful business, and guard them against those evils and follies which are apt to insinuate into the most solitary life.

I must, in the next place, observe, that the life of man must neither be wholly contemplative, nor wholly active; for as action and business, without any meditation, is apt to alienate the mind from GOD, to corrupt all that is great and truly wise in it, and wed it wholly to the world; so I doubt a life spent wholly in contemplation, without any mixture of action, will prove fruitless and unprofitable; and men condemned to utter solitude, like the trees and shrubs of the wilderness, would grow wild and savage, luxuriant in leaves, but their fruit, if they brought forth any, sour and small. They forget the nature and the duty of man, and talk not seraphically, but fantastically, whoever persuade him to give up himself entirely to contemplation: man is yet a mixed and compound being; when he

becomes all spirit, let him be all thought: he is yet a citizen of this world, though he be destined for another; let him not forget that there are virtues becoming him as such; let him live by intuition, when he comes into the perfect light, and enters into the beatific presence; in the mean time, let man content himself with human virtue, in this low probationary state. I proceed to discourse of these three things:—1. The reasons and ends of a contemplative life. 2. The necessary qualifications for it. And, 3. The due regulations of it.

1. Of the reasons and ends of a contemplative life. (1.) Some propose to themselves ease and enjoyment, as the great end of their retirement. Now though this may be a mean project, little becoming the excellence of our Christian profession, yet I cannot but acknowledge, it seems to me an absurd thing, to wear out life in a continual hurry or drudgery; and I cannot but think it reasonable, that men should one time or other allow ease to the body, and quiet to the mind; should set both free from their servitude to the world, and eat the fruit of their travail and care: but though this be true, yet if men quit the business, only to give themselves up to the pleasures of the world; if they exchange their anxiety and toil for luxury and sensuality, and instead of being industrious and thriving traders, become idle, or, which is worse, loose and riotous country gentlemen; this, I must confess, is a miserable change; this is but to profane retirement, abuse plenty, and waste that precious time of which God has made them masters. This, in a word, is not for a man to quit his slavery, but to exchange masters: for as to the interest of another life, and the true end of this, it is much the same thing, whether a man be a servant to pleasure and sloth, or to covetousness and ambition.

The sum is plainly this: It is undoubtedly lawful for such as have been long toiled in the pursuit of the world, to retire and enjoy themselves and their friends: but if by enjoyment be understood only the gratification of the humour by outward pleasures, I must affirm, that it is too

mean, too low, to be the chief end of a retreat: and if, which is worse, by enjoyment be meant, growing fat with good eating and drinking, or, as it were, rank and rotten through ease and sloth, I deny this to be the enjoyment of a man, much less of a Christian. The enjoyment of a private life ought to consist in peace and order, in harmony and exaltation, in a holy calm and serenity, in which, as in a clear day, from the top of some advantageous height, we enjoy an enlarged and delightful prospect. When we look backwards, we behold a wide sea, covered with a vast number of all sorts of vessels, tossed up and down at the mercy of winds and waves, some few seem to make out with a steady course, but are immediately encountered with cross winds and storms, a very few indeed return in triumph homewards, and of these, some miscarry almost in sight of port. Of all the rest, a great part, with much toil and difficulty, scarcely live in stress of seas and weather; but the far greater part suffer wreck, and scatter their miserable ruins on every coast. When we look forward, we discover a rich and secure country, filled with all the marks of joy and victory. The enjoyment then of the retired, is to consist in the pleasant reflections they make on their escape out of a tempestuous world; in the intercourse they maintain with that above; in a calm and leisurely survey of all the various and wondrous works of God, the works of grace and nature; and lastly, in a familiar acquaintance with themselves, and the daily practice of pleasing and perfect virtues.

(2.) One end of retirement may be self-defence, or preservation. An active life is a state of war, and the world is an hostile country. Snares and ambushes are laid every where for us, and ever and anon, temptations, worldly and fleshly lusts, which "war against the soul," endeavour either to court and betray us, or to drive and force us to death and ruin. Therefore, if we be conscious to ourselves of our own weakness, we have reason not to expose ourselves to dangers, which we have not courage nor strength enough to vanquish; and to choose retirement, not as a

state of perfection, but safety. The measures of grace, the strength of reason, and the inclinations of nature, are very different in different men: whoever, therefore, upon the best survey he can make of his own forces, and after some, not insincere, trials, finds himself no match for the world, unable to countermine its policies, and oppose its power, such a one, if he can, may, nay, I believe ought, to retire from the world, as from the face of a too potent enemy. For though an active life be in itself more serviceable to mankind, yet in this case we may prefer a contemplative one as the securer; and this is not to prefer ease before spiritual industry, but before a rash presumption, and a fatal overthrow.

(3.) Another end of retirement may be, to render us more beneficial to the world. The different talents of different persons, seem to mark them out to different sorts of life. There are, if I may so speak, active and contemplative gifts, and it is a great felicity for any one to be able to know himself so well, as to discern what the God of nature has designed him for: some, who are a disgrace to a public station, would be an ornament to a private one; many who act but awkwardly, think very wisely and accurately; and some, who do but expose themselves in business, would pass very well in retirement, and prove excellent examples of innocence and virtue, and wonderfully oblige by their good nature, sweetness, and charity, all such as should live within the reach of their influence. None are wont more earnestly to covet retirement, than such as are naturally addicted to learning. Men too plain, or too great for a crafty world, too generous and tender for a bustling, vexatious one; these are the men, who when they are masters of their wishes, seem more particularly obliged to dedicate themselves to some eminent service of the public. These must not bury their talents, but ripen them in quiet and retirement. Like guardian angels, they should procure the honour and happiness of the places, which they seldom or never appear to; and withdrawing only, not to avoid the service, but the foolery of the world,

they must ever maintain an active charity for those they leave behind, caught and entangled in it. But though this direction more immediately concerns such as these, that is, men of parts, yet sure there are none utterly exempt from this obligation of procuring the public good in their proportion. Who is there so destitute of the gifts of grace, nature, or fortune, as to have no mite to cast into the public treasury? He that dares not attempt the enlightening or reforming the world, can yet advise and comfort his ignorant and afflicted neighbour; he who cannot give advice, may yet give alms, which very often is as solid and substantial a benefit; and he that cannot do this, can yet never be excused from offering up daily prayers for the peace and welfare of his country, for the preservation and edification of the Church, for the conversion of sinners; nay, he may proceed to what particularities he shall see fit or necessary, both in his petitions and thanksgivings, and from these intercessions both the public and private may, for aught I know, reap more true and valuable benefit, than from the works and labours of the learned, or from the alms and bounty of the rich. To conclude, he that leads the most private life, and is of the poorest endowments, can yet never be supposed utterly incapable of rendering any the least service to others: since the single example of virtue and integrity, and the warmth of a pious and edifying conversation, are of the greatest use. Some way or other, therefore, the most solitary life ought to serve the public, that so retirement may not minister to wantonness and sloth, but piety and virtue; and the world may not lose a member, but enjoy its service in its proper place, and most effectual manner. But,

(4.) The main end of retirement from the world should be, to dedicate ourselves more entirely to God. It was to this end that the Prophets, and the Essenes amongst the Jews, and many devout and excellent persons amongst the Christians, have chosen solitude and deserts. I mean not uninhabited places; (for that, if it were so, was an excess and extravagance;) but calm and silent retreats from the

noise and impertinence, from the hurry and distraction, of much business and much acquaintance: here a man seems to have little else to do, but to praise God and improve himself; to correct and subdue whatever he feels amiss in himself; to perfect and augment his graces; and to dress and adorn his soul for the festival solemnities of another world. Now he seems to have nothing to do, but to begin his hallelujahs; to advance into the confines of heaven by faith and devotion; and from the heights of meditation, to survey as from the next advantageous hill, the riches and the pleasures of that Canaan which he shall shortly enter into. And by this method, as he shall enlarge his appetite and capacity of happiness, so shall he enlarge his share in it: by this method he shall adorn religion, and represent it to the world as most lovely and most useful; he shall experience it to be unspeakably delightful in itself; he shall render the world more easy to him, and heaven more desirable; and when he comes to the banks of Jordan, which parts this world from the other, he shall find the streams of it divided to make him way; that is, the troubles and terrors of it dissipated; and he shall pass through it full of humble gratitude for the blessings of this past life, and ravishing hopes of those of the future.

2. I go on to the qualifications which fit men for a retired life: and these are, I think, three:—(1.) A plentiful, or at least, competent fortune. (2.) A mild and humble disposition; or, at least, a quiet and composed mind. (3.) A good understanding.

(1.) A plentiful fortune. It is true, that a competency is sufficient to render a retired life easy; and when any one betakes himself to it as a refuge, or sanctuary, against the hostilities of temptation, this is abundantly enough; but where a contemplative life is a matter of choice, a plentiful fortune is of great use, and a great ornament: it will make the example of a man's virtue shine with a clearer lustre, and greater authority; it will enable him to do many works of charity, which shall have much delight in them, without toil or disturbance; it will furnish him

with all useful means of public and private devotion, and with whatever is necessary to enable him to pass away the time both delightfully and rationally. By a plentiful fortune, I do not mean a great one: this is more commonly burdensome, than useful to a private life, and more apt to encumber it, than promote the true ends of it. In my retirement, I would have decency and order, but not state and show; I would have comely plenty, but not a toilsome affluence: for the business of solitude is to raise the mind, not to entangle and enslave it. But the measures of this wealth must finally be determined by every man's own bosom; for it ought to be proportioned to the temper and genius, to the capacities and abilities of the person who retires, and to the more immediate design and ends of his retirement. And after all, there is no greater stress to be laid upon this qualification than this,—It is convenient, but not essential: though a wise man may make an excellent use of it, it is not so absolutely necessary, but that he may be happy without it, both in public and private. For,—

(2.) The pleasure and success of retirement depend much more on a man's temper; that it be calm and quiet, that it be meek and humble. And if it be not naturally so, it must be made so; for a proud and ambitious, a restless and turbulent person, will in vain seek for that rest in sequestering himself from the world, which is to be found only in the subduing of his passions. He that is fond of esteem, he that is at the disposal of fancy and humour, and is not able to shake off the yoke of fashions and customs, will find much to torment him, but nothing to improve or delight him, in his retirement: but on the other hand, the meek and humble man will find his garden a paradise, and his solitude a conversing with God: he will enjoy the present, without any further prospect or ambition; meditate without any distraction; worship and praise God as if he had no other business; and do all the good he can in his little sphere, as if it were the only pleasure of the life he had chosen. It is one of the great privileges of retirement, to be

able to neglect imaginary good, and pursue that only which is substantial; to be the masters of our time and actions, and to model life by our own reason, not the fancies and humours of others. It is the great advantage of retirement, that a man has all the pleasure his soul desires within his own reach,—that all the world that is grateful to him, is to be found within the verge of his private abode. He, therefore, whose mind gads abroad, and hankers after foreign pleasures,—who is tainted with envy or emulation,—who hunts after esteem, and is discomposed by the fancy and censures of others, muddies the pure stream, corrupts the true relish of a retired life. This, therefore, ought to be the first endeavour of him who seeks happiness in a retreat: To free his mind from all those busy or ambitious passions which will disturb his repose, and corrupt his taste; and to reduce it to its native purity and simplicity, in which it will be able to relish the blessing of true liberty, of easy and innocent pleasures, of true and artless friendship, of regular and undisturbed devotion, and finally, of calm and elevated meditation.

(3.) A good understanding is a necessary qualification for retirement. It requires no little prudence to guard ourselves against those evils or impertinencies which will be apt to insinuate themselves into our solitude: decently to decline business, acquaintance, ceremonies, which will rob us of our time and liberty, and obstruct us in all the wise ends we propose to ourselves, is a matter of no ordinary dexterity and address. Nor does it require less understanding to preserve the peace and order of a private family; and yet it is in vain to shun the infection that is abroad, if more fatal and stubborn maladies reign at home.

Further, the family of the contemplative man ought not only to give him no disturbances, but, if possible, it ought to be moulded and composed to his own humour, and animated by inclinations alike to his. Nay, after all, let us suppose the man so entirely sequestered, as to be utterly disengaged from all other interests but his own, to have no dependance upon any other's motion, to have

none but himself to regard, no other to improve; even here I cannot tell whether so absolute a liberty do not need the greater wisdom to moderate and govern it, and whether it do not require a larger capacity to find a proper and wise employment, for one whose fortune has tied him to none at all. They are no ordinary endowments, which will enable one loose from all business, to spend his time profitably and pleasantly; and yet if he do not, he will be liable to the worst of evils; he will dissolve and putrefy in sloth, or else turn sour and savage, churlish and brutish, through ignorance, disgust, and discontent; nauseated with a life that affords him nothing new, nothing taking.

'But the book of nature lies open to him!' It is true, but he cannot read it: it is not every vulgar eye that discerns the delicate touches of a skilful pencil, the curious and subtile mixtures of light and shade in a well-drawn piece; it is not every spectator can judge of the beauty, strength, and convenience of a well-contrived building.

'But his cabinet may be well furnished!' It is true: but if he has no genius for eloquence, no ear for the music of wit and fancy, no judgment for history, no comprehension for arts or sciences; what is a cabinet to him, though furnished ever so well, either for use or rarity? It is only fit to be shown, or to sleep in; for after all the cost and skill laid out upon it, the couch is the best furniture in it.

'But there is friendship!' There is; the name indeed there is, but the thing is too divine: a low and grovelling soul, a dull and impenetrable temper, cannot discern the charms, nor taste the sweets of friendship. What is that familiarity which is incapable of tenderness or passion? What is that conversation which is incapable of variety, or depth of wit, or judgment?

'But there is religion, there is devotion, a boundless field of profit and delight!' It is true; and the principles of this are plain and strong, able to move the man of lowest capacity to decline evil, follow his calling, and do good in proportion to his sense and ability. But as to

seraphic, contemplative religion, for this to be the life and business of man, it requires a vast capacity, raised and refined notions, and little less than real enthusiasm; I mean, a truly divine impetus or ardour impressed or enkindled in the soul by the exuberant influxes of the blessed SPIRIT. In a word, he who in his retreat is entirely master of himself and time, had need of talents to employ him, to find him business and pleasure, and to enable him to reap benefit from the one, and to preserve his innocence in the other. And without this degree of understanding, a solitary life must be very dull and barren; nor can I think of any cure for this, but to increase a man's task and business, in proportion to the defect of his understanding, that so employment may fill those vacuities which contemplation never can. This puts me in mind to advance on to the third thing proposed, *viz* :—

3. The regulations of a contemplative life, which regard the time, the place, or the exercise and employment of retirement.

(1.) As to time. Though contemplation, more or less, ought to enter into every part of our lives, yet the most seasonable time of giving ourselves up to it, is the evening of life, the declension of our age. We have then had our fill of the world, and shall not be likely to hanker after it; we have seen the emptiness of it, and shall be more likely to fix upon solid good; we shall value our peace and calm the more, after we have been long tossed by storms. Besides, we shall set ourselves more seriously to the meditation of death and judgment, when we are come within view of them; and shall be apt to examine the intrinsic good and evil of things with more impartiality, when the heats of youth and the boilings of our passions are cooled; and finally, this is a seasonable time to correct and repair the errors of the past life, and to state our accounts for the last audit.

But though I thus prefer age, as most fit for a retired life, I do not dissuade the younger from it, provided it be virtue, not softness, the love of another world, not a

cowardly declining the duties of this, which prompts them to it. Otherwise, it were sure much better that the younger sort should be taken up by business; nay, should contend even with the cares, troubles, and difficulties of the world, rather than make choice of retirement to be the scene of a voluptuous, lazy, and unprofitable life: for in the one case something is every day learned, something done; in the other, nothing. In the one, the man lives neither dishonourable to himself, nor unuseful to his country; but in the other, he rots and consumes away ingloriously and unprofitably.

(2.) As to place. Solitude has ever been deemed a friend to meditation, and retirement from the world very serviceable to a conversation with heaven; and this opinion is much strengthened by the practice of the Prophets, and devout persons in the best times. Without question, a private retreat affords many conveniences and advantages to a contemplative life: leisure and silence settle and compose the thoughts, and the mind augments its strength and vigour by rest, and collection within itself; and in this state of serenity, it is most fit to reflect upon itself, or enter into a survey of the rest and peace of glorified spirits, and examine the grounds of its own hopes. By retirement we may disengage ourselves from those things which are apt either to soften or disturb us, and to breed in us either vanity or vexation; and I cannot tell, but the fineness of the air, the openness of prospect, and regularity and moderation of diet, rest, and exercise, may have that influence upon our bodies as to prepare them to be the fitter instruments of the mind. To all this we may add, that the variety, beauty, and use of all the works of nature, insensibly raise in us an admiration of the divine wisdom, and invite us to adore his power and goodness. But all this notwithstanding, it must ever be remembered, that retirement does not so much consist in solitude of place, as in freedom from secular business and troubles, from the allurements, distractions, and vexations of the world. If we put these off, we may find retirement

enough in the most populous city; but if we carry these with us into the country, we shall reap little benefit from change of place or air; and under the retirement, we shall be persecuted with all the evils with which vanity, disorder, and distraction, are wont to disquiet an active and busy life. This being rightly understood, the nature of our circumstances ought to govern us in choosing the place of our retreat, but especially a regard to those duties wherein we propose to spend the bigger portion of our time.

(3.) The exercise and employment of a contemplative life is now to be considered: and here these several things offer themselves immediately: Business, friendship, and meditation, as comprising all the several acts of a contemplative life.

[1.] Business. I have before said, that a life of mere contemplation is above the nature and state of man. And when I consider how few are capable of any long or regular contemplations, I am apt to think that the wisest way for most is, not to free themselves from all temporal engagements, but only from such as will disturb the peace and order of a retired life. And yet I could wish that their growth and improvement in knowledge and goodness, might be their main business and employment. So many indeed are our errors and sins, so frail, tender, and weak our virtue, that to correct the one and confirm the other, is business enough, and may of itself take up the whole of life. If we pursue diligently all the methods of the improvement of life, we shall need no other employments to spend our time. He that, besides a constant attendance upon public devotion, bestows some time each day on bewailing his sins, and blessing God for his mercies; on examining his present state, and establishing his future hopes; he that spends each day but a few thoughts on God, and Jesus Christ his Redeemer, on the vanity and uncertainty of all things in this world, but religion; or, finally, on death and judgment, and withal on the various arts by which sin is wont to cheat and surprise him, will, I believe, find but few hours to waste; especially when it

is considered how much time the necessities of nature, and the indispensible duties we owe to relatives, take up.

And this calls to my mind the vigilance and industry we owe to the happiness of others, as well as to our own. There are a great many offices of charity, to which humanity and our christian profession oblige us. The peace of the neighbourhood, the preservation of the laws, the promoting public piety, the instruction of the ignorant, the relief of the needy, the comfort of the afflicted, the protection of the injured; these, and such like occasions, will never be wanting to rouse our zeal, and employ our charity; and these are works which will turn to as good, if not a better account in the life to come, than solitary virtue. And certainly they turn to excellent account in this; for when the retired man doth cultivate the neighbourhood, and sow it with his charity, he seems but to plant and water his own garden, or plough and sow his own fields; and while he renders them more rich, gay, and fertile, himself reaps the pleasure and the profit, enjoys the prospect, and feasts on the fruit. Just so it is in this piece of spiritual husbandry; he who imparts wisdom and instruction to another, purifies and exalts his own mind; he that scatters the expressions of his bounty and charity, feels his soul warm and delighted, and finds his virtue enlarged. For it is with grace as it is with nature: the exercise of each breeds both strength and pleasure. To all which you may add, that no man consults more effectually the interest and pleasure of his retirement, than he who most zealously studies the support and improvement of his neighbourhood.

It is here very needful to put those I am discoursing to in mind to take care, that whilst they shun the trouble and business of the world, they suffer not themselves to be entangled in impertinences of their own creating; that they mind and pursue the main end, that is, increase in virtue, and be at all times ready to sacrifice matters of less moment to this their great interest; lest fancy and humour, or something worse, usurp the place of reason, as it does

too often happen, in a life of absolute and uncontroulable liberty.

[2.] As to friendship. The distinction between acquaintance and friends is ever good, but never more proper or necessary than here; for retirement, as it signifies sequestering ourselves from company, is to be understood with discretion. And the plain rule here, as in all other cases, is, to avoid extremes; as a crowd, so solitariness, seems not to minister either to the improvement of the mind, or to the peace and calm of life. The one robs us of our time; the other leaves us so much, that to many it becomes burdensome. The one makes us vain, trifling; or, it may be, worse, sensual; the other dull and slow; or, it may be, morose and savage. The skill of a contemplative man is not to decline all company, but provide himself of good. The Prophets themselves had their Colleges; and they in the first times, who left the cities, did yet associate themselves with one another. Indeed, as I take it, in this kind of life we have the fullest enjoyment, and the best service of our friends; the purest delight and the truest edification, being best promoted in the contemplative life by friendship: and therefore friendship is no more to be banished from the gardens and retirements of the contemplative, than from the tables and enjoyments of the active.

Lastly, Devotion. Prayer and meditation are the remaining parts of the ascetic life; and indeed these ought to be his great employment. A life in the world may be a life of business, but a retired one ought to be a life of prayer and meditation. Nor indeed can it be well otherwise, unless we have proposed to ourselves some false ends of retirement; for these are not only the duties, but the pleasures of the private life. In these the soul is enlightened, enlarged, raised, ravished; in these it soars up to heaven, and looks down upon earth; in these it possesses stability and security, peace and rest, in the midst of a frail unstable nature, and a restless and tumultuous world; in these all the passions of the soul are exercised with a

most tender delight, sorrow, fear, or reverence; love, hope, joy, reign here without either check or satiety.

O blessed life! wherein, sequestered from the world, I enjoy all that it has in it of pure, of true, or natural. Ah, that I could once break loose from those obligations that hang upon me, and enter into thy peace and tranquillity! I would plunge myself into all thy rational delights; I would lose myself to this contemptible world, and, forgetting those shadows and appearances, and at best but faint and weak reflections of good which flutter here about me, I would abandon myself entirely to the joys of the SPIRIT, and the elevations of contemplation. Let others enjoy honour, wealth, and power; let me enjoy myself, truth, and GOD. Let others enjoy the flatteries of sense, and the cheats of fancy; give me the health of a sprightly mind, the calm and serenity of a silent retreat, with the pleasure and security which the divine presence breeds in it. Let others, finally, depend on fortune; me only, on GOD and myself.

SECTION III.

OF THE RIGHT HUSBANDING OR PROLONGING LIFE.

HAVING, in the two former sections, first proved life to be in its own nature a solid good, a considerable blessing; and next, endeavoured to prevent the abuses to which it is liable, by stating the true notion of life, and by prescribing rules for the right conduct of the active, trading, and contemplative life; the next thing that naturally falls under consideration, is, the shortness and uncertainty of this blessing. This is that which puzzles the wit, and baffles the courage of man, the rock against which all the attempts of human philosophy have dashed and split themselves; for, to say truth, whatever complaints men make against the troubles, yet have they ever made more against the shortness and uncertainty of life.

It is true, no cure has ever yet been found of our mortality: yet, as wise men have ever thought it reasonable to make the most of an enjoyment, though it would not come up to all that they could wish; so, were there no other life, it would behove us to do with this; to keep in the flame as long as we can, though we know it must go out at last.

Now life, like enjoyment, is capable of increase two ways, that is, either in its continuance or perfection; either by lengthening its duration, or by raising, improving, or, as it were, ripening the joys and fruits of life. I will first speak of prolonging life. And here I will, *First*, demonstrate that life may be prolonged; *Secondly*, I will treat of the ways of prolonging it.

But before I do either, it may be no very wide digression to take notice of the little artifices by which many endeavour to evade the strokes of time, and flatter themselves with a sort of imaginary immortality.

CHAPTER I.

The usual Arts of preventing or retarding the Decays of Nature, and lessening the Fears of Death, exploded, and better substituted in their Room.

Some take sanctuary in physic; for which they expect at least the preservation of the vigour of nature, if not the lengthening of the date of life. I will not dispute, whether this art has deserved so well of mankind, as to justify the Gentiles in enrolling the first authors of it among the gods; or, what is more to the purpose, who have lived longest, they who have made most, or they who have made least use of physic. However these questions be resolved, I am sure our time is better spent in labouring to contemn, than to prevent death; and that those excel-

lent principles which fortify the mind, contribute more to the comfort and pleasure of life, than the most sovereign cordials that fortify the spirits.

Some, willing to conceal those decays which they could not prevent, have devised many ways to counterfeit and supply that youth and beauty which time and various accidents have washed and worn away. But, alas! to what purpose is it to deck and varnish withered nature, and paint the spring upon the face of winter? To what purpose is it, when the evil is incurable, to suffer one's self to be flattered and imposed upon, and try in vain to hide a broken fortune, not only from the world, but from one's self? Alas! we must feel what we will not see. Nature droops and decays as fast within as it does without; and we lose the life and briskness of our blood, as fast as we do the elegancy of feature, or the floridness of complexion. In a word, as to this perishing body, physic, washes, fucuses, are in vain; you but paint and patch a ruinous fabric, which can never be made strong and beautiful, until death hath taken it down to the ground, and resurrection built it up anew.

If, therefore, you would take my advice, you should lay in a stock of sprightly generous pleasures, which may be ever ready to entertain you, when youth and strength are past. You should take pains to enrich and adorn the mind, whose beauties will more than supply the loss of those of the body. Wisdom, magnanimity, bounty, modesty, sweetness, and humility, are charms able to recommend a deformed or a decrepid body; and I am confident may be purchased at a much cheaper rate than false or counterfeit beauties are by those who are solicitous about them. Let then the morning and noon of your life be spent in acquiring virtue, honour, knowledge, and good humour, and in your evening you will have no reason to complain of the loss of youth and beauty. These will be solid riches, and most amiable charms, that will provide you delight and support at home, and command both love and reverence abroad; and time will do you no other

injury than it does a tree, when it changes its blossoms into fruit, or than it does statues, medals, and pictures, whose value is enhanced by their antiquity.

Convinced that the decays of nature cannot be long concealed or propped up, some please themselves with an opinion of surviving in their posterity; as if man by generation did but multiply himself, and life did not, like a flame, end with its fuel, but were transmitted from father to son, and so on; like a stream that is still the same, though it passeth through numerous pipes.

Well, for my part, I cannot fool myself with a vain gingle of words; I cannot flatter myself that I shall live in him, who probably will in a little time forget me, however he owe his being and fortune to me; nay, it may be, will wish that others did forget me too; like a stream running, as soon as it enlarges itself, as far as it can from its little fountain, and labouring, as it were, by its circlings and wanderings, to conceal the meanness of its rise. I cannot flatter myself that I shall live in them, whose hopes and fears, desires and joys, will differ it may be no less from mine, whatever they may now be, than the dead do from the living. Fools that we are, to talk so wildly, as if, when dead, we lived in our children. Do we, when living, share in their distant joys? Or do our pulses beat by their passions? I would not be mistaken, as if I designed to oppose or extinguish nature: I know the great Author of it, for wise and excellent purposes, has implanted in us kind inclinations towards posterity: but then these are for the sake of others, not myself; they ripen into actions that serve the turn of others, not my own; I only bear the fruit which others must gather. And whatever pleasure I may now feel in a promising prospect of the honour and virtue of my posterity, it is such a one as that of Moses beholding Canaan at a distance; but such a distance that he must never enter into it.

To conclude: whatever men promise themselves, I think them tolerably fortunate, if instead of reaping any benefit when dead, from their children, their lives be not stained

and disturbed by them; extremely fortunate, if they can make them fit to be their friends and favourites, worthy to share their pleasures, and able to give them some ease in their troubles. Though after all, I cannot but think it is infinitely more eligible to be the father of many good works, than many children; and to spend my time nobly in cultivating my mind, than in entangling my life with cares for those who often will take none for themselves.

Some have entertained vain projects of an imaginary immortality; an immortality which they must owe neither to God nor nature, but to historians and poets, painters and statuaries, and to the dying echoes of a surviving memory; I mean, that which men seek in posthumous fame, in pictures, and statues, and tombs, and embalming carcases. All these seem to carry in them some fading shadows of existence; but, ah! how imaginary a life is this! Something that does infinitely less resemble life, than a dream does enjoyment. Ah, vain support of human frailty! Ah, vain relief of death! If there be any thing in honour, if it be body or substance enough to be seen, or felt, or tasted; if it be reality enough to be any way enjoyed, let me possess it while I live. It comes too late, if it serve only to increase the pomp of my funeral, or to dress and set off my sepulchre, or to silence the groans, or to wipe off the tears of my orphans or my friends, though this be something. I cannot feel any pleasure in the foresight of that glory, which while I strain to gaze upon at a distance, the fogs and mists of death thicken the sky. The voice that will speak me great, will speak me gone; the statues and marbles which adorn my memory, will adorn my grave too; and while they express my image or my actions, will proclaim, that all that is now left of me is rottenness and ashes.

All this I talk, abstracting from the considerations of a future life; for how far the reputation I leave behind, may concern my soul in its state of separation from the body, whether the echoes of those praises bestowed upon my memory here, will reach and please mine ears in another

world, I know not, nor do I much desire to know; for supposing such a life, my soul must needs have nobler employment, and nobler pleasure, than this can ever give it. I must confess, if the reflections of my light, when I am set and gone, would be of any use to direct and inflame posterity, I should now take some pleasure in that, which it is hard to persuade me I shall take any in hereafter. Nor would it be a trifling satisfaction to me, while I lived, if I could believe that my relations or my friends could receive any honour or patronage from me when dead. And since some sort of character I must leave behind; since I must in this manner, among some at least, and for some little time survive, I had rather leave behind me perfume than stench; I had rather live in commendations, than in satires and invectives. But after all, how lean and miserable a comfort is this! that when I am dead, it will be said, I once lived; and a promiscuous crowd will talk of me and of my actions, what they please; some things good, some things bad; some things true, some things false; and what is worse yet, I must suffer all the revolutions of humours and parties in following ages. These must give my abilities and performances their character, and the prevailing faction must stamp what estimate they please upon my memory.

And yet true it is, I love a charity that is universal and boundless, and extends itself to following ages. And certainly there is not a nobler charity, than to furnish the world with an example that may adorn its own times, and enkindle the emulation of posterity. Nay, farther; I am willing to believe that a gracious God will sum up, amongst the accompts of my life, the influence it has upon the world when I am dead; and will consider it, not simply in itself, but with all the happy effects which it may any way be the occasion of in successive ages. Let me then do good, and if I can, great actions, upon any motive, provided it be just and allowable, since this will be the blessed fruit of it. But yet it shall be my business to make sure of my own immortality; if that of my name

will follow, let it. It shall be my business to gain the approbation of God and angels; and if the praises of this lower world join their harmony, and consent with that above, this cannot disoblige me. I will with all my power make sure of my salvation, let my fame be as it may.

Having exploded those mistaken fancies, by which men support themselves against the shortness of life, I will now proceed to treat of the only two ways by which this evil may be in some measure remedied; that is, by prolonging the date, and by improving the nature of life, so that a man may live much in a little time.

CHAPTER II.

Of lengthening Life.

Under this article I design, 1. To refute the opinion of a fatal period of human life. 2. To consider what ways the date of life may be lengthened. 3. To remove those objections with which this advice is encountered.

1. To begin with the first. It has been too generally taught and believed, that the date of human life cannot be protracted; that every particular man has a fixed and immutable period decreed him, beyond which he cannot go. But this opinion directly defeats the force of all motives and arguments to virtue, derived from temporal considerations, and undermines our dependance upon God, and ridicules our addresses to him, as far as they concern this life, and the things of it. And how plain a step is this to the overthrow of Judaism, which was built upon temporal promises; and consequently to the overthrow of Christianity itself, the authority of the New Testament depending in so great a measure upon that of the Old? And were there no other reasons to reject this opinion, these, I should think, were abundantly sufficient;

since it is impossible that any thing should be consonant to truth, which is so repugnant to the authority of religion: but there are so many more, that I must be forced to crowd them together, that I may avoid tediousness and redundancy. This persuasion then is repugnant to all the instincts of our nature. To what purpose is the love of life implanted in us by our great Creator? Why is self-preservation the first dictate and law of nature, if all our care and diligence can contribute nothing towards it? Vain and impertinent is that law, whose observation can procure us no good, nor its violation any evil. This is a persuasion that flatly contradicts the experience and observation of mankind in general. How can the period of life be fixed and unalterable, which we see every day either lengthened out by care and moderation, or shortened by excess and negligence, unless we can resolve to the utter overthrow of religion, not only that life and death, but also that vice and virtue, wisdom and folly, which lead to the one and the other, are alike pre-determined. Nor is this opinion less contrary to the sense and reason of the wise and prudent, than to the experience of the multitude. Self-preservation is the first and chief end of civil societies, and human law: but how ridiculous a thing were it for the sagacious part of mankind to enter into deep consultation, to frame solemn laws, and devise the strongest obligations to fence and secure that life which can neither be invaded one minute before its fatal hour, nor prolonged one minute beyond it. Nor has man only, but God himself, endeavoured to secure this temporal life by the strictest and most solemn laws: nor this only, but he has made life and death the reward of obedience and punishment of sin.

This opinion, therefore, is a manifest calumny against the wisdom and sincerity of God; against his wisdom, if he raise up the bulwarks of laws, to guard that life, which can neither be violated before, nor extended beyond, its minute: his sincerity, for his promises would be ludicrous and insignificant, and so would his threats too, if neither

the obedience of the virtuous could lengthen, nor the disobedience of the sinner, could shorten life. In a word, to what purpose does the SPIRIT, in 1 *Pet.* iii. 10, 11, encourage men to religion by the proposal of life and prosperity, if in truth, life and prosperity depend, not on our behaviour, but our fate; and be not dispensed according to the open proposals, but the secret and unconditional, the rigid and inflexible, decrees of the Almighty?

The truth of this proposition being thus made out by unanswerable reasons, we are not to suffer ourselves to be moved by any superstitious imaginations, by any obscure or subtle objections, or by any mere colours or appearances of reason: for what is once clear and evident, ought to remain firm and unshaken, though we cannot unravel every objection against it. Therefore, though I should not be able to reconcile this doctrine with some obscure texts of Scripture, yet ought its authority to be preserved, as built upon plain texts, and solid reasons.

But the truth is, there is nothing objected here, but what is capable of a very easy answer. The Scriptures which speak of an appointed time for man upon earth, are not to be understood of any particular personal fate, but of a general law or rule of nature; not of the extent of every particular person's life, but of the duration of man in general, or of the mortality of our frame and constitution, and the shortness of man's residence here upon earth; and imply no more than that man, as well as all other species of animals, and indeed of vegetables, (for so far JOB extends the comparison,) hath his time appointed, the bounds of his life or abode here set him, beyond which he cannot pass. "The days of our age are threescore years and ten; and though men be so strong that they come to fourscore years; yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow, so soon passeth it away, and we are gone." (*Psa.* xc. 10.)

As to the Prescience of GOD, I see not how the denial of a fatal period of human life clashes with this. On the quite contrary, he seems to me injuriously to restrain the knowledge of GOD, who thinks he foreknows nothing, but

because he peremptorily pre-determined it. This, if we will speak sense, is to magnify his power, but to reduce and confine his knowledge, or at least, to depress and debase it: for thus it would not be a primary and essential perfection, but would result from, or depend upon, an arbitrary will, an unguided power. For my part, I cannot think it necessary, if I could not reconcile God's foreknowledge with contingency in events, therefore, with the Socinian, to deny the one, or with the Fatalist, the other. It is enough to me, that I learn from Scripture, that is, from God, who cannot err, that Prescience belongs to the Creator, and contingency to the creature: the measure and bounds of these, if there be any, let who will seek, it is not my business now.

2. Having thus evidenced that the period of life is not fatally fixed, that no peremptory and unconditional decree supersedes our vigilance and industry for the preservation of this blessing; I will now proceed to the second thing proposed, and consider which way the date of life may be lengthened.

It is obvious to every one, that life depends upon these three things:—(1.) The cheerfulness of the mind; (2.) The health of the body; and (3.) A favourable Providence of God; by which, as none will deny, who admit of Providence, we may at least be protected from violence and accidents, such as human prudence cannot foresee. And to these three, may, for ought I know, be added, the good-will of man, whose ministry and service is very often of excellent use to us in this point.

(1.) The first thing then I am now to inquire into, is, briefly, what cheerfulness of mind contributes to the preservation of life, and then more fully, how we may possess ourselves of it.

It is true, the morose and sour, the froward, the passionate, and the sullen,—those stains and blots of human nature, —often prolong their lives to a great age; but it is as true, that the loose and debauched, the intemperate and incon-

tinent, do sometimes, though rarely, live long, and descend into the grave, rather oppressed by their years than their excesses. And if from such extraordinary instances as these, we shall take the liberty to form rules of life, and to contradict known and received truths, we shall ever live at the mercy of fancy, and never find any firm footing to rest upon. I will not therefore doubt, notwithstanding these rare instances, but that the cheerfulness of the mind has a very propitious, its discontent a very malign, influence upon the life of man. The content of the mind preserves the balsam of the blood, and the pleasure of it enlarges the heart, raises the spirits, actuates and invigorates all our powers; so that when the mind shines serene and bright, it seems to impart a new warmth and new life to the body; a new spring and new verdure to this earth: on the contrary, a diseased mind does, as it were, scatter its contagion through the body; discontent and melancholy sour the blood, and clog the spirits; envy pines away; and passion frets and wears out our strength and life. In few words, there is an intimate conjunction between the mind and body, and so close is the dependance of the latter upon the former, that the face of inferior nature does evidently vary, wither, or flourish, according to that variety of weather it makes in the sky above it, as the mind smiles or lowers upon it. And accordingly, if we appeal to experience and observation, I believe we may safely pronounce, that, generally, such live longest, as either think very little, or whose thoughts are always calm and cheerful; such as are stupid, and have no passions; or are wise and good, and have none but such as are regular and delightful. All this, I think, is not contested; and all the difficulty lies in possessing ourselves of this satisfaction and content of mind. Men seek it in every thing, and even those things which are diametrically opposite to one another, pretend to be infallible guides to it: atheism and religion, philosophy and ignorance, worldly prudence, and an affected contempt of it, do all promise to teach us the art of satis-

faction; but it will not be a very difficult task, when we have examined the pretences of each, to resolve which we are to follow.

Ignorance, lust, and fancy, are too blind, rash, and violent, for us to abandon ourselves to their conduct; nor are they more giddy and inconstant in themselves, than weak and subject to all the changes and accidents of the world; so that should they lead us on to pleasure, we have reason to apprehend pain the next moment: and at best, they leave us not in a condition, either rationally to approve our enjoyments, or to fortify ourselves against the loss of them.

Worldly policy is built wholly upon mistakes. It proposes to us things under the notion of great and good, which when we have examined, we find not worth our seeking: and of these it can give us no assurance, whether we respect their acquisition or possession: and the ways it prescribes to put us in possession of all that satisfaction which results from these things, have something in them so mean, so laborious, so uncertain, so vexatious, that no success can compensate that trouble and shame, which the canvassing for them puts us to.

Atheism pretends, indeed, to extinguish our guilt and fears, but it does also deface all the beauty and loveliness of human actions. It pretends to let loose the reins to pleasure, but withal, it leaves us no support under evil. It takes off many restraints, but withal, it unchains and lets loose our passions. In a word, it leaves us nothing truly great or lovely to enjoy in this world, or hope for in another. And if its tenets were useful to us, yet have they no certainty, no foundation. It derives all its credit from the confidence, not reason of men, who under colour of a free and impartial philosophy, advance the interest of those lusts to which they are entirely enslaved.

Religion, then, only remains to be followed. This rectifies our opinions, and dispels our errors, and routs those armies of imaginary evils, which terrify and torment the world, much more than spirits and ghosts do. This dis-

covers to us objects worthy of all the love and admiration of our souls. This extinguishes our fear; shows us the happiness of our present condition, and opens us a glorious prospect of our future one. This discovers to us the happy tendency of temporal evils, and the glorious reward of them: and, in one word, teaches us both to enjoy and suffer. It moderates our desires of things uncertain, and fixes them upon those things for which we can be responsible: it raises the mind, clears the reason, and, finally, forms us into such a united, settled, and compacted state of strength, that neither the judgment is easily shaken, nor the affections hurried, by any violent transport. But do I not here imitate Physicians, who attend only to the most dangerous symptoms, and neglect others? Whether I do or no, they who read such general directions, are wont to do so in their applications of them: and most are apt to look upon religion as designed only to redress substantial and formidable evils. And yet it is with the mind as with the body, though fevers, imposthumes, defluxions, kill, the anger of a pustule, the pain of a tooth, strangely disorder and disturb: and thus, though pain, and death, and such like evils, overthrow and overwhelm the mind; yet are there a crowd of slight evils which disquiet and discompose it. And this is a matter not to be contemned, especially by me, in the prosecution of the design I am here upon; since I persuade myself that the great and formidable evils, guilt, pain, poverty, sickness, death, or the thoughts and apprehensions of them, but rarely afflict the life of man. But there are other evils of a slighter nature, which, like pirates, are perpetually cruizing on our coasts, and though they cannot invade and destroy, do much disturb and annoy us. Nay, what is yet more, it is very usual to see men acquit themselves very honourably under true and substantial evils, who come off very poorly from the encounter of slight and despicable ones. How common is it, for one who maintains bravely his courage and judgment amidst swords and bullets, to lose all patience, prudence, and government, when attacked by a rude jest? To see a

man that hears very calmly the loss of a ship, or a considerable sum of money, transported into strange indecency upon the breaking of a glass, or the spoiling of a dish of meat; and he who sits very tamely and unconcernedly down under a high disgrace, sweats and raves if robbed but of a cabbage or an apricot.

These, and such like remarks, one may make every day, and almost in every company: and what is the worst of all, our fears and sorrows, our hate and anger, are as violent and uneasy, when they spring from causes of the least, as of the highest, moment. We bewail fantastic and true misfortunes, with the same sighs and tears, and resent imaginary and substantial injuries with the same disordered pulse and deformed looks. When I have reflected on all this, I have often thought that it was as necessary to the tranquillity of life, to guard myself against dust and flies, as against storms and tempests; to arm myself against the stings of a swarm of vexatious accidents, as against pestilence, and war, and poverty. And to this end, these following rules have often been of great use to me.

[1.] Of the evils of life, I never take more to my share than are really my own. I never travel abroad to find out foreign mischiefs to torment myself; as if there were not enough of the native growth of my country. My own mind, my own body, my own house, are provinces, wide enough for me, and a little too fruitful too. Nay, I am not ashamed to confess, I decline, if I can, an evil, even lying in my way, as I do a bustle, or a fray, by passing on the other side of the street. I will never split upon a shelf or rock, if I have sea-room enough. And as a little distance of place, so a little distance of time, serves my turn to make me reckon such evils as none of mine: I will no more distract or disturb myself with the evils that are fancied teeming in the womb of time, than with those that are now in being in Peru or Mexico. This is the very lecture religion reads me, for sure to incorporate distant evils, or to anticipate future ones, were far from 'studying to be quiet, and doing one's own business;' or from think-

ing with our SAVIOUR, "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," and were indeed to suffer as "busy bodies, fearful, and unbelievers." If any man will impute this to me as brutality and uncharitableness, I cannot help it; I thank GOD that I have sense enough to practise caution without fear, care without anxiety, and charity without distress or agony of mind.

[2.] As to those evils (I speak still of slight and daily ones) which I cannot avoid; my next care is to weaken their force, to disarm them of their sting, their teeth and venom, if they have any. I take from them all the terror that fancy and opinion have given them, and will no more, if I can help it, suffer my imagination, than my taste or feeling, to be imposed upon. In the next place, I carefully strengthen myself, see that my state be healthy, and my nature firm, lest I should complain of the meat, when the fault is in my stomach; or think the bed ill made when the cause of my uneasiness is in the body. And, lastly, when I have reduced the evil to its own natural size, generally it is of such a pigmy, dwarfish growth, that I can securely slight it. I can master it with very little trouble and industry, or at worst, with very little patience.

I labour above all things to fill my soul with great and ravishing pleasures, to possess it with that habitual poverty of spirit, meekness, purity, charity, commended to his disciples by our Lord and Master, that I am generally above the buz and fluttering of these, rather impertinences, than evils; and do often suffer them without being sensible of them. But I can never often enough put the world in mind of the vast difference there is between the fits and habits of these virtues. What we could do in a pious humour, that we should always do, were but the weak impression once converted into nature, the short-lived passion changed into steady habit.

(2.) The next thing to be considered, after the cheerfulness of the mind, is, The health of the body. Life does so apparently depend on this, that in the vulgar notion, it signifies much the same thing. It is notorious, life decays

and expires with the health and strength of the body, and when it is protracted after these are gone, it scarce deserves the name of life, any more than the noise of an ill-strung, and ill-tuned, instrument, does that of music. But I need not teach any body the value of health, or press them to the preservation of the body: I should be sufficiently obliging to the world, if I could teach it any art by which they might be restored to that blessing which it enjoyed before the flood, a life of many hundred years. But I know no art that can raise nature above its own laws, or retrieve its youth, if it be now in its decline. One thing I know, that we too commonly debauch and corrupt nature first, and then load her with our reproaches and accusations. We should undoubtedly live much longer, and this life would be more healthy, that is, more vital than it is, did we but observe the dictates of religion, and not prefer before them those of lust and fancy. How much soever men complain of the shortness of life, most men do, notwithstanding, shorten it themselves by some crime or error, or other. If we could consult the sickly, crazy, part of mankind, I mean such as are so in the middle, or almost beginning, of their years, and demand of them, What blasted their beauty, and impaired their strength? What thus violated their nature? we should soon be resolved to what original their diseases were owing, if, at least, their shame and blushes would give them leave to inform us. And if we should endeavour to trace the deaths of most of those who have gone hence before their time, back to their first cause, I do not think but our search would soon end in some vice or folly, or other. This man drank too much; the other, too much indulged his appetite: one was devoted to his lust, and another putrefied in his sloth. All of them, in our common phrase, did live too fast; but in truth and propriety of speech, died too fast. For since life is nothing else but acting by reason, every deviation from it is an approach towards death.

But to proceed: It is not unusual to see pride kill one, passion another, avarice and ambition a third, while, to

gratify these affections, the body is either exposed to dangers, or worn out by labour. Now, if we can generally find the causes of early deaths in men's vices, when so little of other men's lives comes to our knowledge, what think you, should we not be able to discover, if we could enter into the retirements, and penetrate all the secrets of mankind? How many hidden passions gnaw the heart? how many secret sins consume the strength? where not only concealment excludes the eye, but a show of probity, nay, a real practice of some particular virtue, excludes even suspicion? If, then, immorality often contract the term of life, it is evident what is to be prescribed for the prolonging it. Religion is the best physic: it has often mended an ill constitution, but never spoiled a good one. When did ever chastity impoverish the body, or deflower the face? When did ever temperance inflame the blood, or oppress the spirits? When did ever industry or vigilance sour the humours, and enfeeble the nerves? No crudities, no plethories, no obstructions, no acidities, no stagnations, extravasations, and I know not what hard names, and harder things, derive themselves from religion.

It is true, a man may entitle his folly, his melancholy, his particular fancy, or his particular constitution, religion. And this may prove mischievous to him, to his health, to his strength: but then this is not the fault of religion, but the man; and to speak properly, this is not religion, though it be called so, but it is fancy and folly, or an ill constitution disguised under the garb of religion. Virtue, then, is the most probable way to a long life, or, if not so, at least to a more comfortable and honourable death. For where an early death is the result of a Providence, not a crime, we must needs meet it with less amazement ourselves, and our friends behold it with less regret and affliction.

(3.) The third way of prolonging life, is, to engage the Providence of God in its preservation. If all the promises God has made the virtuous of a long life, did really signify

nothing, I cannot see how we could put up any request to God, relating to temporal protection, with faith or fervour, or so much as sincerity: but if they signify any thing, then surely they must signify, that his Providence is actively employed for the preservation of virtuous men. And how great security is this? What can be impossible to him who is the Governor and Creator of the world, in whose disposal all created means are, and in whose power it is, if these be insufficient, to create new ones? To him, whose unerring laws can never miss of those ends he aims at? Or if they could, his power is ever at hand to supply their defects, and accommodate and temper them to particular emergencies; and his prerogative is under no ties, no limitations, but those of his divine wisdom. Well might the Psalmist say, "I laid me down and slept, for it is thou, Lord, makest me dwell in safety." Every good man may say the same, not in peace and health only, but in sickness, in a tempest, whether by sea or land, in a plague, in a battle, in a siege, in a storm: to believe ourselves under the patronage and protection of God, seems to me nothing less than to believe, that he will make those things we are concerned in, flow with a smooth and gentle stream; that he will place us in a condition of life safe and agreeable; or, if not, that in distresses and dangers, he will contrive the methods of our rescue, and where the ordinary are insufficient, find out extraordinary; that he will concur and co-operate with the natural course of things, or, if he see it fit, that he will exert a supernatural force, and vouchsafe an extraordinary succour. Plainly, thus, though I know not the unsearchable methods of divine Providence, yet from God's concerning himself for my good, I may boldly infer, that in my sickness I may hope for that from God, which I cannot from the skill of my Physician; that in troublesome times, I may expect that from Providence, which I cannot from the wisdom, justice, or power, of the magistrate; that in necessitous, intricate, circumstances, I may promise myself that issue from his favour, which I cannot from the prudence, integrity, or bounty, of my

friends; and, in a word, that in all cases, I can hope for that from my prayers, which I could not from human power or policy. The sum of all is, all the natural means of our security and life are in the hands of God. And if these should be deficient, nothing can restrain him from exerting a supernatural force for our preservation. His fixed and universal laws are infinitely wise. But if at any time our affairs should require his immediate interposal, I know not why I should fancy his prerogative so bounded, that he cannot, or will not, interpose. And though his pavilion be thick clouds, and he walk upon the wings of the wind; though his Providence be a great abyss, and the swiftness and secrecy of his actings elude our search, and baffle our inquiries, so that we cannot discern when he acts by prerogative, when by law; yet I doubt not but that he does frequently exert a miraculous and extraordinary power.

This being so, it is plain that our great business is to engage the Providence of God on our behalf, that we may have an unerring guide of this dubious and floating life, a firm support of this mortal corruptible nature: and I think I need not prove, that religion is the effectual way to oblige God: if this be the great message that we have received of the Son of God, "that God is light," then St. John's inference must needs be good, that he only who walks in the light, can hold communion with him; that is, be dear and acceptable to him: a spiritual and rational worship, must be the only method to endear ourselves to a God, who is a wise Spirit. Nay, though all the precepts of religion should not be necessarily founded in their agreeableness to the divine nature, yet still, since they are the precepts of God, we need search for no other reason for the acceptableness of our obedience. It is true, all the heights of purity, to which the Gospel invites us, are not necessary to the health and strength of the body; yet are they serviceable to the perfection and improvement of our nature: they are not all indispensable to the happy conduct of our temporal affairs; but they are useful to the felicity

and glory of our eternal; and therefore the more religious we are, the more we shall please God. But I will insist no longer on so uncontested a point; nature itself dictates, that an imitation of their virtues is the strongest obligation we can lay upon the wise or good; and obedience, the most effectual recommendation of us to the sovereign powers: whether, therefore, we consider God as the best, or the greatest, the characters under which the light of nature did ever represent him, religion, that is, imitation and obedience, are the only ways by which we may secure his favour.

Nor is virtue less apt to procure the favour and amity of man, than that of God. It fences us about with the arms and succours of mankind; it guards us with all their eyes, and with all their prayers: for their love and reverence make them both active and wakeful in our service.

How directly repugnant to all this are the effects of irreligion? It leaves us no other safeguard than that of our own strength and vigilance; which, to speak properly, is to deliver us up into the hands of folly and fear, our weakness and cowardice. For, alas, what were my single reason or force, when I have neither God nor man to second me? How much less, when the indignation of the one, and the secret aversion, or open enmity, of the other, scare and intimidate me! How can a man hold out against dangers, if he be betrayed by his own guilt within, and his reason, overthrown by ominous fears, do not lessen, but multiply his terrors? Hence is that of Solomon, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion:" abandoned by God and man, he seems at last abandoned by himself too.

The sum of what I have said amounts to this: First, I have proved that the date of life is not fatal and unalterable: from whence it necessarily followed, that it was capable of being prolonged or protracted. Therefore, I proceeded, Secondly, To consider by what means it might be prolonged: and here, supposing that nothing could be more conducive to this than a cheerful mind, a healthful

body, and a propitious Providence; I have made it evident that these are to be sought in the practice of religion and virtue, which is nothing else than what inspired authors have frequently taught: "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour." "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in its season." O blessed and perfect religion, at once the guard and joy of life; at once the support and delight of human nature!

But against this whole discourse, it will be objected, First, How is this that you contend for? How are those texts which make length of days the reward of obedience to the divine laws, reconcileable with those other, which, as far as concerns their temporal effects, seem to equal wisdom and folly, and level righteousness with wickedness, asserting the promiscuousness of all events to the virtuous and vitious? "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked, to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner, and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath." (*Eccles.* ix. 2.) And this is extended as far as death itself: "How dieth the wise man? As the fool." (*Eccles.* ii. 16.) Innumerable are the answers to this objection; but one only fits my purpose, which is plainly this.

These, and the like speeches, design not to derogate from the efficacy of virtue, or weaken the force of the divine promises, but to humble the vanity of man, and convert his fondness for the world into a greater for a better; and are not therefore to be understood in such a general and unlimited sense, as if there were no difference between the righteous and the wicked, with respect to temporal good and evil, life and death; but only thus, that the righteous are not so universally exempt from temporal evils, but that some or other of them in all ages are liable to them, even to an untimely death itself. But what then? Such extraordinary instances of an inscrutable Providence,

ought no more to derogate from the excellency of wisdom and virtue, or the veracity of God, than some few shipwrecks ought to discredit navigation, or the failing of some few traders disparage art and industry. It is enough that the experienced and skilful, the careful and diligent, generally sail and trade successfully. And this may in part suffice for an answer to another objection of the same nature with this; only, that this relates to all events in general, but the objection following to a particular one.

If long life be a great blessing at present, and recommends men to greater afterwards, and if religion be on both these accounts entitled to it, whence is it that an immature death snatches away sometimes the best of men, that it stops them in the very progress of their virtue, and in a full career towards perfection and glory? I answer,

1. The Providence of God is a great deep: "His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out."

2. I cannot believe that this early death which intercepts the fruits of a growing virtue, shall bereave the virtuous of any degree of that future glory, to which such fruits would have entitled them. I should rather think, with the author of the Book of Wisdom, that having completed their perfection in a little time, they had in a little time finished their course; and by what they did do, gave such plain proofs of what they would do, that God rewards their purposes as he does the actions of others, and therefore hastens to take them to himself. But however this matter may be, I am content to believe,

3. That as God orders all the particular events of life, to the good of those that love him, so much more must he dispose this biggest event, to their interest and benefit: and, therefore, this immature death is doubtless, to the righteous, better than life, though we should not be able to discern why. They die in their perfection, their glory yet unsullied, their felicity unstained, no vile temptation, no misfortune, having yet triumphed over them; an advan-

tage which we much admire when we see great and good men surprised or overpowered by weakness and calamities. For then we cannot but acknowledge, that if death had come sooner, it had been much kinder; for they had been gathered into the storehouse of the dead, like corn into the granary, before unseasonable or immoderate rain had corrupted it, or any malignant vapour blasted it.

Lastly, I know not how Heaven has dealt with these its favourites: peradventure it is in the moral as in the political world; some are born to that greatness which others acquire with labour. He never dies too soon who dies ripe and perfect; and if these divine souls were soon enriched with more light and beauty, with more impetuous inclinations to virtue than other men; if their short life were so innocent, so bright, that out of a particular grace, God thought fit to exempt them from the miseries of this life; or that upon account of a particular pre-eminence, they needed not pass through the trial, the discipline, and purgations of it, on either of these supposals, we ought not to commiserate but revere their fate.

CHAPTER III.

Of improving Life, or living much in a little Time.

To understand aright what it is I here aim at, what I mean by the Improvement of Life, it is necessary to call to mind the true notion of life, laid dawn in the beginning; that it is the right use of all our powers and faculties, the rational exercise, the wise employment, of our whole nature.

Now if this be so, it is plain that we live just as much as we act and enjoy, I mean, always rationally; that as we advance and grow up towards a perfection of nature, the more is life also raised and refined. Thus, if the life of the

understanding be to think, to discover and contemplate truth and goodness, then, surely, its life is enlarged with its knowledge: if the life of the soul of man, I mean his will and affections, be to choose and pursue, admire and love, true good, then certainly our life is perfected with our virtue, and augmented with our religion.

In a word, if the life of man do not consist in the motion of animal spirits, but the exercise of his rational powers and faculties; if the true health of man be not to be judged by the regularity of his pulse, but the harmony of his affections; if, finally, the thing called life be not to be measured by hours, and days, and months, and years, but by activity and enjoyment; then, sure I may boldly conclude, that the more regularly and constantly we pursue the proper business of our nature, the more actively and vigorously we are carried on towards that which is our proper good, so much the more we live so much the more true, natural, and pure life; and all this is no other philosophy than what the wise man has long ago advanced: "For honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years. But wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age." (*Wisd.* iv. 8, 9.) This is a truth of vast importance; were it but once thoroughly imbibed, it would relieve all the pressures, and redress all the grievances of life.

We complain of life, that it is dull and nauseous, we impeach it of vanity and vexation, of shortness and uncertainty. How would this one notion, well pursued, soon silence all their complaints? He would never think life too short, who were ripe for death: he would never complain that life were uncertain, who were always ready to die: He would not accuse life of dulness and nauseousness, who was daily advancing his discovery of truth, and enlarging his possession of good: nor would he ever charge it with vanity and vexation, were his actions still wise and rational: for thus, every act of life would be an act of fruition too, being both agreeable to nature, and attended

by a delightful approbation and complacency of conscience. By this time it is plain what the design of this chapter is, namely, to compensate the shortness, by the excellency, of life, and redress the vanity and vexation of it, by its perfection; a design, I confess, worthy of a more comprehensive mind, and a more elevated fancy than mine; a design, demanding all the wisdom and experience of an active, and all the thought and learning of a contemplative, life; a design, in a word, that requires at once the prudence of old age, and the vigour of blooming years.

I shall here discourse but very briefly, and in general terms, of the Improvement of Life. All the advice I shall offer here, is, 1. That we endeavour to perfect and exalt our nature. 2. That we begin to live betimes; or, if we cannot now do that, our years being far spent, that we begin to live immediately. 3. That we avoid those things that are enemies to our true life.

1. We must endeavour to perfect and exalt our nature. The necessity of this will be very conspicuous to any one, who shall consider that the perfection of our acts depends upon the perfection of our faculties and powers; just as the pleasure of seeing does on the goodness of the eye, or that of hearing on the perfection of the ear: so much, and much more, does the beauty of human action, and the gust of all our enjoyments, depend upon the clearness of the judgment, the rectitude of the will, and the vigour of our passions. To render this argument yet more visible and palpable, let us consider how mean a thing man was, and how contemptible life, without cultivation or improvement. The body is but a heap of dust; something there needs to stamp a value upon it; something there must be to give sweetness to the eye, charm to the tongue, and grace to motion. It is a mere machine, alike capable of being made the instrument of cruelty or mercy, of lust or chastity, of avarice or charity: it is religion that must purge and sanctify it; it is wisdom that must conduct and guide, and make it the happy instrument of great and glorious actions. The spirit within us is a volatile, mutable, unsteady thing,

capable of all sorts of impressions, suspended as it were between heaven and earth, floating between the different shores of good and evil. Knowledge and virtue form it into an angel, stamp a sort of divinity upon it; for we are not born but made great; it is wisdom that imprints it with bright ideas, that impregnates it with noble passions, and determines its tendency towards its true good and supreme felicity. Our conversation with the world is naturally nothing else but a dull intercourse of forms, and ceremonies, and civilities; a nauseous circulation of the same tasteless and superficial entertainments: a tedious and repeated pursuit of vain mistaken ends, and often baffled designs. It is virtue and knowledge that give relish to our enjoyments, and life and spirit to all our actions; that lead us on toward excellent ends, and inspire us with immortal hopes. Our fortune and condition in the world is naturally a fluctuating unstable agitation, made up of a confused and motley variety of events; knowledge and virtue fix the floating island, and give light and beauty to the chaos.

I can never carry this argument too far, and therefore I will yet a little more particularly consider what increase of life we derive from perfecting our natures. Does life consist in the exercise of our faculties? True life then is the portion of the active and industrious. The dull and heavy motion of the sluggard is but a faint imitation or resemblance of it; it is a diseased languishing thing, a compound or mixture, wherein there seems to be more of death than life. Does life consist in fruition? How dark and dismal are those of the wicked, compared to the calm and bright days of the good! For what can there be like enjoyment to that man, who dares make no reflections on the past, nor can entertain any just hopes of the future? and whose mind concurs not with his present passions, and refuses to join in the senseless designs he is upon? Does life, lastly, consist, as I have proved it does, in the knowledge of truth and love of goodness? How scanty, narrow, and beggarly is the life of a fool and sinner, compared to

that of the wise and virtuous? TULLY said, 'One virtuous day was to be preferred before a sinful immortality.' This is true in the present sense and notion of life. Error and ignorance are as it were a disease, or state of insensibility and death to the understanding. The mind that is utterly ignorant of objects worthy of it, has nothing to employ itself upon, or at least nothing that gives it any solid satisfaction; but the mind which is filled with the knowledge of excellent things, has a great variety of scenes to entertain it, and never wants some fresh occasion of delight and wonder.

But it will be said, Does not the fool behold the visible world, as well as the philosopher? He does; but just as he reads a poem; without discovering the artfulness of its contrivance, the richness of the fancy, or variety of the incidents. The sinner hears talk too of an invisible world, of moral perfections here, and of divine joys hereafter; but he hears it unmoved, unaffected; which shows he has no lively notion, no distinct perception of any thing of this kind. The glass is dulled and sullied; beauty itself would lose all charm, reflected thus.

But human perfection consists not in knowledge alone, but also in the purity of the heart, in the regulation of the affections, in love and true liberty; that is, the heart must be set upon objects worthy of it, and we must pursue our true good with vigour and constancy; and this is that which renders life truly delightful and uniform. Without objects to engage our affections, we can scarcely be said to live; we shall be becalmed, and scarce be sensible of the breath we draw; and unless these objects be worthy and agreeable, all is but storm and tempest, cheat and torment; and our faculties are not rationally employed, but abused, deluded, depraved, tortured.

Could we but comprehend what all this did amount to, or at least, could we feel and experience it, we should soon discern that the wise and good, and they only, did truly live; for these only know GOD and themselves; these only admire, and love, and rejoice, and hope ration-

ally; and these only are not confined nor limited in their knowledge or their affections; for the objects of both are infinite. Their minds can never travel so far in the contemplation of God, and the most important truths, but that there is still a new world to be further discovered; nor can their admiration or love, their joy or hope, so enlarge themselves, as ever to equal the objects of these passions, and reach the utmost that is in them.

But it is probable, after all, the fool and sinner will pretend to engross the goods of the earth; as if they alone were to possess and enjoy them, as if they were the heirs of this world, the righteous of the other; but this is a vain fancy, and has been often baffled. Who can hasten more to enjoy, than he who knows the true value and right use of all things? And who can enjoy more in any thing, than he who at once gratifies his reason and his appetite, and pleases his inclination, without forfeiting his true liberty? If to be fooled and cheated,—if to be ensnared and to be tormented by the things of this world, be a pleasure,—in this the Christian must indeed give place to the infidel; the righteous man to the sinner.

The sum then of the whole matter is,—Life in the foolish, mean, and vicious soul, seems like a little rill of water, confined within narrow or scanty bounds; or, like the light of a candle, inclosed within the narrow compass of a dark lantern; but in the wise and understanding, it is like a mighty stream, which swells above its banks, and spreads itself over a vast plain; or, like light unconfined, which diffuses and darts itself over all the face of nature. Ah, therefore, how much does it import me to fill my understanding with bright and lovely images, with pleasing and important notions, with all the truths that can serve, either to delight or guide, to nourish or adorn, to support or fortify me in this world, or advance my rank in the joys of another! How much does it import me to fill my soul with love; love of all that is good or great; love of all that is pure or sacred; love of all that is beautiful or delightful! And lastly, that my body be a fit instrument

of such a mind, it does not a little import me, that this be strong and healthy, vigorous and vivacious.

2. The second way to improve life, is, to begin to live betimes; or at least, if your years be far spent, to begin to live immediately, which is all we can do. Life, in my notion of it, dawns with our reason, and grows up to ripeness and perfection with the virtue, liberty, and tranquillity of the soul. To be wise, and to be religious, this is to live; for in this consist fruition and enjoyment; in this the health and vigour of our faculties; in this the harmony and beauty of the whole frame of our nature; and this, and no other, is a rational and agreeable exercise of our powers and capacities. Whoever, therefore, will improve life, ought to begin the next moment to assert his liberty, and to give himself up to true wisdom.

It is strange to see how men put off this, or attempt it only superficially, and by the by. They prefer, I will not say, trades and husbandry, and various sorts of knowledge, foreign and remote from the service and conduct of human life; (ah! that time were but so well spent in general;) but they prefer even dressing, painting, drinking, gaming, and all, not only the most silly and trifling, but the most vile and infamous ways of consuming time, before true wisdom. Nay, among those that make profession of wisdom, and pretend to have dedicated themselves to the doctrine of JESUS, it is common to see great numbers hearing, talking, reading, disputing, without ever making any use of those truths they study and contend for, or feeling any warmth or influence of them; like those wise ones in temporals, who are laying up provision all their life long, which they will never use, never enjoy. Ah, wretched consumption of life! How soon will the last minute expire! and the unhappy man will not have lived one year, one month, one day; but will have wasted a precious treasure of time, and he must go immediately and account for it.

Well, let the world live after its own fashion; I plainly see the point I am to make. No day, no hour, shall pass me unemployed; every moment, if I can, I will grow wiser

and better; it is not how long I last, but how much I live; I will know, I will act, I will enjoy to-day, and then I am sure I have lived a day. This most propose to do, some time or other; but not to-day. And why not to-day? Why not presently? Is there any evil in being immediately wise, immediately free, immediately rational, immediately happy? It cannot be. If the state I am in be really good; if the pleasures I enjoy be really such as my reason can share in, and my conscience can approve; I then indeed live; there is no need of change and reformation, but continuance and perseverance. But if they be not, why will I not exchange false for true, and irrational for rational pleasures? If I am in the right, if my condition be good and safe, it is well; there is nothing further to be done, but to maintain my ground: but if I am in the wrong, if the foundation be unsound, and whilst I dream not of it, my health and fortune consume inwardly, waste and decay insensibly; why am I fond of the cheat? Why am I unwilling to be undeceived, disabused? And why not presently? The reason is plain: They acknowledge the representation I have made of a virtuous and rational life is very pleasant; but to be born into this new state, to come forth into this moral light, is as troublesome as the infant's being born into the natural. They love the ease and wealth of a prosperous trader; but not the hardships of his apprenticeship, the thrift and confinement of his beginnings. They love laurels and triumphal arches, the glory and the pleasure of victory; but cannot endure the toils and hazards of war. Or plainly thus: they admire liberty of mind, serenity, and rational joy, but it will cost them much labour and pains to purchase it.

Thus the wretched man, fearing the regimen of physic, wears out a miserable life in the pains of a disease; and one that has a cancer or gangrene, chooses to waste and rot in pain by piecemeal, rather than undergo the short pain of amputation. Nay, what is worse than all, men are fond of their diseases, love the things that increase and

nourish them, as the gross and corpulent do rest, the lethargic sleep, and hydropic drink.

This is the state, the deplorable state, of the far greater part of mankind; a state of disease and death, a state of bondage and captivity, a state of infatuation and enchantment. And I very much fear, that whatever motives can be extracted out of the subject I am now upon, will be too weak and feeble; for what can all the discourses in the world about rational pleasure, and the satisfactions of a regular and virtuous life, amount to, with men wholly given up to sensuality, and incapable of relishing any pure and sacred delights? If I have succeeded so far, as to possess them with an opinion that a life of reason or religion is a life of pleasure, though they have not any clear and lively notion of this pleasure, it is the utmost I can hope for; but to persuade men to embrace this life, there is need of all the arguments that either reason or religion can administer; and these too pointed with all the life and spirit, with all the edge and flame that wit or judgment can give them; a task too hard for me. O God! thou Lover of mankind, aid me by thy Spirit, while I strive to prevail with young and old to seek thy glory and their own happiness; to pursue virtue and true pleasure!

I will first address myself to the young, and then to those more advanced in years.

(1.) To the younger. You are now in your bloom. What glorious fruit may you bring forth! What honour may you do God! What service may you render your relations and your country! And what joys and blessings may you heap on yourselves! Time and tide seem to wait on you; even the providence and grace of God (with reverence be it said) seem to attend and court you! But, ah! remember they will not do so for ever; these smiles and invitations of heaven and nature will not last continually; your infidelity or ingratitude, your folly and sensuality, will soon blast and wither all these fair hopes, turn all your pleasures into gall and wormwood, and all

your blessed advantages into the instruments of your ruin, and aggravations of it too. Grace will soon retire, nature degenerate, time grow old, the world despise you, the God of it frown upon you, and conscience, guilty conscience, will be either stupified and benumbed, or fester and rage within you; and death will come, and then judgment. And how sudden it will come, ah! who knows? Sudden and early deaths ought to convince you on what uncertain ground you stand. The scythe of death stays not always until the harvest be ripe; but promiscuously mows down the young and old. Ah! begin, begin then to live. Seize upon pleasure and happiness, while they stand courting and inviting you. Pursue virtue and glory immediately, while the difficulties are fewer, your strength and aids greater; your judgments being not yet corrupted by the maxims, or rather the fancies of the world; nor your wills yet disabled and enslaved by a custom of sin. Ah! venture not to devote your youth to vanity and folly, on presumption of devoting your age to religion. For if this were a rational and just design in itself, yet it is to you a very unsafe and doubtful one; for, which way can you insure life? or on what ground can you confide on the morrow? "Boast not of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

I know what opposition will be raised against this kind of exhortation, and with what rude reflections it will be treated. 'Come,' say they, 'this is our spring; let us enjoy ourselves whilst we have time and vigour. Religion looks too grave and formal for these years; we shall have time enough to be dull and melancholy. Come on then, let us enjoy ourselves as becomes our youth; this is our portion, and our lot is this; and whatever they who have now outlived themselves, whose blood is sour, and spirits low, may gravely talk against these things, they too, when time was, admired what they now would have us despise, and committed themselves what they now condemn in us.' In answer to this, let us pass over the flourish, and

examine the sense and reason of this sort of talk. The substance of it may be reduced to three heads :—

[1.] Youth is the season of pleasure, *i. e.*, sin and folly; inclination and opportunity conspire to invite you to it, therefore you indulge it. What a strange argument is this? Is there any period of our life, from our cradle almost to our coffin,—I mean, from the moment we arrive at the use of reason to our grave,—wherein some sin or other is not in season? May not manhood defend ambition, and old age covetousness, by the same argument by which you do your sinful pleasures? If inclination to a folly would justify our commission of it, in what part of life should we begin to be wise and virtuous? It will be hard to find the time wherein we shall have no inclination to any sin or folly; or rather, if this be so, who can be guilty? The adulterer will impute his uncleanness to the violence of his lust; the murderer his bloodshed to the violence of his rage; *i. e.*, each of them their sins to the strength of inclinations; and if your argument be good, they will be innocent. But do not deceive yourselves; then is your obedience, as most acceptable to God, so most indispensable in itself, when you lie under temptations to sin; and heaven is proposed as a reward, not of following but conquering your inclinations.

[2.] The second part of the objection is, That religion doth not look graceful in young years. This I could never well understand. If you be so foolish as to think that religion consists in sour faces, or an affected moroseness and sullenness, or in stupidity and melancholy; this becomes no age. But if by religion you understand devotion towards your parents and superiors, temperance and chastity in yourselves, and such like virtues; I must needs say, nothing can appear to me more lovely than religion in youth. What can better become those who possess the gifts of nature in their perfection, than gratitude to the God of nature? What can be a greater glory to the young, than obedience to parents, and reverence to their

elders and superiors? What does more preserve, or better become, strength, than sobriety and temperance? What is a more charming or more lasting ornament to beauty, than modesty and chastity?

After all this, it is a vain thing to comfort yourselves with saying, That the grave and wise, when they had the same inclinations you now have, did, as you do, indulge and gratify them. For, first, this is not universally true; and secondly, the less they did it, the more were they honoured and beloved; but, thirdly, if they did, it is certain they have bitterly condemned it, and repented of it. And is it not strangely absurd, that you should propose to yourselves nothing in the lives of the wise and virtuous, but their frailties and errors, for your example? That you should pitch upon that only for your imitation, which all the wise and good detest and bemoan as their sin and shame?

To conclude this address to the younger sort. Unless there be any who are possessed with a spirit of infidelity, against which I will not now enter the lists, all the pretences you can possibly form for your deferring to devote yourselves instantly to wisdom and religion, are founded on two suppositions, of which the one is false, and the other absurd. The false one is, That sin is a state of pleasure; virtue, of trouble and uneasiness: the contrary of which is, I think, sufficiently demonstrated through this whole treatise. And would you but be prevailed with to taste the pleasures of a sincere virtue, your experience would soon confute this fancy. What madness then is it to be afraid of becoming happy too soon! Ah, how differently are we affected under the maladies of the mind and of the body! Did the lame or blind, the lepers, the lunatics, or demoniacs, ever entreat our LORD to defer their cure, and give them leave to enjoy miseries, diseases, and devils a little longer? The other supposition is absurd, which is, That you will repent hereafter. Must you then repent hereafter? Must this be the fruit of all your sinful pleasures: guilt and remorse, grief and fear, distress and agony of soul? Do revelation and reason,

death and judgment, do all your sober and retired thoughts, preach you this one lesson, *Repentance?* And yet can you resolve to plunge yourselves in that filthiness which must be washed off with tears? Can you resolve to indulge those cheating and deceitful lusts which will one day fill your soul with shame and sorrow, with distraction, horror, and amazement? Ah, infatuation! ah, bewitchery! that ever a rational creature should live in such open hostility against his reason! And yet, if repentance after many years, and innumerable sins, would be more easy; if your sins would be more easily conquered; this frenzy would not want some little colour: but how contrary is this to truth! Which puts me in mind of another sort of readers, to whom I am now to apply myself, namely,—

(2.) To those who are advanced in years. It is observed of CÆSAR, by SUETONIUS, that lighting upon the statue of ALEXANDER the Great, in the temple of Hercules, at Gades, and reflecting on himself, that he had yet done nothing remarkable at those years, wherein that brave man had overrun all the East, he blushed under the keen reproaches of his own mind, and groaned under the conscience of his sloth, and presently desired to be dismissed from his Questorship, that he might pursue glory and immortality. Had you but one spark, I will not say of the zeal of a Christian, but of this generosity of a Pagan, you would blush to think that you have not yet put on the armour of light, at an age in which many others have been covered with laurels; that you have not started at those years in which some others have finished, though not their race, yet all the difficulties of it. The miserable account that you will give of thirty, forty, peradventure of fifty years! I will not say that you have lived to no purpose, but to the worst imaginable; ignorant, enslaved to lust, oppressed by guilt! All that you have done is, you have "treasured up wrath against the day of wrath." For this to be the product of so many years! Shame and confusion! But greater, infinitely greater, to go on thus. Sin may to some seem the misfortune of youth; but it is

unquestionably the reproach of age. Unhappy nature and unhappy education bear a share of the imputation in youth; but in these years, your own obstinacy and choice engross the whole guilt. Young people are like weak barks, which in boisterous seas and winds carry too much sail, and too little ballast; their judgment is weak and unresolved, and their passions light and violent as hurricanes; but riper years do, or should, bring on wiser thoughts, cooler, sedater tempers; and therefore certainly sin in these carries a deeper guilt and shame in it. The raw unexperienced sinner perisheth whilst he but tastes and gazes; the virgin soul coming into a strange world, is deflowered whilst it gratifies its curiosity, like DINAH when she went forth only to see the daughters of the land; but the full-grown sinner sins against, not only the Preacher's instruction, but his own experience too; he repeats those sins which he has often confessed to be his folly and his shame; and returns, like foolish mariners, to treacherous seas, where they were shipwrecked but the other day. If this be not to outrage conscience, defy reason, and dare GOD, what is? No, you will say, you too resolve to repent hereafter. Hereafter! How ill does this word sound in one who begins to bow already under the weight of years! Hereafter! How ill does this language become this decaying, mouldering body! But suppose the wheels of time would stop, though running now down a headlong precipice; suppose your sun would for a while stand still; yet what a work have you to finish! what guilt to be washed out! what sins to vanquish! and what a day of judgment to prepare for! Are these slight considerations? Will your sins, think you, be easily removed, when their number is swollen, not only by length of time, but also by an uncontrolled licentiousness? For a novice in sin is awed by modesty, held in by scruples, and discouraged by regret and remorse; but the veteran sinner is carried away by a torrent of debauched affections, and repeats his follies with a relentless confidence, and an authority that brooks no opposition. Will it be an easy task to subdue those sins which have maintained a long and undisturbed do-

minion over you? What shall awaken that sinner, who, like SOLOMON's drunkard, is insensible of stripes and wounds; (*Prov.* xxiii. 35;) and, alas, when roused out of the arms of his Dalilah, his locks, like SAMSON's, are cut off, the spirits retired, his strength impaired, and the force of his enemy augmented; and with what will he conquer? IS it, lastly, a trivial thing to appear before the judgment-seat of GOD, that you should think a moment will serve to prepare for it? I will suppose the Judge of the whole world as merciful as you can desire him, if you will suppose him too, (with reverence be it spoken,) to have so much sense as not to be imposed on; and this alone will make that judgment formidable.

I very much fear that both young and old entertain too mild a notion of that day, and so elude and baffle the force of the most powerful motive to virtue and religion the Gospel has; I shall therefore close this exhortation to begin to live immediately, with a short reflection on that day.

We must first bid adieu to this world, to every thing in it that is dear to us, and die ere we can go and appear before GOD. What a perfect mortification of all our sensual appetites is necessary, ere we can calmly part with all below! What a long experience of love and duty is necessary to confirm and assure the soul against all its fears and apprehensions! What a vigorous faith to carry us through this dark passage into another world! When we are got there, what a strict trial are we to undergo! There all disguises will be taken off, and every thing appear in its naked nature; there all our superstructures of hay and stubble will be burned up, only pure solid virtue will bear the test; there darling vices will not pass under the disguise of sins of infirmity; there an honest sloth and harmless luxury, will not be thought innocent; there some few good fits will not pass for godly sorrow, nor some feeble and short-lived attempts for repentance; there the effects of a lucky constitution will not be crowned as the works of grace, and fruits of the divine life; there, in a word, talk will not pass for action, nor

censure of others commute for mortification in ourselves. Finally, nothing shall be rewarded there but a conquering faith, an active charity, an humble, constant zeal, patient, persevering hopes, spiritual joys, and pious fears. This needs no application. Begin, begin to live before you die; begin to repent and reform before you be judged.

3. A third way of improving life, is to avoid and cut off all those things that are injurious to it. Such are, Sloth, that wastes, and impertinence, that embroils it; coldness or remissness in religion, that dispirits and dilutes, levity and inconstancy, that disorder and confound it; and finally, all those evils that sour and embitter it.

(1.) We must avoid idleness. Sloth is the rust of time; sleep is an image of death, and sloth of sleep. The life of the sluggish is but a waking dream, a vacation from all business and true enjoyment too; a cessation and stop, though not of time, which still runs on, yet of the very powers and faculties of the soul; whereas life consists in the exercise of both. How remote then must idleness be from improving or exalting life! It never ploughs nor sows, and therefore never reaps; it never plants nor sets, and therefore never gathers any fruit: nothing great was ever performed by it, nothing great ever enjoyed by it. And shall the richest fruit that ever grew upon any of the trees of Paradise, wisdom and virtue, *i. e.*, knowledge and life, be gathered by a sluggish hand? No; though no angel, or flaming sword, stop his way, yet are there difficulties in it, too many and too great for this heavy, dastardly animal to conquer. Even temporal goods cannot be obtained without the travail of the mind, and toil of the body; and yet what lean, starved, and beggarly blessings are these, compared to those I treat of! The rich man may starve for want of true pleasure, in the midst of his glittering heaps; sorrow may sit heavy on the heart of the conqueror, or the bride, even on the days of solemn triumph: the Prince may be a slave, an Egyptian slave, even while he reigns with absolute and uncontrolled power: but life and pleasure, content and happiness, are the inseparable companions of wisdom and virtue. Let no

man therefore, flatter himself with the hopes of such a treasure, who lives idly, and at his ease: he must pray, meditate, watch, and exercise himself in industry, sobriety, and purity, who will overcome the corruptions of his nature, and obtain the tranquillity and liberty of a true Christian.

(2.) Impertinence, or being busied and employed in trifles, is as different from sloth, as motion from rest; but yet such a wretched consumption of time cannot deserve the name of life: for this is not activity of soul, but a poor and mean debasing of it. Fancy, and that a silly and extravagant one, may be said to live, but reason cannot. That idleness which consists in heavy, passive dulness, is like a state of dead sleep; that which consists in a fluttering and impertinent activity, is nothing else but a giddy ferment of the spirits, and agitation of the fancy, the incoherent disjointed thoughts, the confused and fruitless projections, of a dream: and we may almost as properly say of him that dreams, that he eats and drinks, fights or travels, or whatever he fancies himself to do, as we can of this sort of sluggard, that he lives. It is true, could a man be for ever impertinent, this sort of idleness would seem to some men to have no great evil in it: but how could such a mind bear the shock of misfortunes? How could such a soul discharge the great duties of society? How could it entertain itself with objects agreeable to a rational nature? And if it could do none of these things, it is impossible to conceive how it could be other than miserable: for though we could suppose such a creature to be so mere a trifle, as never to be nearly concerned in any changes of fortune, nor ever called upon by that community he belongs to; that is, I should almost say, never to be regarded or minded either by God or man; yet still, such a one did no way live up to the excellence of his nature: his business was not manly and rational, and his childish life was, therefore, only pretty and pleasing to him, because he had a childish and silly soul.

Nor is the grave much better than the gay impertinent; or the man of business, if he neglect the main, the one

thing necessary, to be preferred before the man of mode. Sensuality, it is true, softens, and drudgery hardens the mind; but both alike intoxicate it; both wed it to this, and alienate it from the other world. It imports very little to what idol one sacrifice, whether ASHTAROTH, MOLOCH, or MAMMON, if we sacrifice not to the true GOD. In vain do they pretend to any other art, who are ignorant of the art of living: to plod or drudge, intrigue or trade, canvass and court, it is all but solemn impertinence, if virtue and religion be neglected. Ah! what phantoms, and clouds, and dreams, do men pursue, instead of life and peace, rest and pleasure!

(3.) Remissness or lukewarmness in religion, a sort of neutrality between vice and virtue, is the next thing to be avoided. We can never truly live, unless we be entirely uniform, unless we be wholly given up, and without reserve, to the conduct of reason. There is little pleasure in religion, if there be no fervency in it: it is love that makes the duty easy, and the prospect delightful. If there be no strength in faith, no life in devotion, no spirit in duty, no desire in hope, this is religion without a soul, it is the carcase of an unanimated virtue. What peace, what assurance, what joy, what transport, can ever be the portion of such a Christian?

(4.) Levity and inconstancy is the last thing I will now mention, and the most irreconcileable enemy to life. For this does not only interrupt the course of life, or like sleep or sloth, make a vast chasm in it, but puts us more back than we had advanced forward; an unhappy gust of wind that throws us off to sea again, when we were almost come to shore. If we will reap the fruit of victory, we must pursue it; if we will find rest, we must be steadfast and immoveable; if we will enjoy virtue, we must unite and incorporate it with us; it is impossible that the inconstant unstable proselyte of virtue, should either have a pleasant life, or a comfortable death: for if he build to-day what he pulled down yesterday, if he practise one hour what he condemns another, it is impossible he should please himself, much less his GOD.

PART III.

INTRODUCTION.

By what steps I am advanced thus far in my *Inquiry after Happiness*, is obvious. First, I endeavour to remove those objections which represent all inquiries and attempts after true Happiness in this Life, either as fantastic or unnecessary; or, which is as bad, vain, and to no purpose: and after I have asserted the value and possibility of happiness, I in general point out the true reasons of our ill success in pursuit of it. In the Second Part, I state the true notion of human life, insist upon the several kinds of it, and show what qualifications and virtues the active and contemplative life demand; and then, consider, how life may be prolonged and improved. In this Third, I prosecute the same design which I had in the two former: the promoting human happiness. For Life, Perfection, and Happiness, have a close and inseparable dependance on one another. For, as life, which is the rational exercise and employment of our powers and faculties, does naturally terminate in perfection, so perfection, which is nothing else but the maturity of human virtues, does naturally end in that rest and peace, that tranquillity, serenity, and joy, of mind, which we call Happiness.

The method I observe in this Treatise, is: in the First Section, I consider Perfection more generally: in the Second, The several parts of it; and in the Last, The obstacles and impediments of our attaining it. In the first two Sections, I always first fix and explain the notion of that state which I discourse of. Next, I proceed to the fruits or advantages of it; and in the last place, prescribe the method by which it may be attained.

SECTION I.

OF RELIGIOUS PERFECTION* IN GENERAL.

CHAPTER I.

Perfection a confirmed Habit of Holiness.

Religion is nothing else but the purifying and refining nature by grace, the raising and exalting our faculties and

* It should be carefully observed, that by *Perfection*, throughout this Treatise, is meant only Christian Holiness: and that measure of it which is actually experienced by every young man in Christ. [Edit.

capacities, by wisdom and virtue. Religious Perfection, therefore, is nothing else but the moral accomplishment of human nature; such a maturity of virtue as man in this life is capable of. Conversion begins, Perfection consummates, the habit of righteousness: in the one, religion is, as it were, in its infancy; in the other, in its strength and manhood: so that perfection, in short, is nothing else but a ripe and settled habit of true holiness.

According to this notion of Perfection, he is a perfect man whose mind is pure and vigorous, and his body tame and obsequious; whose faith is firm and steady, his love ardent and exalted, and his hope full of assurance; whose religion has in it that ardour and constancy, and his soul that tranquillity and pleasure, which bespeak him a child of the light, and of the day; "a partaker of the divine nature, and raised above the corruption which is in the world through lust."

In this sense of the word Perfect, St. Peter prays for those to whom he writes his Epistle, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." (1 *Pet.* v. 10.)

The utmost height to which the Scripture exhorts us, is a steady habit of holiness; the brightest characters it gives of the perfect man, the loveliest descriptions it make us of the perfect state, are all made up of the natural and confessed properties of a ripe habit. There is no controversy that I know of, about the nature of a habit; we are all agreed that it is a kind of second nature, that it makes us exert ourselves with desire and earnestness, with satisfaction and pleasure; that it renders us fixed in our choice, and constant in our actions, and as averse to those things which are repugnant to it, as we are to those which are distasteful to our nature. And that, in a word, it so entirely and absolutely possesses the man, that the power of it is not to be resisted, nor the empire of it to be shaken off; nor can it be removed and extirpated without the greatest labour. All this is a confessed truth, in the habit of sin; and there is no reason why we should not ascribe

the same force and efficacy to a habit of virtue; especially, if we consider that the strength, easiness, and pleasure, which belong naturally to these habits, receive no small accession from the supernatural energy and vigour of the HOLY SPIRIT. I will, therefore, in a few words, show how that state of righteousness, which I term Perfection, answers this account I have given of a habit.

Is habit in general a second nature? This state of righteousness is in Scripture called, "the new man," (*Eph.* iv. 24,) "the divine nature." (2 *Pet.* i. 4.) Does it consequently rule and govern man? Hear how ST. PAUL expresses this power of the habit of holiness in himself. "I am crucified with CHRIST; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but CHRIST liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the SON of GOD, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (*Gal.* ii. 20.) This is a constant effect of habits, and is equally discernible in those of vice and virtue, that they sway and govern the man they possess: "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (*Rom.* vi. 16.)

Shall I go on to a more distinct consideration of the properties of a habit? 1. The First is, a great aversion for those things which are contrary to it, or obstruct us in the exercise of it. And this is directly the disposition of the perfect man towards temptations and sins: he is now ashamed of those things which before he gloried in; he is filled with a holy indignation against those things which before he took pleasure in; and that which before he courted with fondness and passion, he now shuns with fear and vigilance. In brief, the Scripture describes such a one as possessed with an utter hatred and abhorrence of every evil way, and as an irreconcileable enemy to every thing that is an enemy to his virtue and his GOD. And how can this be otherwise? The love of GOD must necessarily imply an abhorrence of evil; and that habit which confirms and increases the one, must confirm and increase the other too.

2. The next property of a habit is, that the actions which flow from it are (if we meet not with violent opposition) performed with ease and pleasure: what is natural, is pleasant and easy, and habit is second nature. When the love of virtue, and the hatred of vice, have once rooted themselves in the soul, what can be more natural than to follow after the one, and shun the other? Since this is no more than embracing and enjoying what we love, and turning our backs on what we detest. This therefore is one constant character of perfection in Scripture: delight and pleasure are every where said to accompany the practice of virtue, when it is once grown up to strength and maturity: "The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." (*Prov.* iii. 17) "Perfect love casteth out fear." (1 *John* iv. 18.) And to him that loves, "the commandments of God are not grievous." (1 *John* v. 3.) Hence it is, that "the good man's delight is in the law of the Lord, and that he meditates therein day and night." (*Psa.* i. 2.) Nor does he delight less in action than meditation; but grows in grace as much as knowledge; and abounds daily more and more in good works, as he increases in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

3. Vigour and activity, or much earnestness and application of mind, is a third property of a habit. It is impossible not to be intent upon those things for which we have even an habitual passion, if this expression may be allowed me: an inclination which has gathered strength and authority from custom, will exert itself with some warmth and briskness. Now certainly there is nothing more frequently required of, or attributed to, the perfect man in Scripture, than zeal and fervency of spirit in the ways of God; and no wonder; for when actions flow at once from principles and custom; when they spring from love, and are attended by pleasure, and are incited and quickened by faith and hope too; how can it be, but that we should repeat them with some eagerness, and feel a holy impatience as often as we are hindered or disappointed?

Lastly, Is constancy and steadiness the property of a habit? It is an undoubted property of perfection too. In Scripture, good men are every represented "as standing fast in the faith; steadfast and immovable in the works of God; holding fast their integrity:" in one word, as constantly following after righteousness, and maintaining a good conscience towards God and man. And so natural is this to one habitually good, that St. John affirms of such a one, "that he cannot sin: Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." (1 *John* iii. 9.)

Thus I have cleared my notion of perfection from Scripture: nor need I multiply more texts, to prove what I think no man can doubt of, unless he mistake the main design of the Gospel; which is to exalt us to a steady habit of holiness: "The end of the commandment," saith St. Paul, "is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." This is the utmost perfection man is capable of, to have his mind enlightened, and his heart purified; and to be informed, acted, and influenced by faith and love, as by a vital principle: and all this is essential to habitual goodness.

If any one desire further light or satisfaction in this matter, let him read the eighth chapter to the Romans, and he will soon acknowledge, that he there finds the substance of what I have hitherto advanced. There, though the word itself be not found, the thing called Perfection is described in all the strength and beauty, in all the pleasure and advantages, of it: there the disciple of Jesus is represented as one "who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" as one whom "the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set free from the law of sin and death;" one who ὁ φρονεῖ, "does not mind or relish the things of the flesh, but of the Spirit;" one "in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells:" he does not stand at the door and knock; he does not make a transient visit; but here he reigns, and rules, and inhabits: one, finally,

in whom "the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness." And the result of this is the joy and confidence, the security and transport, that become the child of God. "Ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." And now, it is no wonder if the perfect man "long for the revelation of the glory of the sons of God;" if he cry out in rapture, "If God be for me, who can be against me? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?" If any one would see the perfect man described in fewer words, he needs but cast his eye on *Rom.* vi. 22: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

CHAPTER II.

Inferences deduced from the true Notion of Perfection.

Having fixed the Notion of Perfection, and proved it consonant to Scripture, I have nothing now to do, but by way of inference, to represent the advantages we may reap from it.

1. It is from hence, plain, that perfection must not be placed in fantastic speculations, or voluntary observances, but in the solid and useful virtues of the Gospel; in the works of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope; in the purity and humility of a child of light; in the constancy and magnanimity which become one who has brought the body into subjection, and has set his affections on things above. This state of Perfection is well

enough described by the rule of St. Benet: *Ergo his omnibus humilitatis gradibus ascensis, Monachus mox ad charitatem*, &c. "The monk having passed through these several stages of humility or mortification, will arrive at that love of God which casteth out fear; by which he will be enabled to perform all things with ease and pleasure, and, as it were, naturally, which before he performed with reluctancy and dread; being now moved and acted, not by the terrors of hell, but by a delight in goodness, and the force of an excellent habit: both which Christ by his Spirit vouchsafes to increase and exalt in his servants, now cleansed and purged from all sin and vice."

2. This notion of perfection proves all men to lie under an obligation: for as all are capable of a habit of holiness, so it is the duty of all to endeavour after it. If perfection, were, indeed, an angelical state; if it did consist in an exemption from all defects and infirmities, and in such an elevation of virtue, to which nothing can be added; then I confess, all discourses of it, and much more all attempts after it, would be vain.

But if Christian perfection be only a well confirmed habit in goodness, if it differ from sincerity only, when sincerity is in its weakness and infancy, not when grown up, then it is plain, that every Christian lies under an obligation to it. Accordingly, the Scripture exhorts all "to perfect holiness in the fear of God; to go on to perfection:" (*Heb.* vi.:) and it assigns this as one great end of the institution of a ministry in the churches of Christ, namely, "the perfecting of the saints, the edifying the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the fulness of Christ." (*Eph.* iv. 12, 13.) And hence it is, that we find the Apostles pursuing this great end, by their prayers and labours, earnestly contending and endeavouring to present all Christians perfect before God. "Night and day praying exceedingly, that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith."

(1 *Thess.* iii. 10.) "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in CHRIST JESUS." (*Col.* i. 28.)

3. It is very easy to discern now where we stand in reference to Perfection; how remote we are from it, or how near to it. And because this is a matter of no small importance, and men are generally backward to advance into such reflections as may breed any disturbance to their peace, or any diminution of their good opinion of themselves, I shall endeavour by several particular deductions, to lay every man's state as plainly open to view as I can.

(1.) Then, from the notion I have given of Perfection, it appears, that if a man's life be very uneven, inconstant, and contradictory to itself; if he yield to-day to the motives of the Gospel, and impulses of the SPIRIT, and to-morrow to the solicitations of the flesh, and temptations of the world, he is far from being perfect; so that there is not ground enough to conclude him a sincere or real, though imperfect, convert. The only certain proof of regeneration, is victory: "He that is born of GOD, overcometh the world." (1 *John* v. 4.) Faith is not saving and justifying, unless it subdue the will, and captivate the heart. We may have sudden heats and passions for virtue; but if they be too short-lived to implant it in us, this is not that love which animates and impregnates a Christian: it is not "faith working by love." Lastly, we may have good purposes, intentions, nay, resolutions; but if these prove too weak to obtain a conquest over our corruptions; if they prove too weak to resist the temptations we are wont to fall by, it is plain they are not such as can demonstrate us righteous, or entitle us to a crown, which is promised to him that overcometh. Here I think it is well worth considering, whether that great change in the nature of a sinner which is called holiness, be now effected at once, and in a moment, or not.

It is certain in the primitive times, when the conviction of a sinner was wrought by a dazzling light, and by

exuberant influxes of the SPIRIT, sanctification (as in the Gaoler and his family, *Acts* xvi.) might be wrought in one hour. But I doubt it is rarely so with us at this day; * our convictions in the beginning of conversion are seldom so full and clear as theirs: and, if we may judge by the effects, it is but seldom that the principle of a new life is infused in the same power it appears to have been in them. And if so, then these things will follow: 1. Though in the first plantation of the Gospel, men being converted as it were in a moment, engrafted into CHRIST, and receiving the HOLY GHOST, the earnest of their justification or acceptance with GOD, and their future glory; we may very well say of them, that they were not only justified, but also knew themselves to be so, before they had brought forth any other fruit of righteousness, than what was implied in the dedication of themselves to CHRIST by that solemn rite of baptism; but at this day conversion is not effected in the same manner; † righteousness is not brought forth into victory, but by long labour. 2. The doctrine of infused habits has been much ridiculed as absurd; and I must confess, if it be essential to a habit, to be acquired by length of time, and repetition of the same acts, then an infused habit is a very odd expression: but why GOD cannot produce in us those strong dispositions to virtue in a moment, which are naturally produced by time; or why we may not ascribe as much efficacy to infused grace, as Philosophers are wont to do to repeated acts, I cannot see. Nor can I see why such dispositions, when infused, may not be called habits, if they have all the properties and effects of a habit. And that such excellent dispositions were on a sudden wrought in the minds of Christians in the beginning of Christianity, is too plain from the history of those times to need a proof.

(2.) He that feels in himself little or no fervency of spirit, little or no hunger and thirst after righteousness,

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* Yes it is: as may be proved by a thousand instances. [EDIT.

† Indeed it is. [EDIT.

has no reason to doubt, lest his religion be nothing else but custom, or common prudence. I see not how so much indifference and sluggishness can consist with a sincere love of God: and the best advice that can be given such a one, is surely that of St. Peter, that by adding one degree of virtue to another, he would use "all diligence to make his calling and election sure." (*2 Pet.* i. 10.)

(3.) If a man's religion produce very few good works, or such only as put him to little travail or expense, we may conclude that this man is not perfect; his charity is too weak, too narrow, to be that of a real Christian: this remark, that the inconsiderableness of our good works is reason enough to question, not only one's perfection, but sincerity, holds good in such cases only, where neither the opportunity nor capacity of higher and nobler performances is wanting. I dare not pronounce, that no man can be a Christian, unless he be fit to be a martyr: it is true, the lowest degree of sincerity must imply universal obedience, in defiance of all temptations; but yet that grace may be sufficient to save a man, that is sufficient to master the difficulties he is to encounter with, although he should not be able to grapple with the trials to which another man may be subject. Surely the wisdom and the faithfulness of God can be no further concerned, than to qualify any one for the discharge of those duties which he thinks fit to call him to: and if the discharge of such duties be not a sufficient proof of our sincerity, we can never have any, but must be always held in suspense about our future state.

(4.) If the duties of religion be very troublesome and uneasy to a man, we may from hence conclude, that he is not perfect: for though the beginning of wisdom and virtue be generally harsh and severe to the fool and sinner, yet to him that has conquered, "The yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light;" to him that is filled with the love of God, "his commandments are not grievous:" hence the observation of the Son of Sirach: "For at the

first she will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his soul, and try him by her laws; then will she return the straight way unto him, and comfort him, and show him her secrets." (*Esdras* iv. 17, 18.) The reason of this assertion is palpable; it is the nature of a habit to render difficult things easy, harsh things pleasant, to fix a floating and uncertain humour, to nurse and ripen a weak and tender disposition into nature. And it is as reasonable to expect these effects in religious, as in any other sorts of habits.

Lastly, He who does not find religion full of pleasure, who does not glory in God, and rejoice in our Lord Jesus, he who is not filled with an humble assurance of the divine favour, and a joyful expectation of immortality and glory, does yet want something: he is yet defective, with respect either to the brightness of illumination, the absoluteness of liberty, or the ardour of love; he may be a good man, and have gone a great way in his Christian race; but there is something still behind to complete and perfect him; some error or other creates him groundless scruples, some incumbrance, or impediment, or other; whether an infelicity of temper, or too warm an application to something of the world, retards his vigour, and abates his affections.

The next thing I am to do, according to the method I have proposed, is, to consider the fruits and advantages of Perfection. A consideration which will furnish us with many motives to it, and demonstrate its subserviency to our happiness.

CHAPTER III.

A general Account of the Blessed Fruits and Advantages of religious Perfection.

I BEGIN with assurance; which may relate to the time present or to come: for the resolution of two questions, gives the mind a perfect ease about this matter. The first is, Am I assured that I am at present in a state of grace? The second, Am I assured that I shall continue so to my life's end? To begin with the first: the answer of this inquiry depends on three grounds:*—

1. A divine revelation, which declares in general, who shall be saved; namely, they who repent and believe. Heaven lies open to all that perform these conditions; every page of the Gospel attests this; this is the substance of CHRIST's commission to his Apostles, that they should preach repentance and remission of sins through his name amongst all nations.

2. The Second ground of assurance, as it relates to our present state, is an application of the conditions of life laid down in the Gospel to a man's own particular case, thus: "They that repent and believe shall be saved:" I repent and believe; therefore I shall be saved. Now that a man upon an examination of himself, may be thoroughly assured that he does repent and believe, is evident from Scripture, which does not only exhort us to enter upon this examination, but also asserts, that assurance, joy, and peace, are the natural fruits of it: "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that JESUS CHRIST is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 *Cor.* xiii. 5.) "But sanctify the LORD GOD in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of

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* N. B. The primary assurance, that we are now in a state of favour with GOD, arises from the direct witness of his SPIRIT. This secondary kind of assurance may and ought to follow. [EDIT.

the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." (1 *Pet.* iii. 13.) "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." (1 *John* ii. 3.) It is true, men often deceive themselves, and entertain a more favourable opinion of their state than they ought. But whence proceeds this? Even from too partial or superficial reflections on themselves, or none at all. And therefore the Apostle teaches us plainly, that the only way to correct this error, is a sincere and diligent search into ourselves: "For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself: but let every man prove his own work; and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." (*Gal.* vi. 34.)

And then a sincere Christian may easily discern his spiritual state by the inward movings and actings of the soul: for is it possible that such a one should be ignorant, what impressions divine truths make upon him? Is it possible he should be ignorant, whether his faith stands firm against the shock of all carnal objections; whether he earnestly desire to please God, as loving him above all things; whether he thirst after the consolation and joy of the Spirit, more than after that of sensible things? Is it possible that the soul should be carried upwards frequently on the wings of faith and love, that it should maintain a familiar conversation with heaven, that it should long to be delivered from this world of trouble, and this body of death, and to enter into the regions of peace, of life, and righteousness? Is it possible, I say, that these should be the affections, the longings and yearnings of the soul, and yet that he who often enters into his closet, and communes with his own heart, should be ignorant of them? It cannot be. In a word, can the reluctances of the body, and the allurements of the world, be disarmed, weakened, and reduced? Can the hunger and thirst after righteousness be eager, the relish of spiritual pleasure brisk and delightful, and contempt of worldly things really and thoroughly settled, and yet the man be insensible of all this? It cannot be. But if we feel these affections in us,

we may safely conclude, that we are partakers of the divine nature; that "we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust;" and that "we are growing up into a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST."

One would think, there should be nothing further needful to establish the consolation of a Christian; and yet GOD, out of regard, no doubt, to the vast importance and happy influence of assurance, has furnished us with another ground of it, which is,

The testimony of the Spirit.* This Spirit, as it assists us in our examination, so it ratifies and confirms our sentence by its suffrage, fortifying our assurance, and increasing our joy. All this the Scripture expressly teaches us; for the Spirit is called, "The earnest of our inheritance, the seal of our redemption." (*Eph.* i. 13, 14; iv. 30, 31; 2 *Cor.* ii. 10; v. 1.) And if it were supposed that these places relate more immediately to the spirit of promise which was conspicuous in miracles; yet there are texts enough which assure us, that the SPIRIT of GOD should be imparted to believers through all succeeding ages, and that this should be one effect of it to comfort us, and be a pledge to us of the divine favour: Thus, "Now the GOD of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the HOLY GHOST." (*Rom.* xv. 13.) And, "For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father: the SPIRIT itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of GOD; and if children, then heirs, heirs of GOD, and joint-heirs with CHRIST." (*Rom.* viii. 15, 16.) If it be here demanded what this testimony of the SPIRIT is, I answer, it is a powerful energy of the blessed SPIRIT, first witnessing GOD's love to us, and then shedding abroad and increasing the love of GOD in our

* This does *accompany* our Self-Examination; but *precedes* it likewise. [EDIT.

hearts. This is the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of obsignation, the Spirit of glory, and the Spirit of love; happy is he who is partaker of it.

3. Assurance may regard the time to come; and it conduces very little less to the peace and pleasure of a Christian, to be assured that he shall persevere in a good state, than that he is now in one. Let us therefore, in the next place, examine what grounds the perfect man may have for such a persuasion: now these are likewise three. (1.) The favour of God for the perfect man. (2.) The sufficiency of divine assistance. And (3.) The conscience of his own integrity.

(1.) The favour of God. I need not go about to prove that God's "eyes are always upon the righteous, and his ears always open to their prayers;" that they are the dear objects of his delight and love: reason and Scripture both abundantly attest this; and the repeated promises of God to good men encourage them to hope from God whatever beloved children may from a tender and kind father. Is not this enough then to inspire the perfect man with great and confident hopes? He knows, not only that God is an immutable God, free from all levity and inconstancy; and therefore, that nothing less than presumption and obstinacy, habitual neglect, or wickedness, can tempt him to recall his gifts, or repent him of his favours: He knows not only that "God is faithful, and will not suffer him to be tempted above what he is able;" but he knows also, that he has a powerful "Intercessor at the right hand of God, an advocate with the Father," who cannot but prevail. Nor is this all yet: he has a great many things that plead for him with God: there are his tears which are bottled up; there are his prayers and alms which are gone up for a memorial before God; there is a book of remembance written, wherein all his pious discourses are registered; and God is faithful, and cannot forget his works and labour of love. The Spirit of God will not soon quit the bosom that it so long resided in; it will not suffer itself to be divided from that person with whom it had

entered into so close an union, that it seemed as it were incorporated with him, and become essential to his being; whence it is that the SPIRIT is said to be grieved, when he is forced and compelled to retire.

(2.) The second ground of assurance for the time to come, is, the sufficiency of divine assistance. The good man is well assured, that GOD will never refuse the protection of his providence, or the aid of his SPIRIT. And what can be too difficult for such an one? Providence can prevent a temptation, or remove it; the SPIRIT can support him under it, and enable him to vanquish it; nay, it can enable him to extract new strength and vigour from it: "My grace is sufficient for thee:" (2 *Cor.* xii. 9:) the truth of which assertion has been illustriously proved by the victories of martyrs and confessors, who triumphed over the united force of men and devils. Though then the conscience of human frailty may awaken in the best of men fear and caution, the assurance of divine assistance cannot but beget in them a holy confidence.

(3.) The conscience of his own integrity is a third ground of a good man's confidence. He knows that nothing but crying provocations can quench the SPIRIT, and oblige GOD to desert him; and he has reason to hope that this is that he cannot be guilty of. He is sure, that presumptuous wickedness is not only repugnant to his principles, but to the very bent of his nature, to all the inclinations and passions of his soul. Can he ever wilfully dishonour and disobey GOD, who loves him above all things? Can he forsake and betray his SAVIOUR, who has long rejoiced and gloried in him; who has been long accustomed to look upon all the satisfactions of this life as dung and dross, in comparison of him? Can he, in one word, ever be seduced to renounce and hate religion, who has had so long an experience of the beauty and of the pleasure of it? Good habits, when they are grown up to maturity, seem to me as natural as evil ones; and if so, it is no less difficult to extirpate the one than the other. And I think I have the Scripture on my side in this

opinion. Does the Prophet JEREMIAH demand, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well." (*Jer.* xiii. 23.) ST. JOHN on the other hand does affirm, "Whosoever is born of GOD, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of GOD." (1 *John* iii. 9.) "Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not." (*Verse* 6.)

Here we have room enough for joy, and peace, and for caution too; room enough for confidence, and for watchfulnes too. The Romanists, indeed, will not allow us to be certain of salvation, with such a certainty as that with which we entertain an article of faith; *i. e.*, we are not so sure that we are in the favour of GOD, as we are that there is a GOD; we are not so sure that we have a title to the merits of CHRIST, as we are, or may be, that JESUS is the CHRIST. Now if this assertion be confined to that assurance which regards the time to come, there is nothing very absurd or intolerable in it. For a less assurance than that which this doctrine excludes, will be sufficient to secure the pleasure and tranquillity of the perfect man; but if it be designed against that assurance which regards our present state, then it is not agreeable either to reason, Scripture, or experience. For,—

1. The question being about a matter of fact, it is in vain to argue that cannot be, which does appear manifestly to have been. And certainly they who rejoiced in CHRIST with joy unspeakable and full of glory, were as fully persuaded that they were in a state of grace and salvation, as they were that JESUS was risen from the dead.

2. It is one thing to balance the strength and degrees of assurance; another to balance the reasons of it. For it is very possible that assurance may be stronger, where the reason of it may not be so clear as where the assurance is less. Thus for example: The evidence of sense seems to many learned men to be stronger than that of faith; and yet, through the assistance of the SPIRIT, a man may

embrace a truth that depends upon revelation, with as much confidence and certainty as one depending upon sense. And so it may be in the case of assurance; the SPIRIT of GOD may, by its concurrence, raise our assurance as high as he pleases.

But, 3. Why should not the certainty I have concerning my present state, be as divine and infallible, as that I have concerning an article of faith? If the premises be infallible, why should not the conclusion? He that repents and believes is in a state of grace,—is a divine, an infallible proposition: and why may not this other,—I repent and believe, be equally infallible, though not equally divine? What repentance and faith is, is revealed; and therefore there is no room for my being here mistaken. Besides, I am assisted and guided in the trial of myself by the SPIRIT of GOD. So that the truth of this proposition,—I repent and believe, depends partly upon the evidence of sense; and I may be as sure of it, as of what I do, or leave undone, partly upon the evidence of inward sensation, or my consciousness of my own thoughts; and I may be as sure of it as I can be of what I love or hate, rejoice or grieve for. And lastly, It depends upon the evidence of the SPIRIT of GOD, which assists me in the examination of myself. And when I conclude from the former propositions, that I am in a state of grace, he confirms and ratifies my inference. And now let any one tell me, what kind of certainty that is, that can be greater than this? I have taken this pains to set the doctrine of assurance in a clear light, because it is the great spring of the perfect man's comfort and pleasure, the source of his strength and joy. And this puts me in mind of that other fruit of perfection: Its subserviency to our happiness in this life.

That happiness increases in proportion with perfection, cannot be denied; unless we will at the same time deny the happiness of a man to exceed that of an infant, or the happiness of an angel that of a man. Now this truth being of great importance, and serving singly instead of a thousand motives to perfection, I will consider it closely.

Happiness and pleasure are generally thought to be only two words for the same thing. Nor is this very remote from truth; for let but pleasure be solid and lasting, and what more is wanting to make man happy? The best way, therefore, to determine how much perfection contributes to our happiness, is to examine how much it contributes to our pleasure.

If, with the Epicurean, we think indolence our supreme happiness, and define pleasure by the absence of pain, then I am sure the perfect man will have the best claim to it. He surely is freest from the mistakes and errors, from the passions and follies, that embroil human life; he creates no evil to himself, nor provokes any unnecessary danger; his virtue effectually does that which atheism attempts in vain,—dispels the terror of an invisible power; he need not drown the voice of conscience by wine, or noise, or the toil of life; it speaks nothing to him but what is kind and obliging; it is his comforter, not his persecutor: and as to this world, he reaps that satisfaction and tranquillity from the moderation of his affections, which ambition and avarice in vain promise themselves from preferments, or the increase of wealth. If, therefore, there were any state on this side heaven exempt from evil, it must be that of the perfect man. But he knows the world too well to flatter himself with the expectation of indolence, or an undisturbed tranquillity here below; and is as far from being deluded by vain hopes, as from being scared by vain fears, or tortured by vain desires. He knows the world has its evils, and that they cannot wholly be avoided; he knows it, and dares behold them with open eyes, survey their force, and feel and try their edge; and when he has called in the aid of heaven, he shrinks not nor desponds; but meets evil with that courage, and bears it with that evenness of mind, that he seems, even in his afflictions, nearer to indolence, than the fool and sinner in his prosperity. So that there appears so much loveliness in the deportment of the perfect man, with respect to the evils of life, that for that reason alone, were there no

other, I should prefer his virtue above any possession or enjoyment of life. Give me leave to compare the saint and the sinner on this occasion, and but very briefly: "The wise man's eyes," saith SOLOMON, "are in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness." (*Eccles.* ii. 14.) The wise man sees that he has enemies, I mean evils; and therefore he informs himself well of their strength, observes their motion, and prepares for the encounter: but stupidity is the greatest blessing of the sinner's life; and his most admired quality is not to be apprehensive of evil, until it crush him with its weight. If the sinner be not fool enough to arrive at this degree of brutality, then as soon as the report of the most distant evil, or the most inconsiderable, reaches his ear, how it fills his imagination, how it shakes his heart, and how it embitters his pleasures! And to what poor and despicable arts, to what base and dishonourable shifts does his fear force him! When on the same occasion we discover nothing in the perfect man, but a beautiful mixture of humility and faith, devotion and confidence, or assurance in GOD. "He is not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD:" (*Psa.* cxii:) a frame of spirit, which to those who have opportunity and sense to observe it, renders him both more beloved and revered.

Lastly, If we consider the wicked and the good man, actually under the pressure of evil, how much unlike is the state of the one to that of the other, even while the outward circumstances are the same! What cheerfulness, what courage, what resignation, what hopes adorn the one? What instruction to all, what satisfaction to his friends and relations does his deportment afford! And how does it warm the breasts of those that converse with him, with an esteem for, and love of goodness, and himself! What charm, what delight is there in those gracious speeches that proceed at this time out of a good man's mouth! "I know that my Redeemer liveth." "The LORD giveth, and the LORD taketh away; blessed be the name of the LORD." "Thou of very faithfulness hast

caused me to be afflicted." "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." And how often does he pour out his heart in secret before God! How often does he reflect on the gracious and wise ends of divine chastisement! And how often does he, with desire and thirst, meditate on that fulness of joy which expects him in the presence of God! But let us cast our eye on the voluptuary, on the ambitious, on the covetous, or any other sort of sinner, under disgrace, poverty, sickness, or any such calamity; what a mean and despicable figure does he make! What impatience, what despondency, what guilt, what pusillanimity, does every word, every action betray! Or, it may be, his insolence is turned into crouching and fawning; his rudeness and violence into artifice and cunning; and his irreligion into superstition. Various, indeed, are the humours, and very different the carriage of these unhappy men, in the day of trial; but all is but misery in a different dress; guilt and baseness under a different appearance. Here I might further remark, that *that* faith which produces patience in adversity, produces likewise confidence in prosperity. "I will lay me down," may every good man say, "and sleep, and rise again; for thou, Lord, shalt make me dwell in safety." And surely the one is as serviceable to the ease of human life as the other. But I think I have said enough to show, that if pleasure be supposed to imply no more than indolence, the perfect man has, without controversy, a far greater share of it than any other.

But let us take pleasure to be, not a mere calm, but a gentle breeze; not mere rest and quiet, but a delightful motion; not the mere tranquillity of the mind, but the transport of it, or something nearly approaching it. Perfection will suffer nothing by this change of the notion of pleasure. How many pleasures has the wise man, which depend not on fortune, to which the sinner is an utter stranger! What pleasure, what triumph is equal to that of the perfect man, when he glories in God, and makes his boast of him? When he "rejoices in the Lord, with joy

unspeakable, and full of glory?" When, being transported by a vital sense of divine love, and strengthened and exalted by the mighty energy of the SPIRIT of adoption, he maintains a "fellowship with the FATHER, and with his SON, JESUS? All communion with GOD consists in this joy of love and assurance, and has a taste of heaven in it. Let the most fortunate, and the wisest Epicurean too, ransack all the storehouses and treasures of nature; let him muster together all his legions of pleasure, and let him, if he can, consolidate and incorporate them all; and after all, being put into the scale against this alone, they will prove lighter than vanity itself. To be the care, the delight, the love of an Almighty GOD; to be dear to him who is the Origin and Fountain of all perfections; LORD! what rest, what confidence, what joy, what ecstasy do these thoughts breed! How sublime, how lofty, how delightful, and ravishing, are those expressions of ST. JOHN: "Behold what manner of love the FATHER hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of GOD! Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of GOD, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (1 *John* iii. 1, 2.) But I will descend to cooler and humbler pleasures. It is no small happiness to the perfect man, that he can reflect on the truth and justice, the courage and constancy, the meekness and charity of his soul, with much gratitude towards GOD, and contentment in himself. Nor is it a matter of small importance: for, grant any one but this, and he can never be very uneasy, or very miserable; but without this, there are very few things which will not disturb and discompose; and the most obliging accidents of life will have no relish in them. It is true, folly and vanity do sometimes create a self-complacency in the sinner; why, even then, it is pleasing error. But there is as much difference between the just and rational complacency of a wise man in himself, and the mistaken one of a fool.

as there is between the false and fleeting fancies of a dream, and the solid satisfactions of the day. This will be very manifest upon the slightest view we can take of those actions, which are the true reason of the good man's satisfaction, and render his conscience a continual feast to him.

It is commonly said, 'Virtue is its own reward.' And though it must be acknowledged, this is a reward which is not sufficient in all cases, nor great enough to vanquish some sorts of temptations, yet there is a great deal of truth and weight in this saying. For a state of virtue is like a state of health or peace, of strength and beauty; and therefore desirable on its own account. And if pleasure, properly speaking, be nothing else but the agreeable exercise of the powers of nature about their proper objects, and if it be then complete, when these powers are raised, and the exercise of them is free and undisturbed; then certainly virtue, which is nothing else but the perfect action of a perfect nature, as far as the one and the other may be admitted in this state of mortality, must be a very considerable pleasure. Acts of wisdom and charity, the contemplation of truth, and the love of goodness, must be the most natural and delightful exercise of the mind. Indeed, how many, how various, are the exercises and employments of the mind of man! And when it is once polished and cultivated, how agreeable are they! To find out, to illustrate and adorn, to prove and demonstrate, to weigh and distinguish, to deliberate calmly and impartially, to act with an absolute liberty, to despise little things, and look boldly on dangers; to do all things dexterously, to converse with a sweet and yet manly air, in honest and open, yet taking, obliging language; how delightful are these things in themselves! How much do they conduce to the service, the beauty, and dignity of human life! To these accomplished minds we owe histories, sciences, arts, trades, laws. From all which, if others reap an unspeakable pleasure, how much more the authors, the parents of them! And all this puts me in

mind of one great advantage which the perfect man enjoys above the most fortunate sensualist; which is, that he can never want an opportunity to employ all the vigour of his mind, usefully and delightfully. Whence it is, that retirement, which is the prison and the punishment of the fool, is the paradise of the wise and good.

But let us come at length to that pleasure which depends upon external objects; where, if any where, the fool and sinner must dispute his title to pleasure with the wise and good. Yet how many things are there here which force us to give the preference to the wise man! I will not urge, that a narrow, a private fortune can furnish store enough for all the appetites of virtue; that a wise man need not at any time purchase his pleasure at too dear a rate; he need not lie, nor cheat, nor crouch, nor fawn: this is the price of sinful pleasure. I will not, I say, urge these and the like advantages, since the world thinks it want of spirit to be content with a little; and want of wit not to practise those arts, let them be never so base, by which we may compass more. I will only remark these few things:—

1. The wise man's prospect is enlarged. He is like an artist, or philosopher, who discovers a thousand beauties in a piece, wherein the idiot can see none. He sees in all the works, in all the providences of God, those depths, those contrivances, which the fool cannot fathom; that order, that harmony, of which the sinner is insensible.

2. The pleasure of sense that is not refined by virtue, leaves a stain upon the mind; it is coarse and turbulent, empty and vexatious. The pleasure of virtue is like a stream, which runs indeed within its banks, but it runs smooth and clear, and always feeds the current. But the pleasure of sin is like a land-flood, impetuous, muddy, and irregular; and as soon as it forsakes the ground it overflowed, it leaves nothing behind it but slime and filth.

Lastly, The wise man, forming a true estimate of the objects of sense, and not looking upon them as his ultimate

end, enjoys all that is in them, and is not fooled by an expectation of more.

Thus, having considered the objects of human pleasure, two things are plain: First, that the perfect man has many sources of pleasure, which the sinner never tastes of, which he cannot relish, which he is a stranger to. Next, as to outward things, that he has even here many advantages above the other. But what is more considerable yet, is—

All the claim the sinner lays to pleasure, is confined to the present moment, which is extremely short, and extremely uncertain; the time that is past and to come he quits all pretension to, or ought to do so. As to the time past, the thing is self-evident; for the sinner, looking back, sees his pleasures and satisfactions, the good man his trials and temptations, past and gone. The sinner sees an end of his beauty and his strength; the good man of his weaknesses and follies. The one, when he looks back, is encountered with sin and folly, wickedness and shame; the other with repentance and good works. Guilt and fear haunt the reflections of the one; peace and hope attend those of the other. As to the time to come, the Atheist hath no prospect at all beyond the grave; the wicked Christian a very dismal one; the weak and imperfect a doubtful one; only the wise and perfect an assured, joyful, and delightful one. And this puts me in mind of that which is the proper fruit of perfection, and the truest and greatest pleasure of human life, that is, assurance; assurance of the pardon of sin, assurance of the divine favour, assurance of immortality and glory.

Need I prove, that assurance is an unspeakable pleasure? One would think, that to man, who is daily engaged in a conflict with some evil or other, it were superfluous to prove that it is a mighty pleasure to be raised, though not above the assault, yet above the venom and malignity of evils; to be filled with joy, and strength, and confidence; to ride triumphant under the protection of the divine

favour, and see the sea of life swell and toss itself in vain, in vain threaten the bark it cannot sink, in vain invade the cable it cannot burst. One would think, that to man, who lives all his life long in bondage for fear of death, it should be a surprising delight to see death lie gasping at his feet, naked and impotent, without sting, without terror. One would finally think, that to man, who lives rather by hope than enjoyment, it should not be necessary to prove, that the Christian's hope is greater, its objects more glorious, and its success more certain, than that of any worldly pleasure; and that it is a delightful prospect to see the heavens opened, and JESUS, our JESUS, our Prince and Saviour, sitting at the right hand of GOD.

Thus I have, I think, sufficiently made out the subserviency of perfection to the happiness of this present life. Nor can I imagine what objections can be sprung to invalidate what I have said, unless there be any thing of colour in these two :—

1. To reap the pleasure, will some one say, which you have described here, it requires something of an exalted genius, some compass of understanding, some sagacity and penetration. To this I answer, I grant indeed that some of those pleasures which I have reckoned up as belonging to the perfect man, demand a spirit raised a little above the vulgar; but the richest pleasures, not the most polished and elevated spirits, but the most devout and charitable souls are best capable of. Such are the peace and tranquillity which arise from the conquest of all inordinate affections; the satisfaction which accompanies a sincere and vigorous discharge of duty, and our reflections upon it; the security and rest which flow from self-resignation, and confidence in the divine protection; and, lastly, the joy that springs from the full assurance of hope.

But, 2. It may be objected, It is true, all these things seem to hang together well enough in speculation; but when we come to examine the matter of fact, all you have said to prove "the ways of wisdom ways of pleasantness,

and all her paths peace," amounts to no more than a pretty amusement of the mind, and a visionary scheme of happiness. For how few are there who feel all this to be truth, and experience the pleasure you talk of! How few are there in whom we can discover any signs of this spiritual joy, or fruits of a divine tranquillity or security! I answer, in a word, the examples of mature virtue are very few; religion runs very low, and the love of God and goodness in the bosoms of most Christians, suffers such an alloy and mixture, that it is no wonder at all if so imperfect a state breed but very imperfect hopes, faint and doubtful joys. But I shall have occasion to examine the force of this objection more fully, when I come to the obstacles of perfection.

3. It may be objected against the account I have given of the growth of virtue, that when I come to the maturity of it, my colours are too bright, my strokes too bold, and the form I have given it too divine. For you describe it, will one say, as if man, now grown perfect, had nothing to do but to enjoy God and himself; as if he were already entered into rest; as if he had nothing to do but to rejoice continually: nothing further to press after, nothing to combat, nothing to contend with: whereas the Fathers generally, and all judicious modern writers, seem to place perfection in nothing higher than in a perpetual progress towards it; they look upon life as a perpetual warfare, and utterly deny any such height or eminence as is raised above clouds and storms, above troubles and temptations. To this I have several things to say:—First, I have described the Christian's spiritual progress in the same manner, and, as near as I could, in the same words which the Scripture does. Secondly, I do not pretend any where to assert, that there is any state in this life raised above trials and temptations. Thirdly, As the world now goes, perfection is a state we arrive at very late;* and all the way to it full of labour and travail, full of dangers and

* True; but it is our own fault. [EDIT.

difficulties; so that upon this account, the life of man may well be said to be a perpetual warfare. But, fourthly, I do by no means affirm, that the perfect man is incapable of improvement. Of this I shall have occasion to unfold my sense more fully afterwards.

CHAPTER IV

Of the Means of Perfection.

SHOULD I insist particularly on every one of the means or instruments of perfection, it would lead me through the whole system of religion; it would oblige me to treat of all the articles of our faith, and all the parts of moral righteousness. For the virtues of the Gospel all afford mutual support and nourishment to one another; and prayer and the LORD's Supper, not to mention meditation, psalmody, conversation, discipline, consist in the exercise of almost all Christian graces, as repentance, faith, hope, charity; but this would be an endless task. I purpose, therefore, here only to lay down some few general observations, which may serve for directions in the use of Gospel-means, point out the ends we are to aim at, and enable us to reap the utmost benefit from them.

Subsect. 1. The practice of wisdom and virtue is the best way to improve and strengthen both. The practice of virtue gives a man great boldness towards GOD, mingles joy and pleasure in all his addresses to him, purifies and enlightens the mind, and entitles him to more plentiful measures of grace, and higher degrees of favour. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (*John* viii. 31, 32.) "To him that hath, shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." (*Matt.* xiii. 12.) If this be so, as undoubtedly it is, it is plain, that we ought not to be fond of such a solitude or retirement, as

cuts off the opportunity of many virtues, which may be daily practised in a more public life. The true Hermit was at first little better than a pious extravagant: I will not say how much worse he is now. Meditation and prayer are excellent duties; but meekness, charity, mercy, and zeal, are not one jot inferior to them. The world is an excellent school to a good Christian; the follies and the miseries, the trials and the temptations of it, not only exercise and employ our virtue, but cultivate and improve it: they afford us both instruction and discipline, and advance us towards solid wisdom, and a well-settled power over ourselves.

Religion is not to be confined to the church and to the closet, nor to be exercised only in prayers and sacraments, meditations and alms; but every where we are in the presence of God, and every word, every action, is capable of it. It is to the virtues or the errors of our common conversation and ordinary deportment that we owe both our friends and enemies, our domestic peace or troubles; and in a high degree, the improvement or depravation of our mind. Let no man then, that will be perfect or happy, abandon himself to his humours or inclinations in his carriage toward his acquaintance, his children, his servants. Let no man that will be perfect or happy, follow prejudice or fashion in the common actions of life: but let him assure himself, that by a daily endeavour to conform these more and more to the excellent rules of the Gospel, he is to train himself to the most absolute wisdom and perfect virtue he is capable of.

Subsect. 2. The two great instruments, not of regeneration only, but also of perfection, are the Word and the Spirit of God. The Gospel contains all those truths that are necessary to the clear exposition of our duty, or to the moving and obliging us to the practice of it. And the Spirit supplies that supernatural strength that is necessary to enable us not only to will, but to do, that which is our duty.

This then being unquestionable, that the Gospel and

the SPIRIT are the two great instruments of Perfection, we may hence infer two rules, which are of the most universal use in the pursuit of perfection.

1. We cannot have too great a value, too great a passion, for the book of GOD; nor fix our thoughts and hearts too earnestly upon the truths of it. We must entertain the Gospel, as that which has infallible truth in all its doctrines, uncontrollable authority in all its precepts, a divine certainty in all its promises and threats, and a divine wisdom in all its counsels and directions: and he that thus believes, what light and beauty will he discern in all its descriptions of our duty! What force in all its persuasions! What majesty, what dignity, what life, what power, what consolation, what support! In one word, what heavenly virtue will he discern in each part of it, and what vast unfathomable wisdom in the whole composure and contrivance of it! How will he then admire it, how will he love it, how will he study it, how will he delight in it! How will he be supported by the promises, and awed by the threats of it! How will he be pierced by those exaggerations of sin, and enamoured by those lively descriptions of virtue he meets in it! How will he adore the goodness of GOD, conspicuous in our redemption! How will he be inflamed with the love of JESUS, and amazed at his condescension and humility? This and much more is the natural effect of our receiving the Gospel as we ought, and pondering the truths of it with devout and incessant meditation. Nor will any one think I attribute too much to the study of this word of life, who shall consider that it is one of the great works of the HOLY SPIRIT, "to incline our hearts to the testimonies of GOD, to write his laws in our hearts," to dispose us to attend to revealed truths, and, in one word, to fix our minds and thoughts upon them.

2. Since the Spirit, together with the Gospel, is a joint principle of regeneration and perfection, it is manifest, that we ought to live in a continual dependance upon GOD. He must be our hope and confidence in the day of trial: he must be our praise and boast in the day of victory, and

in the day of peace. When we lie down, and when we rise up, we must say with the Psalmist, "It is thou, LORD, that makest me dwell in safety." (*Psa.* iv. 8.) We must look upon ourselves as surrounded by enemies, and besieged by spiritual dangers, as DAVID was by temporal: and as he in the one, so must we in the other, expect strength and salvation from him. "Through GOD we shall do valiantly, for he it is that shall tread down our enemies." (*Psa.* lx. 12.) "Many nations compass me round about; but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them." And when we have conquered temptations, and routed the powers of darkness, we must ascribe all, not to our own strength, nor to our own watchfulness, but to the grace and power of GOD.

Now, many will be the happy effects of this dependance upon GOD: we shall be passionately desirous of his presence, of his grace and favour; we shall prepare our souls, we shall awaken and dispose all our faculties, to receive him; we shall ever do the things that may invite and prevail with him to abide with us; we shall be apprehensive of his forsaking us, as the greatest evil that can befall us. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." Awake, O my soul, raise thyself above this world and flesh, that thou mayest be fit for the King of Glory to dwell in thee. "Who is the King of Glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle;" (*Psa.* xxiv. 7, 8;) that HOLY SPIRIT that subdues our enemies, that strengthens us with might, and fills us with courage and holy alacrity. Nor does the Psalmist prepare his soul for GOD by meditation only, and spiritual recollection; but by a careful regulation of all his actions. "I wll behave myself wisely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me." (*Psa.* ci. 2, 3.)

The result of all this, must needs be steadfastness and

growth in holiness and goodness. For, *First*, This is the natural influence of such a dependance upon God. It places us always before him, and makes us walk humbly and circumspectly, as becomes those that are awed by the presence of so holy a Majesty: "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." *Secondly*, We cannot doubt but that God will plentifully bestow his grace on those who thus rely upon him. For where can he bestow it with more advantage to his glory, or to the propagation of holiness; both which are so dear to him? Who is a subject more capable of it, or who can be better entitled to it, than he who thus depends upon God? As he begs it humbly, and receives it thankfully; so he will husband it carefully, and employ it zealously.

Subsect. 3. In prayer, meditation, and other instrumental duties of religion, we are to aim at one or all of these three things. 1. The quickening and enlivening the conscience. 2. The confirming and strengthening our resolutions of obedience. 3. The raising and keeping up holy and devout affections.

Great is the benefit of each of these. Tenderness of conscience will keep us not only from evil, but every appearance of it: increase of spiritual strength, will render us steadfast and immoveable in all the works of God; and holy passion will make us abound in them. To spiritual passion we owe the zeal and pleasure, to spiritual strength or liberty, the constancy and uniformity, of a holy life: and both strength and passion are generally owing to a tender and enlightened conscience. For while the conscience preserves a quick and nice sense of good and evil, all the great truths of the Gospel will have their proper force and efficacy upon us. These then are the genuine fruits of meditation, the Eucharist, Prayer, and Psalmody. If they do not add life and light to the conscience; if they do not augment our strength, nor exalt our passions; if they do not increase our detestation of sin, and our love to God and goodness; if they do not quicken and excite

devout purposes; if they do not engage and refresh the soul by holy joy, and heavenly pleasure; if, I say, they do not in some degree promote these things, we reap no benefit at all from them.

But though the ends I have mentioned be of this great use to all, and consequently, all are obliged to aim at them, yet may the different imperfections of different Christians, render one of these ends more necessary than another; and by consequence, it will be wisdom more immediately and directly to intend and pursue that. For example: If a man's temper be such, that his passions soon kindle, and soon die again; that he is apt to form wise and great projects, and as unapt to accomplish any thing; in this case, it will be his duty to aim especially at the increase of strength. But if on the other hand, a man's temper be cold and phlegmatic, slow and heavy; it is but fit that he should particularly apply himself to the exciting devout affections in his soul. For as excellent purposes often miscarry for want of constancy and firmness of mind: so steadiness of mind seldom effects any great matter, when it wants life and passion to put it into motion. Again, if one's past life has been very sinful, or the present be not very fruitful, it will behove such a one to increase the tenderness of conscience, to add more light and life to its convictions.

Having thus, in few words, both made out the usefulness of those three ends to a Christian, in the performance of instrumental duties, and showed in what cases he may be obliged to aim more immediately at one than another; I will now inquire how these three ends may be secured and promoted.

1. Of tenderness of conscience, or the full and lively convictions of it. To promote this, the first thing necessary, is Meditation. No man, who diligently searches and studies the book of God, can be a stranger to himself or to his duty. Not to his duty; for this book reveals the whole will of God in clear and full terms: it points out the great ends of life so plainly, and conducts

them by such unerring rules, that there is no variety of circumstances can so perplex our duty, but that an honest man by the help of this may easily discover it. For this reason it is, that the word of God is called light, because it distinguishes between good and evil, right and wrong; and like a lamp manifests the path which we are to choose, and disperses that mist and darkness with which the lust of man, and the subtlety of hell, has covered it. Nor can he that studies the word of God, be a stranger to himself any more than to his duty. For this light ransacks all the recesses of the soul; it traces all its affections back to their first springs; it lays open all its desires and projects, and strips its most secret purposes of all their disguise: "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (*Heb.* iv. 12.) In a word, if we would preserve the conscience quick and sensible, we must be daily conversant in the book of God. For this commands with that authority, instructs with that clearness, persuades with that force, reproves with that purity, prudence, and charity, that we shall not easily be able to resist it. It describes righteousness and sin in such true and lively colours, proclaims rewards and punishments in such powerful and moving language, that it rouses even the dead in sin, penetrates and wounds the stupid and obdurate.

To meditation we must add prayer. For this is a proper and essential means to renew in the soul the hatred of sin, and love of goodness, and to improve those impressions which meditation has made upon it. We cannot easily put up petitions to God with confidence, unless we do the things that please him; for our hearts will misgive us, and our very petitions will reproach us: and the mere thought of entering more immediately into the presence of God, obliges us to a more careful examination of our actions.

But this is not all; we are to pray, that God would enable us to search out and discover our own hearts.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (*Psa.* cxxxix. 23, 24.) And if we do this sincerely, God will undoubtedly grant our requests; and will lay open to us all our present defects, and show us how far short we come of the glory of God; that perfection of holiness and happiness, which many eminent saints actually arrived at upon earth. And we may be sure, that light which breaks in upon our mind with this brightness, will not suffer any latent corruptions to continue undiscovered; nor permit us to forget the stains and ruins, which the sins of our past life have left behind them.

Conversation is another way, by which we must learn to know ourselves, and by which conscience is kept awake, and in its vigour. How convictive, how moving, is the discourse of a devout and pious friend! When he complains, or when he rejoices; when he relates the history of his own experience; when he lets us see the designs he has formed, and the ends his soul thirsts after; how does our heart burn within us? What variety of affections does it raise in us, when he makes his remarks on human nature and the world; when he bewails the dishonour of God, and the decay of religion amongst us; when he relates the misery of sinners, and observes the particular sins and follies that occasion it? How often does he hereby provoke us to wise reflections on ourselves? How many new beauties does he discover to us in virtue? How many deformities in sin, which had escaped our observation? But it is not the conversation only of my friend, but his life also, from which I derive instruction and admonition. The perfections of my friend are the gentlest and the mildest, and yet the most awakening reproofs too, of my own defects; and by the freshness and lustre of his virtue, I discern best the weakness and the dimness of my own. How often have I been moved to turn my thoughts with some indignation on my own heats and commotions, while I have admired and blessed the sweetness and the

gentleness, the softness and the calm, very conspicuous in an excellent friend? And when I have heard another mention his nightly praises, and those divine thoughts which filled the intervals of his sleep, and made those hours that are so burdensome to some, the most entertaining and delightful parts of his rest, how have I been inwardly filled with confusion and shame? How have I upbraided and reproached myself, condemned the sluggishness of my days, the dulness and the wanderings of my soul by night? And I believe every sincere man must find himself thus affected on the like occasions. For in this kind of reproof, there is something more of force and authority, than is to be found in any other: for the example of friends does not only teach us what we are to do, but demonstrates also that it may be done. Nor does virtue any where appear with so lovely and charming an air as in a friend.

But after all, among all the benefits we gain by excellent friendships, we ought not to reckon this as the least, that it is one, and that an indispensable office of friendship, to admonish and reprove: "For the reproofs of instruction are the paths of life." (*Prov.* vi. 23.) But then, that we may be capable of this blessing, we must dispose our minds to expect and bear reproof. We must strive after an humble and teachable temper; and we must invite and encourage our friends to this kindest office; not only by unaffected request, but also by obeying their advice, pardoning whatever infirmity may be interspersed with it, and loving them the better, as indeed they deserve: for there is scarce any better proof of their affection, prudence, and courage, which they are capable of giving us.

2. A second end of instrumental duties, is, the increase of spiritual strength. Now spiritual strength consists in the dominion we have over our affections and actions: and it stands upon two bases: The reduction of sin, and growth of virtue. Whatever weakens our propensions to sin, whatever promotes the subjection of the body, adds power and authority to the mind, and renders virtue more easy

and pleasant. And because virtues have a mutual connexion and dependance, therefore whatever promotes any, promotes all: but especially, whatever strengthens our hope or fear, or enlarges our knowledge, and increases our faith, confirms and establishes our resolution more than any thing else. Faith is the root, fear the guard, and hope the spur, of all our virtues. Faith convinces us what is our duty; fear makes us impartial, diligent, and watchful; hope, resolved and active in the prosecution of it.

It being thus clear, what our spiritual strength consists in, it will be easy to discern by what means we are to gain it. But I can here only suggest those hints, which the reader must upon occasion, as he needs, enlarge and improve.

(1.) Meditation is the first thing necessary. We must often survey the grounds of our faith; we must consider frequently and seriously, the Scripture topics of hope and fear; such are the death of JESUS, a judgment to come, the holiness and justice, and the omnipresence of GOD: we must diligently observe the wiles of SATAN, the arts and insinuations of the world and the flesh, and mark the progress of sin from its very beginning to maturity; and all this with a particular regard to the corruptions of our own nature, and the deceitfulness of our own hearts: we must often ponder the beauty and peace of holiness, the love of GOD and of JESUS, the virtues, sufferings, and crowns of martyrs. And, finally, if we will increase in strength, we must practise this duty of meditation often, and not suffer ourselves to be withdrawn from it, or be prevailed with to intermit it on any trivial pretences.

But we must not only take care that meditation be frequent, but also that it be not loose and roving. To which end it will be necessary to study ourselves as well as the Scriptures, and to be intimately acquainted with the advantages and disadvantages of our constitution and our state; that so in our meditations on the Scriptures, we may more particularly have an eye to those vices we are

most obnoxious to, and those virtues which are either more necessary, or more feeble and undergrown.

After meditation must follow prayer. Great is the power of prayer, in promoting Christian strength and fortitude; whether we consider its prevalence upon God, or its influence upon ourselves. If we consider the latter, what divine force and energy is there in the confidence of faith, the joys of hope, the earnest longings and desires of love, the tender sorrows of contrition, the delight of praises and thanksgivings, the adorations of a profound humility, and the resolutions and vows of a perfect abhorrence of, and holy zeal and indignation against, sin! How do these things mellow and enrich the soul! How do they raise it higher and higher above "the corruption which is in the world through lust!" How do they renew it daily, and make it "partaker of the divine nature!" How naturally then must prayer fortify the mind, ripen good dispositions, and add strength and perfection to good habits! Since it is nothing else but a repeated exercise of almost all the graces of the Gospel, repentance, faith, hope, charity.

(2.) If we inquire into the prevalence of prayer with God, we shall have further reasons to resolve, that it is a most effectual means of increasing our spiritual strength. What will God deny to the prayer of a righteous man? He may deny him temporal things, because they are not good for him: he may refuse to remove a temptation, because this is often an occasion of his own glory, and his servant's reward: but he will never refuse him grace to conquer it. He will no more deny his Spirit to one who earnestly and sincerely begs it, than the natural parent will deny bread to his hungry and craving child. And no wonder, since grace is as necessary to the spiritual life, as bread to the natural: the goodness of God is more tender and compassionate than any instinct in human nature; and the purity and perfection of God more zealously solicitous for the holiness and immortality of his children, than earthly parents can be for the sickly perishing life of theirs.

Thus then it is plain, that prayer contributes wonderfully to the strengthening and establishing the mind of man in goodness. But then we must have these two qualifications; it must be frequent, and incessantly importunate.

[1.] It must be frequent. I would have this rule complied with as far as it may, even in our stated, regular, and solemn addresses to God.

[2.] Prayer must be incessantly importunate. Importunate it will be, if the soul be disposed as it ought; that is, if it be disengaged from the world, and possessed entirely with the earnest expectation of a better; if it be humbled in itself, disclaim all strength and merit of its own, and rest wholly on the goodness and all-sufficiency of God. I add incessantly, in conformity to the parables of our Lord, (*Luke* xi. 8, and xviii. 5,) and the command of the Apostle. (1 *Thess.* v. 17.) And whoever considers human nature well, and remembers how soon pious motions vanish, and how little they effect, will discern a plain reason, both for vehemence and perseverance in prayer: for vehemence, that the soul may be deeply impressed by pious passions; for perseverance, that such impressions may not be effaced. Nor let any one fancy, that prayer thus qualified, has not a better influence upon God, as well as upon ourselves. It is true, God is void of the defects of human passions, but not of the perfection of divine ones. Woe were to us, if God were an inflexible inexorable deity, and incapable of being wrought upon by the incessant importunity of his poor creatures: woe were to us, if the softness and the tenderness of the divine nature did not infinitely exceed the little resemblances of it in man; if, in a word, God did not abound in goodness, and mercy, and compassion, more easily to be moved, than those human passions that bear some analogy to them.

Next to conversation with God by prayer, the conversation of good men wonderfully contributes to the building us up in faith and virtue. How does the sense and expe-

rience of such as deserve our esteem and affection, establish our judgment when they concur with us? How does their knowledge enlighten us, and their example inflame us! A pious friendship renders religion itself more engaging: it reminds us when we are forgetful, supports us when we faint, and recalls us into the right path when we get out of it. This is the business of conversation, the end of friendship. We should be often talking together of the things of God, communicating and laying open the state of our souls, our fears, our hopes, our improvements and defects. We should watch over one another, comfort and support one another; our discourse should always minister new warmth, or new strength, to our holy faith and love.

But among all the means of grace, there is no one that does so much corroborate and nourish the soul of man, as the Holy Eucharist. How many wise and impartial reflections does the preparation for it occasion? What unfeigned humility, and what a profound awe of the divine majesty, does a previous self-examination beget in us? What a tender sense of the divine love does the contemplation of the whole mystery enkindle? What firmness do we derive from repeated engagements; and these offered up with so much solemnity? And how much, finally, is the habit of holiness improved by that spiritual pleasure, which the sensible assurances of grace and salvation work in us, by that awe and holy fear which the whole action leaves behind on our minds, and the zeal, vigilance, and circumspection, it obliges us to for the time following? Not to mention here, how the participation of this Holy Sacrament obliges us to a most solemn exercise of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, of brotherly love, and the hope of immortality. Here, in a word, we prepare to meet God, as we would do in death and judgment: here we make an open profession of our holy faith, renounce the world and flesh, all our sinful or vain desires, devote ourselves to the service of Jesus, and learn to expect happiness from nothing else but the merits

and imitation of his cross. So profound is the wisdom of this institution, that it evidently speaks God the author of it, and proclaims the too common neglect of it in most parts of this nation, an inexcusable sin and folly.

3. A third end of instrumental duties is, the raising and keeping up holy and devout affections. I know not why passion is so commonly undervalued and disparaged in religion, unless they who thus treat it, mean nothing by it, but a short-lived and superficial commotion of the mind, which leaves no print or relish behind it, and is presently succeeded by sin and folly. Holy passion is the vigour and strength of the soul; it is the state of the mind when it is thoroughly moved and affected. And therefore, to form to one's self religion destitute of passion, is little better than to content one's self with one that is lazy, lukewarm, and lifeless. And though there be some tempers very unapt to be moved, yet it is hard to imagine how even these can be wrought up to a resolution, or that resolution be supported and continued, without their being affected so thoroughly, as to feel either a real passion, or something very nearly approaching one.

It is an excellent frame of spirit, when the soul is easily elevated and transported into holy passion; and all those virtues, or rather acts of virtue, which are described to the life, and which are by all judged most perfect and lovely, have most of passion in them. How warm and passionate was the love of David for his God! What flame, what vehemence of desire was he moved by, when he cries out, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God!" (*Psa.* xlii. 1, 2.) What awful concussions and agitations of spirit did he feel, when he thus describes his fear: "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments!" (*Psa.* cxix. 120.) What tenderness of heart do we meet with in the repentance of St. Peter, when "he went forth and wept bitterly!" Of Mary Magdalene, when she "washed the feet of our Saviour with her tears, and wiped them with

the hairs of her head!" Nor were the pleasures of assurance more vehement than the sorrows of repentance, when the first Christians rejoiced "with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." I wish with all my heart, that all these excellent affections of soul could be rendered natural and habitual. The nearer we come to this, undoubtedly the perfecter. The more frequent, as well as the more vehement and fervent such affections are, the better certainly; for great is the force of holy passion. The flame of love refines our nature, and purifies it from all its dross; the tears of godly sorrow extinguish all our carnal and worldly lusts; and the agitation of fear preserves the chastity and purity of the soul. It is plain then, that our religion ought to be animated by holy passions; that the more frequent and natural these grow, the more perfect we are; that being the most excellent frame of spirit, when we are most thoroughly affected by divine truths. By what means we may attain to this, is now briefly to be considered.

It is for want of close and particular applications, when divine truths do not move us. This now does not only call us to the frequent meditation of the most affecting subjects,—the majesty and omnipresence of God, the sufferings of Christ, death and judgment, heaven and hell; but it shows also how to model and form our meditations, that they prove not cold and sluggish. Let the object of our thoughts be described by the most sensible images or resemblances; let it be made as particular as it can, by fixing its eye upon us, and pointing its motion towards us. Prayer is an exercise very apt to move the passion. The mind having disengaged itself from all earthly affections, is prepared for the impression of truth and the Spirit of God; it draws nearer to the presence of God, and the sense of this sheds an awful reverence upon it; it has a clearer, calmer, and more serious view of divine things, than when it is obscured and disturbed by worldly objects. In a word, meditation is in this exercise rendered more solemn and more particular; and when the

holy fire is kindled in the soul, it dilates and diffuses itself more and more, until the strength of desire, the vehemence of holy love, transcending the weakness of this mortal nature, we faint under the passions that we cannot bear.

The LORD's Supper is a holy rite, wonderfully adapted to raise excellent passions. Here CHRIST is, as it were, set forth crucified amongst us; we see his body broken, and his blood poured forth. Here, with a devout joy, we receive and embrace him by faith and love, in those symbols of his body and blood, and pledges of his love. The soul must be very ill prepared, it must have very imperfect notions of sin and damnation, the cross of CHRIST, grace and salvation, which is not sensible of a crowd of holy passions springing up in it at this Sacrament. Hymns and psalms have a peculiar force and operation upon a pious mind. Divine poetry has a noble elevation of thoughts; it does not devise and counterfeit passions, but only vents those that it feels; and these are pure and lovely, kindled from above. Therefore are all its characters natural, its descriptions lively, its language moving and powerful; and all is so directly suited to a devout mind, that it presently enters, moves, and actuates it, inspires and informs it with the very passions it describes; and though all good men are not equally moved in this duty, yet all, I believe, are more or less moved. It was very much the business of the Prophets, and all of prophetic education. Our LORD and his disciples practised it frequently. It was ever a great part of religious joy, and one of the greatest pleasures of pious retirement; and I wish from my heart the esteem of it were revived in our days. I persuade myself it would add much to the warmth and pleasure of devotion, and would introduce religion into our families.

And this reminds me, that as I have under every head taken notice of the advantages of conversation, so I should not forget it here. This has a lively influence upon our minds, and always kindles in the soul a gentle heat. And did we but accustom ourselves to entertain one another

with discourse about another world; did we mingle the praises of God with the feasts and joys of life; did we retire to our country-houses to contemplate the variety and riches of divine wisdom and bounty in those natural scenes of pleasure which the country affords, and did we now and then invite our friends to join with us in offering up hallelujahs to God on this account, what brightness and serenity, what calm and pleasure, would this diffuse through all our souls, through all our days! To this that I have said touching the exciting holy passions, I will only add one observation, formed upon those words of the Apostle: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms:" (*James* v. 18:) That religion must be accommodated to nature, and that devout passions will soon shoot up, when they are engrafted upon a natural stock. With which I will join this other, That since we are most affected by such truths as are most particular, circumstantiated, and sensible, and therefore imprint themselves more easily and deeply on our imagination, for this reason I should recommend the reading of the lives of saints and excellent persons, were they not generally written so, that we have reason to desire somewhat more of the spirit of piety in the learned, and more of judgment in the pious, who have employed their pens on this argument.

4. The immediate ends of discipline are, the subduing the pride of the heart, and the reducing the appetites of the body. By discipline, I understand whatever voluntary rigours we impose upon ourselves, or whatever voluntary restraints we lay upon our allowed enjoyments; and when I say that the humiliation of the heart, and subjection of the body, are the immediate ends of both, I do not exclude any other which may be involved in these, or result from them. Now of what importance these two things are, I need not show; for since all sin is distinguished in Scripture into the filthiness of the spirit and the flesh, it is plain, that the pride of the heart and the lust of the body are the two great causes of all immorality. And therefore

these are the two great ends which the wise and good have ever had in their eye in all their acts of self-denial and mortification. This is sufficiently attested by the example of DAVID: "LORD, I am not high-minded; I have no proud looks; I do not exercise myself in great matters which are too high for me. But I refrain my soul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother; yea, my soul is even as a weaned child." (*Psa.* cxxxi. 1—3.) Whoever thus mortifies the pride of the heart, whoever thus brings under the body, will soon find himself truly set free,* and master of himself; he will be able to run the way of GOD's commandments, and to advance on swiftly towards perfection, and the pleasure and happiness that attend it.

And to attain these blessed ends, we need not ensnare our souls in the perpetual bonds of monastic vows; we need not expose ourselves by any ridiculous or fantastic observances. There is, I say, no need of this; for we may, as oft as we shall see fit, retrench our pleasures, abate of the show and figure of life; we may renounce our own wills, to comply with theirs who cannot so well pretend either to authority or discretion. And if these things cannot be done in some circumstances, without becoming fools for CHRIST; that is, without that tameness, that condescension, that diminution of ourselves, which will comport with the humours and the fashions of the world; here is still the more room for mortification, and for a nearer and more eminent imitation of the blessed JESUS: provided still we decline all affectation of singularity; and when we practise any extraordinary instance of self-denial, we be ever able to justify it to religious and judicious persons, by the proposal of some excellent end. Fasting, indeed, is plainly described in Scripture; and though the obligation to it, with respect to its frequency and measure, be not the same on all, yet all should some time or other practise it, as far as the rules of Christian prudence will

* After he has living faith, not before. [EDIT.

permit. And I have often thought, that fasting should generally consist, rather in abstinence from pleasing meats, than from all; not the food which nourishes our strength, but that which gratifies the palate, ministering most directly to wantonness and luxury.

For the better regulating of voluntary discipline, I propose, by way of advice, three things:—

(1.) I do not think it best to bring ourselves under any perpetual and unalterable ties in any instance of self-denial. There is a virtue in enjoying the world, as well as in renouncing it; and it is as great an excellence of religion to know how to abound, as how to suffer want. Nay, what is more, all voluntary austerities are in order to give us a power over ourselves in the general course of life. And lastly, I very much doubt, when once a man has long and constantly accustomed himself to any rigour, whether it continue to have much of mortification in it, or whether it so effectually tend to promote our spiritual liberty, as it would if we did return to it but now and then, as we saw occasion.

(2.) We must not multiply unnecessary severities; and that no man may think more needful than really are, I observe here, that as there are very few who have not in their nature very considerable infirmities, so are there as few who have not in their fortunes very considerable inconveniences; and if they would apply themselves to the mastering of both these as they ought, they would stand in less need of the discipline of arbitrary austerities. There are many things too trifling to be taken notice of, which yet prove sufficient to disturb the quiet of most, and betray them to many passions and indecencies; nay, the weaknesses of good men are sometimes fed by temptations of very little moment. Now, to surmount these temptations, and to frame and accommodate the mind to bear the little shocks and justles which we daily meet with, without any discomposure or displeasure, is a matter of great use to the tranquillity of life, and the maturity of

virtue. To be able to bear the pride of one, and the stupidity of another; one while to encounter rudeness, another while neglect, without being moved by either; to submit to noise, disorder, and the distraction of many little affairs, when one is naturally a lover of quietness and order, or when the mind is intent upon things of importance; in a word, to digest the perpetual disappointments which we meet with, both in business and in the little projects which people of all stations and all capacities pursue; to suffer all the humours and follies, the errors, artifices, indecencies, and faults of those we have to do with, with that temper we ought, that is, with a calmness which proceeds, not from an unconcern for the good of others, but a just dominion over our own spirits: this is a great height; and to train ourselves up to it daily with much patience, vigilance, and application of mind, is the best discipline. Though I do not mean hereby to exclude all voluntary impositions; for in order to master the evils which we cannot avoid, it may be of good use now and then to form the mind by voluntary trials and difficulties of our own choosing.

(3.) We must ever have a care not to lose the substance for the shadow, not to rest in the means, and neglect the end; being much taken up in discipline, without producing any fruit of it. For this is taking much pains to little purpose; travelling much without making any progress. But much more must we take care, in the next place, that the discipline we put ourselves upon, do not produce any ill fruit. To which end, we must carefully observe three things:—

[1.] That we keep to that moderation which spiritual prudence requires; neither exposing nor entangling ourselves, nor discouraging others by excesses and extravagancies.

[2.] That our self-denial never betray us into pride or uncharitableness; for if it tempt us to overrate ourselves, and despise others, this is a flat contradiction to one of the

main ends of Christian discipline, which is, the humiliation of the heart.

[3.] That we ever preserve, nay, increase, the sweetness and gentleness of our minds: for whatever makes us sour and morose, or peevish and unsociable, makes us certainly so much worse; and instead of begetting in us nearer resemblances of the divine nature, gives us a very strong tincture of a devilish one. There is indeed but little reason why the look should be lowering, when the heart is filled with joy and goodness. A serene open countenance, and a cheerful grave deportment, best suit the tranquillity, purity, and dignity, of a Christian mind.

5. Lastly, Since meditation, prayer, and holy conversation are so necessary to quicken the conscience, excite our passions, and fortify our resolutions, it is as necessary so to model and form our lives, that we may have time enough to bestow on these. For they whose minds and time are taken up by the world, have very little leisure for things of this nature, and are very little disposed to them, and as ill qualified for them. As to conversation, as the world goes now, it is not to be expected that it should have in it any relish of piety, unless between such as have entered into a close and strict friendship. But the worldly man is a stranger to true friendship; it is too sacred, too delicate a thing for a mind devoted to the world, to be capable of. A regard to interest, to some outward forms and decencies, or the gratification of some natural inclination, may invite him to more familiarity with some, than others; but it is hard to believe that there should be any thing in such combinations, of that which is the very life and soul of friendship,—a sincere and undesigning passion, increased by mutual confidences and obligations, and supported and strengthened by virtue and honour. As to prayer, men of business do, I doubt, oftener read or say prayers, than pray; for it is very hard to imagine that a soul that grovels perpetually upon earth, that is incessantly solicitous about the things of this world, and that

enters abruptly upon this duty without any preparation, should immediately take fire, be filled with heavenly vigour, and transported with earnest and impatient desire of grace and glory.

Ah! how hard it is for him who hungers and thirsts after the profits of this world, to "hunger and thirst after righteousness!" And, lastly, as to meditation, how can it be imagined that those whose minds and bodies are fatigued and harassed by worldly business, should be much inclined to it, or well prepared for it? How should these men form any notion of exalted virtue, of devout and heavenly passion? What conceptions can they have of the power and joy of the HOLY GHOST, of poverty of spirit, or purity of heart, or the diffusion of the love of GOD in our souls? What ideas can they entertain of heaven, or of angelical pleasure and beatitude? In a word, the religion of men intent upon this world, when they pretend to any, which too often they do not, consists especially in two things,—in abstaining from wickedness, and doing the works of their civil calling; and how far they may be sensible of higher obligations, I determine not. Good GOD! What a mercy it is to these poor creatures, that it is the fashion of their country to dedicate one day in seven to the service of GOD and their souls! But have not I often taught, that purity of intention converts the works of a secular calling into the works of GOD? I have so; it is the doctrine of the Gospel; but, ah, how hard a thing is it for a worldly man to maintain this purity of intention! How hard a thing is it for a mind eaten up by the love and cares of this world, to do all to the honour of GOD! Let no man, therefore, that desires to be saved, take sanctuary in purity of intention, while he suffers the works of his secular calling to engross his soul, and entirely usurp his time. If secular works thrust out such as are properly religious, it will not be easy to conceive, how the power of godliness should be maintained; how any wise thoughts or heavenly desires should be preserved in

such men; or how, finally, those who have utterly given up themselves to the wisdom of this world, should retain any true value for those maxims of the Gospel, wherein consists the true wisdom that is from above.

SECTION II.

OF THE SEVERAL PARTS OF PERFECTION: ILLUMINATION, LIBERTY, AND ZEAL.*

ILLUMINATION is the perfection of the understanding, liberty of the will, and zeal of the affections. I am now to treat of these three things, as so many essential parts of religious perfection. To these three, I add Humility; for this must begin and complete religious perfection; it must accompany the Christian in every stage of his spiritual progress; it must crown all his actions, and add beauty and excellence, grace and lustre, to all his other virtues.

CHAPTER I.

Of Illumination. 1. The distinguishing Characters of illuminating Truths. 2. The Nature of illuminating Knowledge.

THE Scripture describes the state of illumination very plainly to us, calling it sometimes wisdom, sometimes knowledge and understanding. Next, it acquaints us with the design and end of it: namely, "to convert us from the power of SATAN to the service of the living GOD;" to purify and sanctify us, to enable us "to approve the holy,

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* I doubt whether this division be throughly agreeable, either to Scripture or experience. [EDIT.

acceptable, and perfect will of GOD;" and, in one word, "to make us wise unto salvation." Nay, it proceeds further, and points out to us particularly the truths, in the knowledge of which illumination consists. Thus the Old Testament reckons wisdom to be, sometimes the knowledge of GOD, sometimes the knowledge of the law; and all the descriptions in the Old Testament may be summed up into that one: "Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." (*Job* xxviii. 28.) The New Testament tells us, "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST, whom thou hast sent;" that "CHRIST is the way, the truth, and the life;" that "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" that true understanding consists in "knowing the will of GOD, which will is, our sanctification." And when ST. PAUL understands by wisdom, (as sometimes he does,) the penetrating into the spirit and mystery, the depths and recesses of the Old Testament, and discovering the great design of man's redemption, carried on through all the ages of the world, and through a wise variety of dispensations, this alters not the notion of illumination; for this does not point out to us any new or different truths, but only regards one peculiar way of explaining and confirming the great Christian doctrines.

To conclude: we may easily know what sort of knowledge the SPIRIT of GOD recommends to us above all other, from those petitions which ST. PAUL puts up for the Ephesians and Colossians. For the former he prays thus: "That the GOD of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Father of glory, may give unto you the SPIRIT of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in CHRIST, when he raised him from the dead,

and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places," &c. (*Eph.* i. 17—20.) For the latter thus: "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the LORD unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of GOD." (*Col.* i. 9, 10.)

If from these, and the like texts, we form a general idea of illumination, it will be this: Illumination is a state of knowledge, relinquishing those errors which pervert our affections, and undermine the authority of reason; and in embracing those truths which purify the one, and restore and establish the other. I proceed to a fuller discovery of it.

Illumination then being a state of knowledge, and the object of this knowledge being truth, in order to form a just notion of illumination, it will be necessary to inquire into two things:—

First, What kind of truths, and, *Secondly*, What kind of knowledge of these truths, constitute illumination.

First, Of the truths which illuminate. We have many noble characters in the Old Testament and the New, which distinguish these from truths of an inferior nature; all which are, I think, comprised by SOLOMON in few words: "My son, eat thou honey, because it is good, and the honey-comb, which is sweet to thy taste; so shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul, when thou hast found it; then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off." (*Prov.* xxiv. 13, 14.) SOLOMON here, as is usual with inspired writers, compares spiritual with corporeal things, or illustrates the one by the other. He tells us, that what honey is to the body, that wisdom is to the soul; and recommending the former from two properties, its ministering to health and pleasure, he recommends the latter from advantages, which bear indeed some resemblance, but are as much superior to these, as the soul is to the body. "My son, eat thou honey, because it is good;" *i. e.*, because it both cleanses

and purges all noxious humours, and nourishes and strengthens the body. "And the honey-comb, because it is sweet to the taste;" which is the second excellence of this food, namely, its pleasantness; and properly urged to invite the eater. Then proceeding, he adds, "So shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul, when thou hast found it;" *i. e.*, it shall minister to the purification, strength, and delight of thy soul. But this is not all: Though the parallel can be extended no further between honey and wisdom, yet he does not think fit for that reason to omit one of the greatest excellencies of wisdom; and therefore he adds, "Then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off." Wisdom does not only perfect and entertain our minds, but also brings to those rewards, for the enjoyment of which it prepares us. Here then we have from SOLOMON the true properties of true wisdom; by these we may pronounce safely of all the different kinds of knowledge, distinguishing the precious from the vile, and fixing the true estimate of each. If there be any sort of truths, whose knowledge does not promote, but obstruct these great ends; these we are to despise, to shun, and hate. If there be any knowledge that does neither oppose, nor yet contribute to these ends, unless very remotely; for this we may have some, but no very great regard. But whatever knowledge that be which is attended by those fruits, this is that which we are "to search for as for hid treasure;" this is that which, when we have found it, we are to value above the gold of Ophir, the topaz, and the carbuncle, and all precious stones." The distinguishing characters, then, of illuminating truths are four:—1. They purify us. 2. They nourish and strengthen us. 3. They delight us. 4. They lead us to a glorious reward.

1. They purify us. This is a property which the royal Psalmist frequently attributes to the word of GOD. And the New Testament frequently ascribes to faith and hope, that they purify the heart. And this sure is the first thing necessary to the perfecting the soul of man. It is with the soul as with the body: it must be first cleansed from

hurtful humours, before it can be fed and nourished; purged of its errors and vices, ere it can be enriched with divine virtues, and attain that liberty and strength, wherein consists the true excellence of the mind of man.

The first step towards the perfection of virtue, is the relinquishing vice; for we must cease to do evil, ere we can learn to do good; and the first step towards the perfection of wisdom, is the dispelling those errors which deceive the mind, and pervert the life. What these were in the Jew and Gentile, and what they are at this day in us, it is easy to discern. The mind of man, as far as I can observe, is naturally prone to religious worship; not only the consideration of the wonderful mechanism of the world, and of events, strange, sudden, and unaccountable; but also the conscience of his own impotence inclining him to the belief, and prompting him to seek the patronage of an invisible, all-sufficient Power. In the next place, the mind of man is ever prone to propose to him some great, some sovereign good, in which he may acquiesce, and by which he may secure himself against the indigence and poverty of his nature, and the changes, revolutions, and miseries, to which this mortal state is exposed.

These are two things of that importance, that no man can err in them, but the error must prove fatal to his repose. He that sets up to himself for his ultimate end, an empty and uncertain good, instead of a solid and eternal one, must needs be as miserably deluded and disappointed, as he must who sets up to himself a false god instead of the true; or goes about to recommend himself to the true, by a false and superstitious worship. Now in these points the Jew and Gentile were miserably, though not equally mistaken. The Gentile worshipped devils instead of God; their mysteries were either sensual or cruel; their religion did oftener encourage sin than virtue; and as to their sovereign good, their hearts were set upon this world, upon the pomp and pleasure, upon the ease and honour of it; and they had either none, or very dark and imperfect prospects beyond the grave; all beyond it

was an unknown region, full of fables and idle phantoms. The Jews, though they enjoyed the oracles of God, and generally preserved the worship of one true and living God, yet were not free from very deplorable errors relating to these points. They seemed to have turned the true God into an idol, and to have entertained some notions of him very repugnant to his nature. They looked upon him as the God of the Jews, not of the Gentiles; as a respecter of persons; as fond and partial to their nation; and as delighted with a religion, made up of numerous rites and ceremonies, and external observances. And this could not but have a very sad influence upon their religion; the holiness which is truly acceptable to God being neglected, and Sadducism or Pharisaism, *i. e.*, sensuality or dead form, introduced in the room of it. And as to their ultimate end or supreme good, the Sadducees denied the resurrection, angels, and spirits; and therefore it is not to be expected they should entertain any design above the pleasure of the body. And though the Pharisees acknowledged angels and a resurrection, yet can we not discern that they had a real value for any thing besides the honour, power, and wealth of this world. And no wonder, since they could, upon their principles, satisfy themselves in a religion which had nothing of internal purity in it. So that upon the whole, the Jew and the Gentile were alike wicked; only the wickedness of the Jews had this aggravation in it, above that of the Gentiles, That they enjoyed the oracles of God, and the favour of a peculiar covenant.

This being the state of darkness which lay upon the face of the Jewish and Gentile world, our Lord, who was to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel," advanced and established in the world that doctrine, which directly tends to dispel these errors, and rescue mankind from the misery that attends them. For all that the Gospel contains may be reduced to these three heads:—

(1.) The assertion of one only true God, with a bright

and full revelation of his divine attributes and perfection.

(2.) An account of the will of God, or the worship he delights in, which is a spiritual one, together with suitable means and motives; in which last is contained a full declaration of man's supreme happiness.

(3.) The revelation of "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus; through whom we have access with boldness to the throne of grace; through whom we have obtained from the Father, grace and pardon and adoption;" and through whom, lastly, all our oblations and performances are acceptable to him.

The design of this glorious manifestation was, to open men's eyes, "to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God; that they might obtain remission of sins, and an inheritance" of glory. These, then, are the truths which illuminated the Gentile and the Jewish world; and these are the truths which must illuminate us at this day. These dispel all errors that lead us to vice or misery; these point out our supreme felicity, and the direct way to it; these open and enlarge the eye of the soul, enable it to distinguish and judge with an unerring exactness between good and evil, between substantial and superficial, temporal and eternal good. And I wish from my soul, whatever light we pretend to at this day, we were well grounded in these truths.

I doubt, notwithstanding our belief of one God and one Mediator, and notwithstanding we are assured that "God, who is a spirit, must be worshipped in spirit and in truth;" and notwithstanding our pretending to believe a life to come; I say I doubt, that notwithstanding these things, we generally err in two main points: namely, in the notion we ought to have of religion, and the value we are to set upon the world and the body. For who that reflects upon the pomp and pride of life, upon the ease, the softness, and the luxury of it, upon the frothiness, the vanity, and impertinence, to say no worse, of conversation, will not conclude, that either we have

renounced our religion, or formed to ourselves too complaisant a notion of it? For is this the imitation of JESUS? Is this to walk as he walked in the world? Can this be the deportment of men to whom the world and the body are crucified? Can such a life as this is, flow from those divine fountains, faith, hope, and love? Who, again, can reflect upon the passion we discover for superiority and precedence, our thirst of power, our desire of wealth, and not conclude that we have mistaken our end; that we set a wrong value upon things; and that, whatever we talk of eternity, we look upon this present world as our most valuable good? For can such a tender concern for, such an eager pursuit after, temporal things, flow from, nay, consist with, purity of heart, poverty of spirit, and the love of GOD?

Whoever will be perfect, must carefully avoid both these errors. He must never think that religion can subsist without the strength and vigour of our affections; or that the bent and vigour of our souls can be pointed towards GOD, and yet our deportment and conversation be earthly, sensual, and vain, conformed even to the pagan pride, and show of life. Next, he must never cherish in himself the love of this world; he must never look upon himself other than a stranger and pilgrim in it; he must never be fond of the pleasure of it; he must never form vain designs and projects about it; nor look upon the best things in it as ingredients of our happiness, but only as instruments of virtue, or short repasts in our journey. And because all our mistakes about the nature and perfection of religion, and the value of temporal things, generally arise from that peculiar sin to which our constitution betrays us; therefore the knowledge of ourselves, an intimate acquaintance with all our natural propensions, is no inconsiderable part of illumination. For we shall never address ourselves heartily to the cure of a disease which we know nothing of, or to the rectifying any inclination, until we are thoroughly convinced that it is irregular and dangerous.

2. The second character of illuminating truths is, that they are such as feed and nourish, strengthen and improve, the mind of man. Bodily strength enables us to baffle and repel injuries, to bear toil and travail, to perform difficult works with speed and ease; and finally, it prolongs life to a further date, than weak and crazy constitutions can arrive at. And of all these we find some resemblances in spiritual strength; but as much more perfect and excellent, as the spirit is above the body.

Those truths, then, are illuminating, which enable us to vanquish temptations, to endure with constancy the toils and hardships of our Christian warfare, to discharge the duties of our station with zeal and vigour; and which, lastly, render us firm, steady, and immortal. And these are the glorious effects which are attributed to the truths of God. Hence it is, that the word of God is said to quicken and strengthen; that man is said to "live, not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;" to teach us, that there is nothing steady and unalterable, nothing durable, nothing eternal, but God, divine truths, and those that are formed and moulded by them.

There are truths which are merely barren and inactive, which amuse the mind, but never benefit it; but there are others which are, in the language of Solomon, like "health to the navel, and marrow to the bones:" wisdom and virtue, life and honour, the favour of God and man, attend them wherever they dwell. And these are the truths which illuminate. Truths that are active and fruitful; that make us wise and good, perfect and happy; such as have a strong influence upon us; such as give a new day to the understanding, and new strength and liberty to the will; such as raise and exalt our affections, and render the whole man more rational, more steady, more constant, more uniform. These are the truths which make men great and modest in prosperity, erect and courageous in adversity; always content with this world, yet always full of the hopes of a better; serene, calm, and

well assured in the present state of their souls, and yet thirsting after the consummation of righteousness in the world to come.

Now the truths that effect this, are all reducible to those which I have mentioned under the former head; for in those we find all that is necessary to raise and support true magnanimity, to enlarge and free the mind, and to add strength and courage to it. For what can more certainly promote all this than immortality and glory? What can be a surer foundation for the hope of both to rest on, than the favour of God himself? And what can more effectually reconcile and ingratiate us with God, than the mediation of his dearly beloved Son?

3. The third character of illuminating truths is, that they are pleasant and agreeable to the soul. Hence it is that the Royal Psalmist pronounces "the word of God, sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb;" that he ascribes to it delight and joy; for he tells us, that "it rejoices the heart," that "it enlightens the eyes." And accordingly we find the true servants of God, not only continually blessing and praising God in the temple, but magnifying him by psalms and hymns in their prisons, and rejoicing in the midst of tribulation. But when I reckon pleasure and delight amongst the fruits of illumination, I must add, that there is a vast difference between the fits and flashes of mirth, and the serenity of a fixed and habitual delight. And when I say, illumination consists in the knowledge of pleasant and agreeable truths, I mean it of rational pleasure, an habitual tranquillity of mind. And then the matter is beyond question.

Whatever truths contribute to promote this, the study and contemplation of them must be our true wisdom. Joy, when it is solid and rational, does enlarge and exalt the mind of man; it renders us more thankful to God, more kind and courteous to man. It is an excellent preparation to invite more plentiful influxes of the Spirit of God. Hence did Elijah call for a musical instrument when he desired to prophesy; and we find the company

of Prophets rejoicing with hymns, music, and dances; all outward testimonies of the inward transports and ravishments of their minds. And as I am persuaded that *that* which distinguishes a godly sorrow from a worldly one,—repentance and contrition from the agonies of despair,—is the peace and tranquillity which attend it; so am I persuaded, that God does press and invite us to mourning and sorrow for sin, for this reason, not excluding others: Because it leads to peace and joy; a soft and tender sorrow dissipating the fears and distresses of guilt, as mild and fruitful showers lay storms. In a word, there is no such powerful antidote against sin, nor spur to holy industry, as holy pleasure, pious joy, or spiritual peace and tranquillity. The study, then, of such truths, is true wisdom.

4. The last property of those truths, in the knowledge of which illumination consists, is, that they lead us to an eternal reward.

No knowledge of arts or sciences can pretend to an eternal reward. A short pleasure, and a transient interest, are all that this sort of knowledge can bestow; and very often, instead of pleasure and profit, it requites its disciples with pain and trouble. The Gospel only contains those truths which confer life and immortality on those that believe and obey them. It is the Gospel alone that teaches us how we are to gain the love and favour of God; and it is God alone who rules and governs the visible and invisible world. He therefore alone is to be feared, and he alone is to be loved. "Fear not them," saith our Saviour, "which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." (*Matt.* x. 28.) And St. John gives the same precept concerning the world: "Love not the world, nor the things of the world;" and backs it by the same reason: "For the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." That is, the world can at best but gratify for a moment the appetites of the body, or the desires of a sensitive

fancy; therefore love it not; but love the Father, who after the dissolution of the vital union betwixt soul and body, is able to confer life and happiness on both to all eternity.

Thus I have considered the characters of illuminating truths. And the whole of what I have said amounts to these two things.

1. There are truths of very different kinds: truths that are of no use; such are those which are either trifling or merely notional, and have no influence on life: truths that are of ill use; such are those of which consist the arts of sensuality, avarice, vanity, and ambition: these are to be detested, the former to be contemned by all that seek after true wisdom. Again, there are truths of an inferior use; such as concern our fortunes, our relations, our bodies; and these may be allowed their proper place, and a reasonable value. But the truths which concern the peace and pleasure, strength and liberty of our souls; which lead us to the favour of God, and the grace of his Spirit; the truths, in a word, which secure our temporal and eternal happiness; these are illuminating truths, these have a transcendent worth, and inestimable usefulness, and consequently, can never be too dear to us.

2. Since the great characters of illuminating truths exactly fit the Gospel of Jesus, it is plain, that this is that system of knowledge, which we are to study day and night; this is divine Philosophy, whose principles and laws we must incessantly revolve. How wisely then did St. Paul resolve, "to know nothing but Christ Jesus, and him crucified!" For "He is the way, the truth, and the life;" and "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

But after all, as there is a form of godliness, so there is a form of knowledge, without the power of it. The knowledge of the same truths in different persons, may be very different, as meeting with a different reception. In some they may only float superficially; in others they may penetrate deeper: and the degrees of their influence will be

certainly proportioned to the different manner of their reception. For this reason it will be necessary to the right understanding of a state of illumination, to discourse,

Secondly, Of the nature of the knowledge we must have of the former truths; to show, what kind of assent we must pay them, and what kind of consideration we must employ about them. As I have therefore laid down the properties of those truths, so will I now lay down the properties of that knowledge of them, which is essential to illumination.

1. Illuminating knowledge must be deeply rooted. This our SAVIOUR has taught us in that parable, wherein he has observed to us, that the seed which had not depth of earth, as it soon sprang up, so it soon withered and died away. We often know (or pretend to do so) the rudiments of our religion, without the grounds and foundation of it. We embrace conclusions, without examining the principles from whence they flow; and, contrary to the advice of the Apostle, we are unable to give a reason to any that asketh us of the faith and the hope that are in us. And then ours is not properly knowledge, but opinion: it is not faith, but credulity: it is not a firm persuasion, but an easy customary assent. And this is overthrown by every temptation; defaced by every suggestion or profane objection.

2. This knowledge must not be obscure and confused, but distinct and clear. Where the images of things are slight, faint, and vanishing, they move men but weakly, and affect them but coldly; especially in such matters as are not subject to our senses. And this I persuade myself is one chief reason why those glorious and wonderful objects, a judgment to come, heaven, and hell, strike us so feebly, and operate so little. We have generally no lively and clear conception of them: it being otherwise impossible, that things in their own nature dreadful and amazing, should excite in us no fear; or that things in their own nature infinitely amiable, should enkindle in us no passion, no desire.

3. This knowledge must not lie in the understanding, crude, and undigested; but it must be throughly concocted, and turned into nourishment, blood, and spirits. We must know the true value and use of every principle, of every truth; and be able readily to apply them. For what does it signify how important truths are in themselves, if they are not so to me? What does it avail that they are impregnated with life and power, if I feel not any such influence? Of what use is the knowledge of Gospel promises to me, if I reap no comfort from them? Or the knowledge of Gospel threats, if they are unable to curb and restrain my passions? We must then follow the advice of SOLOMON, and never quit the search and meditation of truth, till we grow intimate and familiar with it; and so have it always ready for a guide and guard, for our support and strength, and for our delight and pleasure. We must "bind it about our heart," as he speaks, "and tie it as an ornament about our neck. Then when we go forth it shall lead us, when we sleep it shall keep us, and when we awake it shall talk with us: for the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." (*Prov.* vi. 21—23.) In a word, nothing can render the most important truths powerful and operative in us, but such a digestion of them by serious and devout meditation, as may in a manner incorporate them with us.

To wind up all. There are several kinds of knowledge of the same truths: there is a knowledge which serves us only as Pisgah's top did MOSES, to show us Canaan, but not to bring us into it. There is, again, a knowledge which serves us only as the talent did the wicked servants; not to procure rewards, but punishments. And finally, there is a knowledge, which, like the talent in the hand of the faithful and good steward, enriches us first, and recommends afterwards to higher trust and dignities; which improves and perfects our nature first, and then puts us into possession of such blessings, as only nature thus improved and perfected is capable of. And this knowledge must

not be a slight, superficial, and undigested one; it must not be a confused and obscure, a weak and imperfect one. This is not the knowledge that will bring forth those excellent fruits, which we have reason to expect from true illumination. But it must be a knowledge that has all the quite contrary characters; even such as I have before described.

CHAPTER II.

Of the Fruits of Illumination.

HAVING dispatched the notion of illumination in the foregoing Chapter, and showed both what truths, and what sort of knowledge of them is requisite to it, I am next to treat, 1. Of the Fruits, and, 2. Of the Attainment, of it.

Subsect. 1. As to the fruits of illumination, I have the less need to insist upon them, because whatever can be said on this head, has been in a manner anticipated. All the characters of illuminating truths, and illuminating knowledge, being such as sufficiently declare the blessed effects of true illumination. I will therefore be very short on this head, and only just mention two advantages of illumination. As the use of light is especially twofold,—to delight and guide us; so do we reap two benefits from illumination.

1. The first and most immediate one is, that it sets the whole man and the whole life right; that it fixes our affections on their proper object, and directs all our actions to their true end. It is always alluring and inviting us to our sovereign good, and deterring us from sin and death. It alarms, disquiets, disturbs, and persecutes us, as often as we wander from the paths of life. In one word, the great work of illumination is, to be always representing

the beauties and glory of virtue; and remonstrating the evils and dishonours, the deformities and dangers of vice. So that a man will never be at rest, who has this light within him, until it be either extinguished or obeyed.

2. This light within us, if it be followed, if it be not quenched and extinguished by wilful sin, or unpardonable remissness; if, in a word, its influence be not interrupted; disperses all our fears as well as errors, creates an unspeakable tranquillity in the soul, spreads over us a calm and glorious sky, and makes every thing in us and about us look gay, and verdant, and beautiful. Deliverance from a state of bondage and wrath, the peace of God, the love of Jesus, the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the perfection and blessedness of eternity! Good God! what ravishing themes are these for the thoughts of an enlightened soul to dwell upon! Blessed and happy is he who enjoys this pleasure upon earth. And that we may, I am now to discourse,—

Subsect. 2. Of the attainment of illumination. Now whatever advice can relate to this, may be reduced under two heads: 1. What qualifications render man capable of illumination. 2. What it is that one duly qualified is to do in pursuit of it.

1. To begin with the Qualifications requisite to illumination.

I observe, (1.) That illumination depends not upon a man's outward fortune. There are indeed several sorts of knowledge which we can never arrive at without much leisure, and much expense: and in order to support the one, and enjoy the other, it is requisite that we be masters of a good fortune. Illumination consists not in arts and sciences which relate to the body, and minister to a temporal life; but in those divine truths which purify the soul, and minister to an eternal one: not in notional improvements of the mind, but in spiritual and vital ones; and therefore, the husbandman and the artist, the mechanic and the trader, are as capable of this sort of wisdom, as the

man of office, money, or quality. There needs no wealth to render one "the child of light and of the day." There is the book of nature, the book of revelation; both the books of God, both writ throughout with glorious illuminating truths: these lie wide open to every honest Christian. The being and nature of God, the mediation of Jesus, and a judgment to come, the nature and necessity of holiness, are fully revealed, and unanswerably proved. And though every honest man may not be able to discover all the arguments on which they stand, yet may he discover enough. And what is more, he may have an inward, vital, sensible proof of them; he may feel the power, the charms of holiness; experience its congruity to the human soul, and observe a thousand demonstrations of its serviceableness to the honour of God, and the good of mankind: he may have a full and convictive sense of the manifestation of the divine perfections in the great work of our redemption; and the excellent tendency of it may be so palpable to him, as to leave no room for doubts or scruples. But besides all this, there is a voice within, there is a divine teacher and instructer, which will ever abide with him, and lead him into all necessary truths: all which is implied in those words of our Lord: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

(2.) Extraordinary natural parts, such as sagacity or acuteness of judgment, strength of memory, liveliness of imagination, are not necessary to illumination. Such is the beauty of holiness, that it requires rather purity of heart, than quickness of apprehension, to render us enamoured of it. And the same thing may be said of the power and energy of all Gospel motives, and of the proofs and evidences too of divine truths. To convince and affect us there is no need of sagacity and penetration, but probity and sincerity. However, I have two or three reflections to make here, which may not be unuseful: for though acuteness and retention, by which I mean quickness in discerning, and firmness in preserving truth, be commonly

accounted natural parts, and generally are so; yet, I think, where the one or the other are most defective, they may be much helped, and wonderfully improved. To which end I remark,

[1.] That those defects of understanding or memory, which some are wont to accuse themselves of in spiritual things, are with more justice to be imputed to want of concern and affection for such things, than to any incapacity of nature. We easily understand, and easily remember, what we desire and love: and wherever we follow the impulse of strong inclinations, we seldom fail of excelling. Let us therefore take care that our hearts be set upon the things of God, and we shall soon see that our judgment will no more fail us here, than in those worldly interests and pleasures.

[2.] As to memory; it depends very much upon the perspicuity, regularity, and order, of our notions. Many complain of want of memory, when the defect is in their judgment: and others, while they grasp at all, retain nothing. In order then to relieve this infirmity of memory, it were an excellent way to confine our search and meditation to a few objects, and to have these clearly and methodically handled.

[3.] It is with the understanding, as with the eye of the body: one sees further off, and in a fainter light; but another sees as well with regard to all the uses of life, who yet requires that the object should be nearer, and the light better. Men of slow capacities must not be daring or precipitate in passing their sentence, and forming their notions: they must examine whether the matters they inquire after be not too remote and obscure; whether the object may be brought nearer, and placed in a better light; or whether they may be furnished with telescopes or microscopes fit for them: if not, they must quit the search of such truths, as improper and unnecessary for them; by which means, they will, at least, avoid being deceived or perplexed; which is no small advantage. To be enriched with a kind of universal knowledge, is a great thing; but too great for

most men. Next to this is, to be endued with a knowledge of necessary and important truths; and to be freed from errors and perplexity in matters of any moment: and methinks it were no great excess of modesty or humility, for man to be content with this.

(3.) There is no great need of acquired learning in order to true illumination. Our SAVIOUR did not exact of his disciples, as a necessary preparation for his doctrine, the knowledge of tongues, the history of times or nature, logic, metaphysics, mathematics, or the like. These indeed may be serviceable to many excellent ends: they are necessary instruments of, or introductions to, several employments. But as to perfection and happiness, to these they never can be indispensably necessary. A man may be excellently, habitually good, without more languages than one: he may be fully persuaded of those great truths that will render him master of his passions, and independent of the world; that will render him easy and useful in this life, and glorious in another, though he be no logician, or metaphysician. Yet would I not all this while be supposed to exclude the use of true reason and solid judgment. Though the meanest capacity may attain to its proper perfection; that is, such a measure of knowledge as may make the man wise and happy; yet the more capacious any man's soul is, and the more enlarged his knowledge, the more perfect and happy he is.

(4.) The qualifications previously necessary to illuminations, are, two or three moral ones, implied in that infant temper our SAVIOUR required in those who would be his disciples. These are, humility, impartiality, and a thirst or love of truth.

[1.] Humility. He that will be taught of GOD, must not be proud or confident in himself: he must not overrate his own parts and capacity; nor lean too stiffly to his own understanding: he must firmly believe, that illumination is the work of GOD, and on Him he must depend: he must confess the weakness of his own faculties, the natural poverty and indigence of his understanding; and so look

up to God, who is the fountain of wisdom; and giveth "grace to the humble, but resisteth the proud."

[2.] Impartiality: sincerity, or a certain purity or innocence of judgment, if I may speak so. That the understanding may be capable of divine light, it must not be biassed by corrupt inclinations. Some, to prove their impartiality or freedom of judgment, abandon themselves to scepticism, and endless disputation and contradiction. But I cannot think it necessary to our impartiality, to deny the evidence of our senses; to oppose the universal reason of mankind; and to shake off all reverence for the integrity of man, and the veracity of God. No; this savours too much either of ostentation, or of a raw and unexperienced affection. He secures his freedom sufficiently, who guards his reason against the force of groundless prepossessions, and senseless modes and customs; against the lusts of the body, and the prejudices of parties; who keeps a strict eye upon the motions and tendencies of his inferior nature; who considers, that there are revolutions of philosophy and opinions, as well as of states and kingdoms; and judges well of times and men, ere he pay much deference to authority. But,

[3.] This is not all that is necessary to any complete degree of illumination. Impartiality is necessary to the first dawnings of it; but if we would have it increase, and diffuse itself into a perfect day of spiritual wisdom and understanding, we must hunger and thirst after truth. An unprejudiced mind is necessary to qualify us for the first rudiments of truth; but we must be inflamed with desire and love of it, ere we shall enter into the sanctuary and recesses of it; therefore our Saviour invites to him "every one that thirsts." (*John* vii. 37.) And St. Peter exhorts us "as new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby." (1 *Pet.* ii. 2.) And St. Paul imputes the damnation of "those that perish, to want of love of the truth." (2 *Thess.* ii. 10.)

2. What one thus qualified is to do for the actual attainment of it. All the advice I shall give here, may be

reduced to four heads:—(1.) That we do not suffer our minds to be engaged in quest of knowledge foreign to our purpose. (2.) That we apply ourselves with a very tender and sensible concern, to the study of illuminating truths. (3.) That we act conformable to those measures of light which we have attained. (4.) That we constantly address ourselves to God by prayer, for the illumination of his grace.

(1.) The first is a natural and necessary consequence of what has been already said concerning illumination. For if illumination consist in the knowledge, not of all sorts of truths, but the most necessary and important; such as purify and perfect our nature; such as procure us sacred and stable pleasure, and all the rewards that flow from our adoption to God; it is then plain, he who would be perfect ought not to amuse and distract his mind in pursuit of trifling or diverting knowledge; that he ought to shun, and not to admit, whatever is apt to entangle, perplex, or defile him; and to fix his thoughts and confine his meditations to the great truths of the Gospel. He that knows "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," knows enough to oblige him to virtue, and to open the way to glory and everlasting life. He that "knows nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified," knows enough in order to peace, grace, and joy; enough to promote holiness and hope; "hope that abounds in joy unspeakable and full of glory."

(2.) We must apply ourselves with a very tender and sensible concern, to the study of illuminating truths. This rule must be understood to enjoin three things:—[1.] Great care and caution in examining doctrines proposed. [2.] Great industry to increase our knowledge. [3.] Frequent and serious reflections upon the truths we know.

[1.] There is need of great caution in the trial and examination of doctrines. This the Scripture itself frequently puts me in mind of; and not without reason: because the Devil "sows his tares amongst the wheat."

Errors, and these fatal ones, are frequently obtruded on the world for the revelations of God; and every party, nay, every single author, lays the stress of salvation on their peculiar and distinguishing opinions. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (1 *John* iv. 1.) It is needless to multiply words on this occasion. When the peace and purity of our mind, the happiness of our lives, and the blessedness of eternity, have so close a dependance upon the doctrines we imbibe; who sees not, unless he be stupid and infatuated, that greater care is necessary here than in any matter whatever, because there is no other of equal moment? Bad money, or bad wares, instead of good, an ill title or conveyance, instead of a firm one, may impoverish us; bad drugs instead of good, may infect the body, and destroy the health: but what is all this to the dismal consequences of error and heresy, which impoverish and infect the mind, pervert the life, and damn the man to all eternity? The example of the Bereans is never forgotten, and indeed never ought to be, on this occasion. We must admit nothing hastily; assent to nothing, without examining the grounds on which it stands. Credulity, precipitation, and confidence, are irreconcilable enemies to knowledge and wisdom.

[2.] We are to use great industry to increase our knowledge. The treasures of divine wisdom are infinite; and it fares with those that study them, as with a traveller when he ascends a rising ground: every new step enlarges his horizon, and presents new countries, new pleasures to his eye. It is our own negligence, if we do not daily extend the compass of our knowledge; if our view of things grow not more distinct and clear, and our belief of them more firm and steady. And of what importance this is, is manifest from what I have before proved; namely, that illumination consists not in a slight and superficial, or a confused and obscure knowledge; but in a clear, distinct, firm, and well-established one; and the acquiring

such an one, demands a very diligent and an indefatigable study of the Word of Life. To fill the mind with numerous, great, and beautiful ideas, and these clear and distinct; to have them engraven in the memory in deep and lasting characters; to have them lodged and disposed in that order, as to be able in an instant to have recourse to them; to discern and demonstrate plainly the connexion and dependance of one upon another, and the unquestionable evidence of each; this is a work of time and labour; the fruit of a regular and assiduous search after truth; and if the capacities and fortunes of all men will not suffer them to come up to this, they must come as near as they can.

[3.] We must make frequent and serious reflections on the truths we do know. This again naturally follows from the notion of illumination as it is before settled. For if it is not every knowledge of the best things that suffices for illumination, but a vital and operative one, that is, a well-grounded and well-digested one, it is plain, that constant, daily, and devout meditation is necessary to illumination; because it is not a transient and perfunctory reflection upon the most important truths; it is not a fleeting, rambling, irregular, and desultory meditation of them, that will possess us with such a kind of knowledge. To imprint a truth in lively notions upon our minds, to digest it into nourishment and strength, and make it mix itself with all our affections and all our actions, it is necessary that we dwell upon it with constancy and delight. And accordingly we find that excellent and elevated souls, both under the Old Testament and the New, have been daily, nay, almost hourly, conversant in the Book of God. They have been passionately devoted to the study of it, and delighted more in it than in treasures or honours, than in the most profitable employments, or engaging diversions of life. It is this kind of meditation on God, on Jesus, the world, and ourselves, that can alone acquaint us thoroughly with each; it is this kind of

meditation on death, judgment, heaven, and hell, that can "make us wise unto salvation."

The sum of all is this: Illumination is not to be attained without labour and travail. It is, indeed, the gift of God; but such a one as he will never bestow but upon those who ask, and seek, and knock. Divine bounty and human industry here very well accord. The Spirit of God generally joins them together; and it is impiety in man to go about to divide them. "If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." (*Prov.* ii. 4—6.)

(3.) That we act conformable to those measures of light which we have attained. The more spiritual we grow, the fitter we are for the residence of God's Spirit, and the more capable of his influences. The more we subdue all inordinate affections, the clearer does the understanding grow, and the more absolute its authority. The grace of God, if it be obeyed, while it renders us more like God, renders us more dear to him too; and one favour, if it be not our own fault, qualifies us for another. Whoever shall observe the Scriptures, will find that holiness and illumination advance with equal steps, and grow up to the same degrees of maturity; that as we pass on from the infancy to the manhood of virtue, so do we from the first rudiments of wisdom to the heights and mysteries of it. But, on the other hand, lust obscures and eclipses the light within; sin depraves and corrupts our principles; and while we renounce our virtue, we quench or chase away the Spirit.

(4.) We must frequently and constantly address ourselves to God by prayer, for the illumination of his grace. There is nothing that we do not receive from above; and if the most inconsiderable things be the gift of God, from what fountain but from him can we expect illumination?

The raptures of poets, the wisdom of lawgivers, the noblest pieces of philosophy, and indeed all extraordinary performances, were by the Pagans themselves generally attributed to a divine inspiration; and the Old Testament ascribes a transcendant skill, even in arts and trades, to the SPIRIT of GOD. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if illumination be attributed to him in the New. Wisdom and understanding are essential parts of sanctity; and therefore must proceed from the sanctifying SPIRIT. We must, therefore, look up to GOD, and depend upon him for illumination; we must earnestly pray, in the words of ST. PAUL, "that the GOD of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Father of glory, would give unto us the SPIRIT of wisdom and revelation." (*Eph.* i. 17.) This dependance upon GOD, in expectation of his blessing on our search after knowledge, puts the mind into the best disposition to attain it; because it disengages it from those passions, prejudices, and distractions, which otherwise entangle and disturb it, and render it incapable of raised, sedate, and coherent thoughts. But what is more than this, there are repeated and express promises made to it; so that it can never fail of success: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of GOD, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." (*James* i. 5.) Nor do I doubt but every good man has these promises verified to him.

There are sudden suggestions, unexpected manifestations, extraordinary elevations of mind, which are never to be accounted for, but by a divine principle. Nor does this doctrine of spiritual illumination or irradiation in the least diminish the excellence of the Gospel of CHRIST, no more than the instruction of the Gospel does supersede that of the SPIRIT. For we must not think that the SPIRIT does now reveal any new truth of general use or importance; since the canon of Scripture would, on this supposal, be but a defective rule of faith and manners.

But, first, the SPIRIT may assist us in making a fuller discovery of the sense of Scripture. Secondly, the SPIRIT may help us to form clearer notions of those things we have yet but an imperfect and general knowledge of, and to imprint them in more lasting, as well as more legible characters in our minds; or it may recall to our remembrance such things as are forgotten; or, finally, it may produce in us a more earnest application to the truth of GOD. Thirdly, I see no reason why the SPIRIT may not vouchsafe us particular impulses, directions, and intimations, upon extraordinary occasions and sudden emergencies, where Holy Writ affords us no light, and human prudence is at a loss.

I will close this Chapter with a prayer of FULGENTIUS. (*Lib.* 1. *Cap.* 4.) After he has, in the beginning of the Chapter, disclaimed all pretences to the setting up himself a Master, Doctor, or dictator to his brethen, he breaks out into these words:—

'I will not cease to pray, that our true Master and Doctor, CHRIST JESUS, either by the oracles of his Gospel, or by the conversation of my brethren or joint disciples; or else by the secret and delightful instruction of divine inspiration, in which, without the elements of letters, or the sound of speech, Truth speaks with so much the sweeter, as the stiller and softer voice, would vouchsafe to teach me those things, which I may so propose and to assert, that in all my expositions and assertions, I may be ever found conformable, and obedient, and firm to the truth. For it is Truth itself that enlightens, confirms, and aids me, that I may always obey and assent to the truth.

'By Truth I desire to be informed of those many more things which I am ignorant of, from whom I have received the few I know. Of Truth I beg, through preventing and assisting grace, to be instructed in whatever I yet know not, which conduces to the interest of my virtue and happiness; to be preserved and kept steadfast in those truths which I know; to be reformed and rectified in those

points in which I am mistaken; to be confirmed and established in those truths wherein I waver; and to be delivered from those opinions that are erroneous or hurtful.

'I beg, lastly, that Truth may ever find, both in my thoughts and speeches, all that sound and wholesome doctrine I have received from its gift; and that it would always cause me to utter those things which are agreeable to itself, and consequently acceptable to all faithful Christians.'

CHAPTER III.

Of Christian Liberty.

After illumination, which is the perfection of the understanding, follows liberty, which is the perfection of the will. In treating of which, I shall,—1. Give an account of liberty in general. 2. Discourse of the several parts of it.

1. What liberty is. There have been several mistakes about this. Some, then, have placed Christian liberty in deliverance from the Mosaic yoke. But this is to make our liberty consist in freedom from a yoke to which we were never subject; and to make our glorious redemption from the tyranny of sin, and the misery that attends it, dwindle into an immunity from external rites and observances. Others have placed it in exemption from the laws of man; and others, advancing higher, in exemption even from the moral and immutable laws of God. But the folly and wickedness of these opinions sufficiently confute them; since it is notorious to every one, that disobedience and anarchy are as flat a contradiction to the peaceableness, as voluptuousness and luxury are to the purity, of that wisdom which is from above.

In truth, Christian liberty is nothing else but subjection to reason, enlightened by revelation. Two things,

therefore, are essential to it: A clear and unbiassed judgment, and a power of acting conformable to it. This is a very short, but full account of liberty. Darkness and impotence constitute our slavery: light and strength our freedom. Man is then free, when his reason is not awed by vile fears, or bribed by viler hopes: when it is not tumultuously hurried away by lusts and passions; nor cheated by the gilded appearances of sophisticated good; but it deliberates impartially, and commands effectually. And because the great obstacle of this liberty is sin; because natural and contracted corruption are the fetters in which we are bound; because "the law in the body wars against the law in the mind," obscuring the light, and enfeebling the authority of reason: hence it is, that christian liberty is as truly as commonly described by a dominion over the body, the subduing our corrupt affections, and deliverance from sin.

This notion may be sufficiently established upon that account of bondage which the Apostle gives us, (*Rom.* vii.,) where he represents it as consisting in impotence or inability to do these things, which God commands, and reason approves: "For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." (*Verse* 18.) Liberty therefore must, on the contrary, consist in being able, not only to will, but to do good; in obeying those commandments, which we cannot but acknowledge to be holy, and just, and good. And this is the very notion which our Lord and Master gives us of it. (*John* viii.) For, when the Jews bragged of their freedom, he lets them know, that freedom could not consist with subjection to sin: "He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin. (*Verse* 34.) That if they would be "free indeed, the Son must make them so;" (*Verse* 36;) *i. e.*, they must, by his Spirit and doctrine be rescued from the servitude of lust and error, and be set at liberty to work righteousness. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (*Verses* 31, 32.)

Finally, not to multiply proofs of a truth that is scarce liable to be controverted, as the Apostle describes the bondage of a sinner in *Rom.* vii., so does he the liberty of a saint in *Rom.* viii. For there, (*verse* 2,) he tells us, That "the law of the spirit of life has" set the Christian "free from the law of sin and death." And then he lets us know wherein this liberty consists; "in walking, not after the flesh, but after the SPIRIT;" in the mortification of the body of sin, and restitution of the mind to its just empire and authority. "If CHRIST be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the SPIRIT is life because of righteousness." (*Verse* 10.) And all this is the same thing with his description of liberty, (*chap.* vi.,) where it is nothing else but to be made "free from sin, and become the servant of GOD."

Thus, then, we have a plain account of bondage and liberty. Yet for the clearer understanding of both, it will not be amiss to observe, that they are each capable of different degrees; and both the one and the other may be more or less complete, according to the different progress of men in vice and virtue. Thus, in some men, not their will only, but their very reason is enslaved: Their understanding is so infatuated, their affections so captivated, that there is no conflict between the mind and body: they commit sin without any reluctancy beforehand, or any remorse afterwards: their seared conscience making no remonstrance, inflicting no wounds, nor denouncing any threats. This is the last degree of vassalage: such are said in Scripture to be "dead in trespasses and sins." Others there are, in whom their lust and appetite prevail indeed, but not without opposition. They reason rightly; and, which is the natural result of this, have some desires of righteousness: But through the prevalency of the body, they are unable to act conformably to their reason: their understanding has indeed light, but not authority: It consents to the law of GOD; but it has no power, no force to make it be obeyed: It produces some good inclinations, purposes, and efforts, but they prove weak and ineffectual ones.

And as bondage, so liberty is of different degrees. For though liberty may, in a measure, subsist, where there is much opposition from the body; yet it is plain, that liberty is most complete, where the body is reduced to an entire submission, and the SPIRIT reigns with an uncontrolled and unlimited authority. And this latter is that liberty which I speak of.

I know very well, it is taught by some, that there is no such state: but this doctrine, if it be thoroughly considered, has neither Scripture, reason, nor experience to support it. For as to those places, (*Rom.* vii. and *Gal.* v.,) urged in favour of an almost incessant, and too frequently prevalent "lusting of the flesh against the SPIRIT," it has been often answered, and proved too, that they are so far from belonging to the perfect, that they belong not to the regenerate. But on the contrary, those texts that represent "the yoke of CHRIST easy, and his burden light;" which affirm "the commandments of CHRIST not to be grievous" to such as are made "perfect in love;" do all bear witness to that liberty which I contend for. Nor does reason favour my opinion less than Scripture. For if the perfect man be a "new creature;" if he be transformed into a new nature; if his body "be dead to sin, and his spirit alive to righteousness;" in one word, if "the world be as much crucified to him, as he to it;" I cannot see why it should not be easy for him to act consonant to his nature; why he should not with pleasure and readiness follow that SPIRIT, and obey those affections, which reign in him.

Lastly, How degenerate soever ages past have been, or the present is, I dare not so far distrust the goodness of my cause, or the virtue of mankind, as not to refer myself willingly, in this point, to the decision of experience. I am well assured, that truth and justice, devotion and charity, honour and integrity, are to many so dear and delightful, that it is hard to determine, whether they are more strongly moved by a sense of duty, or the instigations of love and inclination. Nor is all this to be wondered at, if we again reflect on what I just now intimated, that

the perfect man is "a new creature, transformed daily from glory to glory:" That he is moved by new affections, raised and fortified by new principles: That he is animated by a divine energy, and sees all things by a truer and brighter light; through which the things of God appear lovely and beautiful, the things of the world deformed and worthless; just as to him who views them through a microscope, the works of God appear exact and elegant; but those of man coarse, and bungling, and ugly.

The absolute liberty of the perfect man is then sufficiently proved: and if I thought it were not, I could easily reinforce it with fresh recruits. For the glorious characters that are given us in Scripture, of the liberty of the children of God, and the blessed fruit of it, "Peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," would easily furnish me with invincible arguments: Nor would the contrary opinion ever have been able to have kept the field so long as it has done, had it not been favoured by a weak and decayed piety; by the fondnesses of men for themselves, in spite of their sins and frailties; and by many mistaken texts.

I have now sufficiently stated the notion of true liberty. I proceed to the fruits of it; which will serve for so many motives to its attainment.

2. The fruits of liberty may be reduced under three heads.

(1.) Sin being a great evil, deliverance from it is great happiness. (2.) A second fruit of this liberty is good works. (3.) The great and last fruit of it is eternal life. These are all comprised by the Apostle in *Rom.* vi. 21—23, "What fruit have ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of these things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And these are the great ends which the Gospel, that perfect law of liberty, aims at, and for which it was preached to the world; as appears from those words of our Lord to

St. Paul: "Unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts xxvi. 17, 18.) I will here insist on these blessed effects of Christian liberty; not only because the design of the chapter demands it, but also to prevent the being obliged to any tedious repetition of them hereafter.

(1.) Sin is a great evil; and therefore the deliverance from the dominion of it is a great good. To make this evident, we need but reflect a little on the nature and effects of sin. If we inquire into the nature of sin, we shall find that it is founded in the subversion of the dignity, and defacing the beauty of human nature; and that it consists in the darkness of our understanding, the depravity of our affections, and the impotence of the will. The understanding of a sinner is incapable of discerning the certainty and force of divine truths, the loveliness of virtue, the unspeakable pleasure which now flows from the great and precious promises of the Gospel, and the incomparably greater which will one day flow from the accomplishment of them. His affections, which, if fixed and bent on virtue, had been incentives, as they were designed by God, to noble and worthy actions, being biassed and perverted, now hurry him on to lewd and wicked ones. And by these the mind, if at any time it chance to be awakened, is overpowered and oppressed.

It is true, all sinners are not equally stupid or obdurate: but even in those in whom some sparks of understanding and conscience remain unextinguished, how are the weak desires of virtue baffled by the much stronger passions which they have for the body and the world? Do they not find themselves reduced to that wretched state of bondage, wherein the good that "they would do, that they do not; but the evil that they would not do, that is present with them?" It is plain, then, that sin is a disease in our nature. That it not only extinguishes the grace of the

SPIRIT, and obliterates the image of GOD stamped on the soul in its creation; but also diffuses I know not what venom through it, that makes it eagerly pursue its own misery. It is a disease that produces more intolerable effects in the soul, than any whatever can in the body. The predominancy of any noxious humour can breed no pain, no disturbance, equal to that of a predominant passion: no scars or ruins which the worst disease leaves behind it, are half so loathsome as those of vice: nay, that last change, which death itself produces, when it converts a beautiful body into dust and rottenness, is not half so contemptible or hateful as that of sin, when it transforms man into a beast or Devil.

Now if sin is so great an evil; hence it naturally follows, that deliverance from it is a great good; so great, that if we estimate it by the evil there is in sin, health to the sick, liberty to the captive, day to the benighted, weary, and wandering traveller, a calm, a port to passengers in a storm, pardon to men adjudged to death, are but weak and imperfect images or resemblances of it. A disease will at worst terminate with the body; and life and pain will have an end together; but the pain that sin causes will endure to all eternity: "for their worm dies not, and the fire will not be quenched." The error of the traveller will be corrected by the approaching day, and his weariness refreshed at the next stage he comes to; but he that errs impenitently from the path of life, is lost for ever: when the day of grace is once set upon him, no light shall ever recall his wandering feet into the "path of righteousness and peace;" no ease, no refreshment, shall ever relieve his toil and misery. Whilst the feet of the captive are loaded with fetters, his soul may enjoy its truest liberty; and in the midst of dangers and dungeons, like PAUL and SILAS, he may sing songs of praise and triumph. But the captivity of sin defiles, oppresses, and enslaves the mind, and delivers up the miserable man to those intolerable and endless evils, which inexorable justice and almighty wrath inflict upon ingratitude and obstinacy. A storm can but

wreck the body, a frail and worthless bark; the soul will escape safe to shore, the blessed shore, where the happy inhabitants enjoy an undisturbed, an everlasting calm: but sin makes "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience," and he that perishes in it does but pass into a "more miserable" state: "for on the wicked God will rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest; this shall be their portion for ever." (Psalm xi.) And, lastly, a pardon sends back a condemned criminal to life, that is, to sins and sufferings, to toils and troubles, which death, if death were the utmost he had to fear, would have freed him from: But he that is once delivered from sin, is passed from death to life, and from this life of faith, of love, of hope, shall soon pass to another of fruition and glory.

(2.) A second fruit of liberty is good works. Here I will show two things:—[1.] And that but briefly, That the works of righteousness contribute mightily to our happiness; and that immediately. [2.] That deliverance from sin removes the great impediments of righteousness, and throws off that weight which would otherwise encumber and tire us in our race.

[1.] Outward holiness is no small pleasure, no small advantage, to him who is exercised therein. When nature is renewed and restored, the works of righteousness are properly and truly the works of nature: and to do good to man, and offer up our praises and devotions to God, is to gratify the strongest and most delightful inclinations we have. These, indeed, are at first stifled and oppressed by original corruption, false principles, and vicious customs: But when once they have broken through these, like seeds through the earthly coats they are imprisoned in, and are impregnated, warmed, and cherished by an heavenly influence, they naturally shoot up into good works. Virtue has a celestial tendency: from God it comes, and towards God it moves: And can it be otherwise than amiable and pleasant? Virtue is all beauty, all harmony and order; and therefore we may view and review, consider and reflect upon it with delight. It secures us the favour of God

and man; it makes our affairs naturally run smoothly and calmly on; and fills our minds with courage, cheerfulness, and good hopes. In one word, diversion and amusements give us a fanciful pleasure; an animal sensitive life, a short and mean one: sin, a deceitful, false, and fatal one: Only virtue, a pure, a rational, a glorious, and lasting one.

[2.] I am next to show, that deliverance from sin removes the impediments of virtue. This will easily be made out, by examining what influence selfishness, sensuality, and the love of this world, which are the three great principles of wickedness, have upon the several parts of evangelical righteousness. 1. The first part is that, which contains those duties that more immediately relate to ourselves. These are especially two, sobriety and temperance. By sobriety, I mean a serious and impartial examination of things; or such a state of mind as qualifies us for it. By temperance, I mean the moderation of our affections and enjoyments, even in lawful and allowed instances. From these proceed vigilance, industry, prudence, fortitude; or patience and steadiness of mind in the prosecution of what is best. Without these it is in vain to expect, either devotion towards God, or justice and charity towards man. Nay, nothing good or great can be accomplished without them: since without them we have no ground to hope for either the assistance of divine grace, or the protection and concurrence of divine providence. Only the pure and chaste soul is a fit temple for the residence of the Spirit: And the Providence of God watches over none, or at least none have reason to expect it should, but such as are themselves vigilant and industrious.

But now, how repugnant to, how inconsistent with those virtues, is that infatuation of mind, and that debauchery of affections, wherein sin consists? How incapable either of sobriety or temperance do selfishness, sensuality, and the love of this world, render us? What a false estimate of things do they cause us to form? How insatiable do they render us in our desire of such things as have but false and empty appearances of good? And how imperiously do they precipitate us

into those sins, which are the pollution and dishonour of our nature? On the contrary, let him but once come to believe, that his soul is himself, that he is "a stranger and pilgrim upon earth," that heaven is his country, and that to do good works is to lay up his treasure in it; let him, I say, but once believe this, and then, how sober, how temperate, how wise, how vigilant, and industrious will he grow! A second part of holiness regards God as its immediate object, and consists in the fear and love of him, in dependance and self-resignation, in contemplation and devotion. As to this, it is plain, that whoever is under the dominion of any sin, must be an enemy, or at least a stranger to it. The Infidel knows no God; and the wicked will not, or dares not, approach one. Their guilt, or their aversion, keeps them from it. Selfishness, sensuality, and the love of the world, are inconsistent with the love of the Father, and all the several duties we owe him: they alienate the minds of men from him, and set up other gods in his room. But as soon as a man discerns that he has set his heart upon false goods; as soon as he finds himself cheated and deceived in all his expectations by the world, and is convinced that God is his proper and his sovereign Good; he will certainly make the worship of God a great part, at least, of the business and employment of life. With this he will begin, and with this he will end the day: nor will he rest here; his soul will be ever and anon mounting towards heaven, and there will be scarce any action, any event, that will not excite him to praise and adore God, or engage him in some wise reflections on his attributes.

The third part of holiness regards our neighbour; and consists in the exercise of truth, justice, and charity. And no where is the ill influence of selfishness, sensuality, and the love of the world, more notorious than here: for these rendering us impatient and insatiable in our desires, violent in the prosecution of them, extravagant and excessive in our enjoyments; and the things of this world being few and finite, and unable to satisfy such inordinate

appetites; we stand in one another's light, in one another's way to profit and pleasures, or, too often at least, seem to do so: and this must unavoidably produce a thousand miserable consequences. Accordingly, we daily see that these passions are the parents of envy and emulation, avarice, ambition, strife and contention, hypocrisy and corruption, lewdness, luxury and prodigality; but are utter enemies to honour, truth, and integrity; to generosity and charity. To obviate, therefore, the mischievous effects of these vicious principles, religion implants in the world others of a benign and beneficent nature; opposing against the love of the world, hope; against selfishness, charity; and against sensuality, faith.

(3.) The last fruit of christian liberty, is heaven: which will consist of all the blessings, of all the enjoyments that human nature, when raised to an equality with angels, is capable of; beauties and glories, joys and pleasures, will, as it were, like a fruitful and ripe harvest here, grow up there in all the utmost plenty and perfection that omnipotence itself will ever produce. Heaven is the masterpiece of God, the accomplishment and consummation of all his wonderful designs, the last and most endearing expression of boundless love. And hence it is, that the Holy Spirit in Scripture describes it by the most taking things upon earth; and yet we cannot but think that this image, though drawn by a divine pencil, must fall infinitely short of it: for what temporal things can yield colours or metaphors strong enough to paint heaven to the life? One thing there is indeed, which seems to point us to a just and adequate notion of heaven; it seems to excite us to attempt conceptions of what we cannot comprehend; and the labouring mind the more it discovers, concludes still the more behind; and that is the beatific vision. This is that which, as Divines generally teach, constitutes heaven; and Scripture seems to teach so too.

We, who love and adore God here, shall, when we enter into his presence, admire and love him infinitely

more. For God being infinitely amiable, the more we contemplate, the more clearly we discern his divine perfections and beauties, the more must our souls be inflamed with a passion for him: and God will make us the most gracious returns of our love, and express his affections for us, in such condescensions, in such communications of himself, as will transport us to the utmost degree that created beings are capable of. Will not God, that sheds abroad his love in our hearts by his Spirit here, fully satisfy it hereafter? Will not God, who fills us here with the joy of his Spirit, by I know not what inconceivable ways, communicate himself in a more ravishing and ecstatic manner to us, when we behold him as he is, and live for ever encircled in the arms of his love and glory? Doubtless, then, the beatific vision will be the supreme pleasure of heaven; yet I do not think that this is to exclude those of an inferior nature. God will be there, not only all, but in all. "We shall see him as he is;" and we shall see him reflected, in angels, and all the inhabitants of heaven; nay, in all the various treasures of that happy place: but in far more bright and lovely characters than in his works here below.

This is a state that answers all ends. Temporal good, nay, a state accumulated with all temporal goods, has still something defective, something empty in it: "That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered." And therefore "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing; but all things are full of labour; man cannot utter it." And if this were not the state of temporal things, yet that one thought of Solomon that he must leave them, makes good the charge of "vanity and vexation:" And the contrary is that which completes heaven; namely, that it is eternal.

I will close this chapter here; with a brief exhortation, to labour after deliverance from sin. How many and powerful motives have we to it? Would we free ourselves from the evils of this life? Let us dam up the source of

them, which is sin. Would we perfect and accomplish our natures with excellent qualities? It is righteousness wherein consists the image of God, and participation of the divine nature; it is "the cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and the perfecting holiness in the fear of God," that must "transform us from glory to glory." Would we be masters of the most glorious fortunes? It is righteousness that will make us "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;" it is the conquest of our sins, and the abounding in good works, that will make us "rich towards God, and lay up for us a good foundation for the life to come." Are we ambitious of honour? Let us free ourselves from the servitude of sin. It is virtue only that is truly honourable; and nothing surely can entitle us to so noble a relation, for this allies us to God. For, as our Saviour speaks, they only are "the children of Abraham, who do the works of Abraham; the children of God, who do the works of God." These are they who "are born again; not of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God." These are they who are incorporated into the body of Christ; and being ruled and animated by his Spirit, are entitled to all the blessed effects of his merit and intercession. These are they, in a word, who have overcome, and will one day "sit down with Christ in his throne, even as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father in his throne." (*Rev.* iii. 21.) Good God! how absurd and perverse our desires and projects are! We complain of the evils of the world; and yet we hug the causes of them, and cherish those vices whose fatal wombs are ever big with numerous and intolerable plagues. We fear death, and would get rid of this fear, not by disarming, but sharpening its sting; not by subduing, but forgetting it. We love wealth and treasure; but it is that which is temporal, not eternal. We "receive honour one of another," but we "seek not that which comes from God only." But it is Christian liberty that makes us truly great, and truly glorious; for this alone renders us serviceable to others, and easy to

ourselves; benefactors to the world, and delightsome at home. It is Christian liberty that makes us truly prosperous, truly fortunate; because it makes us truly happy, "filling us with joy and peace," and "making us abound in hope, through the power of the HOLY GHOST."

CHAPTER IV

Of Unfruitfulness, as it consists in Idleness. Considerations to deter Men from it.

UNFRUITFULNESS is a fit subject to conclude a discourse of liberty with. It may best be understood by comparing it with a state of wickedness; from which, as it is usually distinguished in the notion of the vulgar, so does it really differ on many accounts. The one forgets GOD, the other contemns him; the one has no relish of that which is good, the other finds too much gust in that which is evil; the one makes us by degrees enemies, the other strangers to GOD. In short, there is little doubt to be made, that the omission of a duty, and the commission of a crime,—lukewarmness in that which is good, and eagerness in that which is evil, may, and generally do differ in the degrees of guilt. From hence it is (the sinner being always a partial judge of himself) that it is not unusual for many, who seem to have some abhorrence of wickedness, to be far from apprehending much evil in unfruitfulness. This is a fatal error; it frustrates the great design of religion, and robs it of its truest honour,—good works. For what can religion effect by that man who retains nothing of it but the bare form and profession, and dares promise himself not only impunity, but a heaven, in an useless and unprofitable life?

Unfruitfulness, if more particularly inquired into, con-

sists in two things: A neglect of duty; or a lifeless and unprofitable performance of it. The former I will call idleness; the latter, lukewarmness; and treat of each in order.

Subsect. 1. Of Idleness. The omission of a duty may be either habitual, or occasional and accidental; and accordingly the case of omission may be very different.

1. An habitual omission of duty cannot consist with sincerity. A general neglect of duty defeats the main end of religion, which is to honour God, adorn our holy profession, and promote the good of human society; all which can never be attained but by following after righteousness, and abounding in the fruits of it. By this rule, an idle, though innocent life, must necessarily be accounted irreligious and vicious. He who does not pray, nor meditate, nor pursue any end of charity, though he be otherwise blameless in his life, yet because he does not work righteousness, because he is so far from imitating the zeal of the blessed Jesus, therefore must he not be looked upon as a disciple of Jesus, but an alien and a stranger. He whose life is spent in vanity or drudgery, in pleasure or business; though his pleasure be not impure, nor his business unjust, yet is he before God a criminal, because unprofitable; he has received the grace of God in vain; the light of the Gospel has risen upon him in vain; and he has served no interest of virtue or religion in his generation; and therefore he will be excluded heaven, with the slothful servant, who hid his master's talent in a napkin.

2. The case of an accidental or occasional omission of duty, is different from this. An occasional omission may be not only lawful, but necessary; but the neglect of duty never can be either. A single omission, wherever there is sufficient reason for it, can neither grieve the Spirit, nor frustrate the design of religion, nor, consequently imply any corruption in the heart. But then we must take care,—

(1.) That our omission be not frequent. We must

always have regard in this matter of duty, to the great end of its injunction; we must take care that our omissions be not so often, that either the honour of our religion or the welfare of our neighbour suffer by it. Nor must we so often omit prayers, reading, the sacrament, and the like, as thereby to abate, or much less extinguish, our spiritual fervour. Omission of duty, often repeated, breeds a kind of lukewarmness; and lukewarmness soon passes into coldness; and this often ends in a reprobate mind, and an utter aversion for religion.

(2.) We must endeavour, some way or other, to compensate the omission of a duty; to supply by short ejaculations, what we have been forced to retrench from regular prayer. And he that watches for opportunities, either of improvement, or doing good, will never have reason to complain of the want of them: God will put into his hands either the one or the other; and for the choice, he cannot do better than follow God's.

(3.) A single omission must never proceed from a sinful motive; from a love of the world, or indulgence to the body. Necessity or charity is the only just apology for it. Instrumental or positive duties may give way to moral ones; the religion of the means to the religion of the end; and in moral duties, the less may give way to the greater; but duty must never give way to sin, nor religion to interest or pleasure.

Having thus briefly given an account of what omission of duty is and what is not sinful; I will propose some considerations to deter men from it, and such advice as may be the best guard against it.

1. The first thing I would have every one lay to heart is, that a state of idleness is a state of damnable sin. Idleness is directly repugnant to the great ends of God, both in our creation and redemption. As to our creation: Can we imagine that God, who created not any thing but for some excellent end, should create man for none, or for a silly one? The spirit within us is an active principle; our rational faculties qualify us for doing good; this is

the proper work of reason, the most natural pleasure of a rational soul. Who can think now, that our wise Creator lighted this candle within us, that we might stifle it by negligence and idleness? That he contrived and destined such a mind, to squander its talents in vanity and impertinence? As to our redemption, it is evident both what the design of it is, and how opposite idleness is to it. CHRIST "gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (*Tit.* ii. 14.) And this is what our regeneration aims at: "We are GOD's workmanship, created in CHRIST JESUS unto good works, which GOD has before ordained that we should walk in them." (*Eph.* ii. 10.) How little, then, can a useless and barren life answer the expectations of GOD? What a miserable return must it be to the blood of his SON; and how utterly must it disappoint all the purposes of his SPIRIT!

But what need I argue further? The truth I contend for is the express and constant doctrine of the Scripture. Are not "idleness and fulness of bread" reckoned amongst the sins of Sodom? What means the sentence against the barren fig-tree, but the destruction and damnation of the idle and the sluggish? The indignation of the LORD is not enkindled against the barrenness of trees, but men. What can be plainer than the condemnation of the unprofitable servant, who perished because he had not improved his talent? (*Matt.* xxv. 38.) And how frequently does the Apostle declare himself against "the idle and disorderly?" And all this proceeds upon plain grounds: Our LORD was an example of virtue, as well as innocence; and he did not only refrain from doing evil, but he "went about doing good." We can never satisfy the intention of divine precepts by negative righteousness; when GOD prohibits the "filthiness of the flesh and spirit," he enjoins the "perfecting holiness in his fear;" when he forbids us "to do evil," he at the same time prescribes the "learning to do well." What need I multiply words? Idleness is a flat contradiction to faith, hope, charity; to fear, vigilance,

mortification; and therefore must be a damning sin. These are all active and vigorous principles; but idleness enfeebles and dis-spirits, manacles and fetters us. These are pure, strict, and self-denying principles; but idleness is soft and indulgent. These conquer the world and the body, raise and exalt the mind; but idleness is far from attempting any thing that is good; it pampers the body, and effeminates the mind; and finally, whatever innocence or inoffensiveness it may pretend to, it does not only terminate in sin, but has its beginning from it; from stupidity and ignorance, from vanity and levity, from softness and sensuality.

2. Next, after the nature, the consequences of idleness are to be considered; and if it be taken in the utmost latitude, there is scarce any sin which is more justly liable to so many tragical accusations; for it is the parent of dishonour and poverty, and of most of the sins and calamities of this life.

But at present I view it only as it is drawn with a half face, and that the much less deformed of the two. I consider it here as pretending to innocence, and flattering itself with the hopes of happiness; and yet even thus, supposing it as harmless as it can be, yet still these will be the miserable effects of it: It will rob religion and the world of the service due to both; it will bereave us of the pleasure of life, and the comfort of death, and send us down at last to a cursed eternity. For where are the virtues that should maintain the order and beauty of human society; that should relieve and redress the miseries of the world? Where are the virtues that should vindicate the honour of religion, and demonstrate its divinity as effectually as predictions or miracles do? Where are the bright examples that should convert the unbelieving part of mankind, and inflame the believing part with a generous emulation? Certainly the lazy Christian, the slothful servant, can pretend to nothing of this kind. As to the pleasure of life, if pure and spiritual, it is easy to discern from what fountains it must be drawn. Nothing but

poverty of spirit can procure our peace; nothing but purity of heart our pleasure. But, ah! how far are the idle from these virtues? Faith, hope, and love, are the seeds of them; victories and triumphs, devotion, alms, good works, the fruits of them. But what a stranger to these is the drone and sluggard! Then for the comfort of death: he that sees nothing but a vast wilderness behind him, will, scarcely, like the Israelites, see a Canaan before him. When the conscience inquires after the effects of the word, and the SPIRIT, and the blood of JESUS, and can discover in all the paths of life no tracks of any thing but fancy and fortune, humour and indulgence, how will it shrink, and faint, and tremble! What melancholy doubts will damp and choke its hope! And how can it be otherwise? We know every man shall receive according to what he has done in the body: GOD will judge every man according to his works. What then must become of him who has none to show? If immortality and glory, if life and peace, be the reward of well-doing, nay, of "patient continuance in well-doing;" what will become of the drowsy, the supine, the careless, and the sluggish, who have slept, and fooled, and trifled away life?

3. I might aggravate the guilt of idleness, by taking an estimate of the talents it wastes, the obligations it slights, and the hopes it forfeits. I might render man more apprehensive of falling into it, by observing how generally it prevails; which is a plain proof, either of the strength of the temptation, or of our propension; either that there is I know not what secret magic in the sin, or else that the cheat it imposes upon the world is a very dexterous one. But I have said enough; and where the former considerations fail, these will hardly succeed. Therefore I will now pass on from arguments to advice; which was the next thing proposed to be done.

And here my advice must have regard to two sorts of persons:—(1.) To such as are born to plentiful or competent fortunes. (2.) To such as are to raise their own, or to provide for the support and maintenance of themselves

or their families, by their industry in some calling or profession.

(1.) To the former, the best directions I can give are these:—[1.] He that is master of his time, ought to devote the more to religion: "to whom God hath given much, of him much will be required." Nor has such an one any excuse left, either for omission, or a hasty and cursory performance of duty, but one; one that will increase his guilt, *i. e.*, laziness, pleasure, or some sin or other. Such an one, therefore, ought to be diligent in frequenting the public assemblies of the Church; his attendance upon prayer, sacraments, sermons, must be such as becomes a man who seems born not to provide for life, but only to live, only to improve and enjoy life, and carry on the nobler designs of it; and as becomes a man whose good or ill example is of such vast importance to religion. Nor must such an one's attendance on the public, excuse him from the religious offices of the closet, or his family; he ought to abound in each. He may be more frequent in meditation and prayer, in reading and instruction, and perform each with more solemnity than others can.

[2.] Persons of fortune ought to be careful in the choice of friends. Conversation is not always a loss, but sometimes a gain of time. We often need to have our forgetfulness relieved, our drowsiness awakened, by the discourses of our friends. If discourse were generally seasoned with grace, conversation would be the greatest blessing; if with sense and reason, innocence and prudence, it would be the most agreeable entertainment of life. But how mischievous is the acquaintance which infects us with vanity and lightness of spirit! which shows us nothing but a gaudy outside, and a frothy soul whose example binds men in civility to be foolish, and makes confidence, and vice, and loss of time, a fashion!

[3.] It were to be wished that persons of rank were ever bred up to something; to something that might improve their minds; something that might employ life,

without encumbring it. And yet, alas! what need I wish this? How many excellent qualities are necessary to render a gentleman worthy of the station where God has placed him! Let him pursue these. How many are the virtues, how many the duties, to which a Christian is obliged! Let him attend these. There is a great deal requisite to make a good master, a good husband, a good father, a good son, a good neighbour, a good parishioner, an excellent subject, and an excellent friend; and yet there are many other relations besides these. In a word, there is no man who, when he shall appear before God, will not be found to have omitted many duties, and to have performed many others with less care and diligence than he ought; and surely such an one cannot justly complain for want of business. I doubt rather, that whosoever takes a just view of things, will have reason to complain that life is short, and our work great; that let us use all the diligence we can, and be as frugal of our time as we will, we arrive much sooner at the maturity of years, than of knowledge and virtue.

(2.) As to such as are engaged in a profession, I have particularly considered their state in several places, and find little to add here, but only to remind them, that they may be guilty of idleness too; that their idleness is the more criminal, the less temptation they have to it. They may neglect the duties of their calling; and if they be negligent in their temporal concern, it is not to be expected that they should be more industrious about their spiritual one. They may again suffer the cares of this life to thrust out those of another; and then they are truly idle and slothful servants to God, how industrious soever they are to the world. For life is but wasted, if it makes not provision for eternity; and it matters little, whether it be in pleasure or in drudgery.

CHAPTER V.

Of Unfruitfulness, as it consists in Lukewarmness.

Besides those who are unprofitable, because they neglect the duties of religion, there is another sort of men, who at the last day will fall under the same condemnation; because their performance of them is cold and formal: men who make a fair appearance of religion, and yet have no inward spiritual life; men who generally observe the external duties, but with such indifference and lukewarmness, that they are neither acceptable to God, nor useful to themselves.

This state of deadness may be considered either more generally, as it runs through the whole course of our lives and actions; or more particularly, in this or that instance of religion.

1. When it is so general, that the bent and course of our lives is, for want of relish of the things of God, perverted and depraved; when we have no designs, drive on no ends, that are suitable to the dignity of our nature, to the holiness of our profession, and to the manifest obligations of God; when we have no joys or pleasures, no thirsts or appetites, that truly become a Christian; when we make no progress, no advance towards our great end; I think we may then boldly conclude, that this is a state of carnality and death, and that this want of relish in the general course of our lives, proceeds from want of faith. Whoever therefore, finds this general stupidity in the course of his life, let him not flatter himself in the performance of any of the duties of religion; he has a corrupt, carnal, and blind heart; his performances proceed not from true principles; they are as different from the performances of a man truly regenerate, as the compliments of a well-bred acquaintance, from the substantial offices of a sincere friend. Nor can any man, who will take the least pains to examine himself, be ignorant of the condition of his soul, if this be it. For whoever will act honestly and

impartially, ought not to pass a sentence of absolution on himself, upon the bare performance of some instrumental duties of religion; but he ought to inquire, First, What virtues he practises, which put him upon expense, hazard, or travail; what works of piety or charity he performs; and what proportion they bear to his ability. Secondly, He ought to consider the end he proposes to himself in all his religious performances; whether he seek the honour of God, the welfare of man, and his own improvement and growth in goodness; or whether he does this merely to acquit himself of a task, and discharge himself of what he takes for a duty, though he finds no pleasure, no advantage in it. Thirdly, he must reflect upon the frame and temper of his mind, in reference to these duties; what hunger and thirst he has for righteousness; what warmth or earnestness of mind accompanies his performances; what peace and pleasure his reflection on them; or whether religion be not a burden to him, or something to which custom only reconciles him. Lastly, He ought to examine what influence his religious performances have upon him. Prayer, hearing, reading, and such like duties, naturally tend to enlighten the mind, purify the heart, increase our love, strengthen our faith, and confirm our hope; and therefore where this is not the effect of them, we may conclude, that they are not discharged in that manner they ought. He therefore that will examine himself aright, must not ask himself how often he reads, how often he hears, and then rest there; but he must ask himself what effect these performances have had upon his mind; which he will soon discern, if he demand of himself, what the bent and scope of his life is; how much he advances in the conquest of any vice, and the attainment of any virtue; what he loves, or what he hates; what esteem he has for the things of God, and what for the things of men? And in a word, how he follows after universal righteousness; and how he increases in purity of heart, and poverty of spirit?

2. Lukewarmness may be considered more particularly,

as it discovers itself in the performance of this or that duty; in hearing, reading, prayer, and participation of the LORD's Supper. Now it is certain there is a deadness in these duties, which proceeds from a carnal and unsanctified heart, and is a plain symptom of a state of sin: and yet it is too common, that they who are subject to it, make little reflection upon it, and are little concerned for it. But what surprises me most is, that some of repute have taught, that the seeking spiritual pleasure in prayer, is an enemy to perfection; that heat and ardour of spirit in prayer, do often happen to the weakest Christians; and very seldom to the perfect. But my business not being to combat the opinions of men, but to advance truths in the most charitable and effectual manner I can: without taking notice of the motives or reasons which have biassed any one on this subject, I will lay down two or three propositions, which will clear this matter.

(1.) First, then, lifelessness or lukewarmness in these duties, must never be constant. There is a vast difference between habitual and accidental coldness in duty; the former is the symptom of worldly, carnal, and unregenerate minds; but not the latter. Many are the accidents which indispose the body; many are the things which distract and clog the mind; therefore our devotion will never be so constant and uniform, but that it will have its interruptions and alloys; and dulness and lifelessness will sometimes seize upon real Christians. But then, if this spiritual deadness in religious exercises be fixed, constant, and habitual, it must needs be a proof of a corrupt mind: for it is impossible that there should be a true principle of grace within, which should never, or rarely, show itself in the fervency of our devotion. How is it possible, that *that* man, who is generally slight and superficial in his confession, should have a true compunction, and sincere contrition for sins? How is it possible that he, who is generally indifferent, formal, and cold in his petitions, should have a just sense either of his wants or dangers, or a true value for the grace and favour of GOD? The sum is, deadness in duty is either general or rare,

common or accidental: if it befalls us commonly, it is an argument of an unregenerate heart; if rarely, it is not. But if the returns of life and deadness in duty, be so frequent that it is impossible to determine whether the one or the other prevail most; then it is plain that the state also of such a man is very dubious.

(2.) Duty must never be without seriousness and concern, though it may be defective in the degrees of love and ardency. Thus in prayer, the tenderness and contrition of the soul, dissolved in love and sorrow, is a frame of spirit much above what the penitent commonly arrives at. But an aversion from sin, a firm resolution to forsake it, and a hearty desire by the grace of God so to do, is what he must not want. So again, joy and transport, ardour and exultancy of mind, are the effect of a clear understanding, an assured conscience, a heart inflamed with love, and a strict life: whoever therefore falls short in the one, will generally fall short in the other. But every Christian, that is truly such, must have a true sense of his wants, a hearty desire to please God, a true notion of his goodness, and a steady dependance upon it through Christ. And these things are sufficient to unite our hearts and our lips in the same petitions; to make us in earnest in all the duties we perform, and careful to intend the main end of them.

(3.) The prayer of the perfect man is generally offered up with the tenderest and most exalted passion; and a holy pleasure mingles itself in every part of his office: his petitions and praises, his confessions, deprecations, and confidences, are all of them expressions of warm and delightful passions. And how can we well conceive it otherwise? Must not those praises be full of joy and transport, which flow from a full assurance of the divine favour, from a long experience of his love, and from the glorious prospect of a blessed eternity? Can those deprecations and confidences want a heavenly calm and tranquillity of spirit, which rest upon the mediation of Jesus, the promises of an immutable God, and the pledge of his Spirit? Can those confessions want contrition, that have all the tender-

ness that holy zeal and the humblest reflections can inspire them with? Which are poured forth by a soul enlightened, purified, and strong in faith, rooted and grounded in love; by a soul, consequently, that has the liveliest sense of the deformity and danger of sin, of the beauty and pleasure of holiness, of the infinite goodness of God, and of that love of Christ that passeth knowledge? Can, finally, those petitions want desire and flame, which are offered up by a soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, that "counts all things but dung and dross in comparison of Jesus," that pants after God, that "longs to be dissolved and to be with Christ? It is true, weight and dignity of matter, gravity and significancy of expression, are the character most conspicuous in public offices, in the best and most ancient prayers; and particularly in the Lord's prayer. We find in them few or no figures of speech, no vehemence of expression. But it is too true, that the devotion of a soul disengaged, as it were, from the body, retired from the world, collected within itself, raised by daily contemplation, and accustomed to converse with heaven, flows naturally and easily. Those great ideas, which such a prayer as that of our Lord's composure, present to the mind, inflame the desire, awaken all the passions of the holy man, without any labour of imagination, or artifice of words.

Thus have I considered the nature of lukewarmness; and showed how far the perfect man is removed from it. My next business is, to persuade and exhort men to quit it, and become sincere and zealous. Only I must first take notice by the way, that besides idleness and lukewarmness, there is sometimes a third cause of unfruitfulness, which deserves never to be slighted; that is, fickleness, unsteadiness, and inconstancy. Many there are, who often propose and resolve great matters, but never bring forth any fruit to perfection: what they build one day, they throw down another. They put on as many various moral forms, as Proteus in the poets does natural ones: sometimes they are in a fit of zeal, at other times nothing but coldness

and bare form; sometimes they are in the camp of virtue; sometimes in that of vice. In a word, they halt, like the Israelites, between GOD and BAAL; and are divided between a sense of duty, and the love of the world and the body; between the checks of conscience on the one hand, and some foolish inclinations on the other. This state I have had an eye to very often, nor shall I forget it here; but shall propose such a method for the cure of lukewarmness, as may be also of good use to all such as fall short of the main end of religion, being not thoroughly changed, but only almost persuaded to be Christians; and only not altogether so far from the kingdom of heaven as others. This being premised, 1. I will inquire into the causes from whence lukewarmness, and all abortive attempts after virtue flow. 2. I will show the folly, guilt, and danger, of a Laodicean state.

1. The causes are generally four:—

(1.) Men finding themselves under great difficulties in coming up to holiness, in the true genuine and Gospel notion of it, have endeavoured to enlarge the way, and widen the gate that leads to life; and have therefore formed to themselves more soft and pliant notions of vice and virtue: such as may be more easily accommodated, either to their particular inclinations, or to the fashions of the world, than those of CHRIST and the Apostles can. Hence it is, that among such as pretend to some religion, humility, poverty of spirit, self-denial, abstinence and mortification, are so far from being visible in their practice, that we seem to have almost lost the notion of them. And the pride of life, the lust of the eyes, are so universal, that though we know, that those in ST. JOHN are the names of vices, we scarce know what the things themselves are. We have confounded the bounds of vice and virtue; and such are the freedoms, I will not say of those who profess debauchery, but Christianity, that if they be consistent with the sanctity and purity of the Gospel, it will be hard to determine what excess is. In a word, how many are there, who making profession of living by faith, and look-

ing for the blessed hope, and the glorious resurrection of CHRIST, do yet live, as if all the business of life were to get and enjoy as much of this life as they can; who professing themselves the disciples of CHRIST, whose heart was lowly, his fortune mean, and his appearance humble, do yet lay out their time, their labour, their wealth, on this, to make a show and figure in the world? And as our indulgence to ourselves in these things, which relate to the pride and vanity of life, and the ease and appetites of the body, is very great; so, on the same ground, and for the same reason, is our zeal for the interest of virtue, and the honour of GOD, very faint and remiss. Conversation has very little grace in it; and we are so far from being resolute and industrious to awe or shame vice, that we ourselves should be almost out of countenance, if we should be observed to pay any particular respect to religion in company.

It is true indeed, these I am speaking of generally frequent the house of GOD; "and they sit before him as his people; and delight to hear his word." But so did the Jews, when GOD tells them in the Prophet EZEKIEL, (xxxiii. 31,) "That their hearts went after their covetousness:" and in the Prophet ISAIAH, we have but an odd character of the morals of these people; of whom GOD saith, "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways." Now though those I speak of may not be chargeable with open wickedness; yet I am afraid, that even in this duty, they but promote the imposture they put upon themselves; and make their diligence in this point minister to quiet their consciences in their Laodicean state: for it were easy to prove, that such as these do more generally aim at the entertainment of the ear, than the reformation of the heart. And we may say of Preachers now, as GOD did of EZEKIEL; "And, lo, thou art unto them as a lovely song of one that has a very pleasant voice." (*Ezek.* xxxiii. 32.) The music of the voice, the gracefulness of delivery, a flow of words, the surprise of novelty and notion, the beauty of sentences, and the sparkling of wit and fancy, or

an appearance of learning. These are, I doubt, too often the things that draw together and charm an auditory: and so all are pleased, but none converted; for who sweats or blushes, who trembles or grows pale at these sermons? Who goes away from them wounded, or struck through, serious and pensive, full of pious fears and devout desires?

(2.) A Laodicean state springs from sloth and cowardice, or the want of a thorough and well-grounded resolution. This was one cause of the Israelites' fluctuation: they were indeed desirous of Canaan, but were not forward to purchase it by tedious marches, hazardous encounters, and the hardship of hunger and thirst: they ever and anon preferred the servitude of Egypt, with security and fulness, before Canaan on these terms. And thus it is this day with Christians of a Laodicean spirit, and a doubtful staggering allegiance. A heaven they would have, but would not purchase it at too dear a rate; they would be accounted disciples of CHRIST, and share in the merits of his sufferings; but they would not take up his cross, and follow him. But, alas! Israel might as well have gained their liberty without going out of Egypt, or Canaan without travel and hardship, as these, virtue and heaven, without watchfulness and industry: we may as well hope to support and increase the health and strength of the body, without food or exercise, as that of the soul without meditation and prayer: we may as soon conquer our enemies without discipline, expense, and blows, as master our corruptions without spiritual watchfulness, travail, or contention. There is indeed force enough in the word of GOD, to purify the heart, if we would but seriously read it, and meditate upon it. And the grace of the SPIRIT is sufficient to conquer our corruptions, and strengthen and stablish us in faith and obedience, if we did but earnestly and frequently pray for it, and cherish and improve it when obtained.

The means which GOD has prescribed are undoubtedly proper and suitable, powerful and effectual to the attain-

ment, preservation, and increase of holiness; and all his ordinances have a divine energy in them, if they be but duly and conscientiously made use of. But if we do not watch, if we do not meditate, if we do not pray, if we expose ourselves to a vain and trifling conversation, if we indulge the body in all the ease it is inclined to, and put ourselves upon no duties, practise no discipline that we have any reluctancy for; it is not to be wondered if our virtue be crazy and sickly, if our performances be cold, our faith weak, our affections low, our life unsteady and unprofitable, our religion destitute of true pleasure, and our latter end void of any rational comfort, or well grounded confidence. It is naturally to be expected that the soul of the sluggard should be like his field. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." (*Prov.* xxiv. 30.) This is one plain cause of our halting between God and Baal; namely, our idleness and sloth in religion, joined with cowardice, which moves us to decline all difficulties, and disables us to make a bold resistance against temptations: but how guilty this must render us in the sight of God, it is no difficulty to guess. Is this the zeal, the revenge of an humble and active penitent? Is this to redeem the time, and efface the memory of our past sins and provocations? Is this the conversation that becomes the children of the light and of the day? Is this our hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is this our ambition, our passion for heaven? Finally, is it thus we requite the mercies of God, and the love of Jesus, that passeth knowledge? Shall such halting Christians as these, think ye, ever be judged endued with living faith, who express in the whole tenor of their lives, so much coldness and indifference for their salvation, which the Son of God thought worth the purchasing by so much travail, and so much sorrow, so much shame, and so much blood?

(3.) A third cause of our halting between God and

BAAL, is some degree of infidelity. This was the case of Israel too. I would to GOD it were not the state of too many Christians; and that we could not trace our lukewarmness and fickleness in religion back to the same source, namely, infidelity. I wish the prosperity of the wicked do not somewhat undermine the belief of a Providence: I wish, whatever we talk of a treasure in another world, we do not now and then think it wisest to have our portion in this. I am afraid, that the decays and dissolutions of our nature in death, the rottenness and corruption of the grave, and the variety of changes our very dust undergoes, may tempt us to some scruples about another life. But however it be in these points, I am well assured, we often doubt whether virtue be the true blessedness of life; whether there be that pleasure in righteousness the Scripture affirms there is. I am confident, the notions of holiness, with which the Scripture furnishes us, are often blotted by the maxims and customs of the world; and there is scarcely one of those, who are Laodiceans and trimmers in religion, that do not flatter themselves, that GOD will not be as severe as his threats; and that he will receive them into heaven upon milder and softer terms than the Gospel proposes. Some such kind of infidelity as this must possess the heart, wherever the life is so infinitely below our profession. When "the word preached doth not profit," it is because it is not "mingled with faith in those that hear it." If we did truly believe, if we saw the promises of GOD as evident and present by faith, it were impossible but they must move, but they must enkindle in us another sort of desire; and this desire would soon produce another sort of life. How does a prospect of gain captivate the covetous? How does the expectation of pleasure inflame the voluptuary? How does the sight of vanity and grandeur affect the proud? And the hope of glory fire the ambitious? What, have the beauty and pleasures of holiness no attraction? Has heaven no charms in it? Have the favour and love of GOD, and of JESUS, no force, no power in them? Surely we have not the face to deny, but that the promises

of God are great and precious ones, and if they raise no passions in us, it must not be through want of excellence in them, but want of faith in us. And then judge you, how acceptable this kind of infidelity must render us to God.

(4.) The fourth fountain of this unsteadiness and remissness in religion is, some remains of corruption; the prevalency of some vicious passion or other. Men's actions are the plainest indications of their affections. If the life looks two ways, we need not doubt but that the heart does so too. This was that which made the young man in the Gospel fluctuate so long between God and mammon; this was the case of Herod; he had yielded, no doubt, to the Baptist's reasons, if he had not been drawn back by the charms of Herodias. And this is the case of every man who is but "almost a Christian:" he is under the ascendant of some silly or vile lust; this is that which diminisheth the price of Canaan.

Without doubt men would apply themselves more vigorously to spiritual things, were they not too fond of the body and the pleasures of it: they would seek the kingdom of heaven more earnestly, and make a better provision for the other world, were they not too much taken with this, and therefore, too apt to set up their rest on this side Jordan. Now if this be so, what can we expect? They only who conquer are crowned; they who sow to the flesh and to the world, can reap nothing from these but corruption. These kinds of Christians, though peradventure they are not slaves to any scandalous lusts, are yet entangled by some other, not much less injurious, though not to reputation, yet to purity of heart: they are captivated to the world and flesh, though their chains seem better polished, and of a finer metal; they cannot mount upwards, they cannot conquer, being retarded and kept under, if not by the strength of temptation, yet by their own softness and weakness; and the more innocent the object of any one's passion is, generally the more fatal, because we are the more apt to indulge ourselves in it.

2. The causes of lukewarmness being thus pointed out, it is evident what the cure of it consists in, namely, in strengthening our faith, and in completing our reformation. I will now endeavour to show, (1.) The folly; (2.) The guilt; and, (3.) The danger of it.

(1.) The folly. How reasonably may I here address myself to the lukewarm in the words of ELIJAH to the Israelites: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be GOD, follow him; but if BAAL, then follow him." (1 *Kings* xviii. 21.) If you do indeed believe, that your safety and happiness depend upon GOD, then serve him in good earnest; but if you think this depends upon the world, the flesh, and the Devil, then serve these. If you really think virtue and religion are the most solid and stable treasure, then strive sincerely and vigorously to possess yourselves of them; but if you really think that the ease and pleasure of the body, respect, and pomp, and state, are the proper portion, and sovereign good of man, then devote and offer up yourselves to these. For what a folly is that life, which will neither procure us the happiness of this world, nor of another? To what purpose is it to listen only so much to conscience, as to damp and chill our pleasure; and so much to pleasure, as to disturb the peace and repose of conscience? But, indeed, the disparity is so vast between GOD and the world, between religion and sensuality, covetousness, and ambition; between those hopes and enjoyments we may reap from the one, and those we can fancy in the other; that there is no place for doubting what choice we are to make, or to which side we are to adhere; nay, in this we are more criminal than the Israelites, being self-condemned. The Israelites seem to be at a loss, whether the LORD or BAAL were GOD; they doubted under whose protection they might thrive best. But at this day, whoever believes a GOD, knows very well there is none besides him. Whatever passion we have for the world, and the things of it; whatever spiritual idolatry we are guilty of, our opinions are not yet so far corrupted, as to attribute to them, in reality,

any thing like divinity. Whilst we dote on wealth, we at the same time know that it makes itself wings and flies away; whilst on greatness and power, we know that it is but a piece of empty and toilsome pageantry, and often the subject of misery and dismal tragedies, not incident to a lower state: Whilst we dote on pleasure, we are well assured that it is dishonourable and short, and intermixed with fears, and shame, and torment. We know that nothing here below is able to free our state from calamity, our mind from guilt, the body from death, much less the whole man from a miserable eternity. In one word, we know that what we admire is vanity, and what we worship is indeed an idol. This being so, I will insist no longer on this topic; for since the world bears no competition with God in our opinion, though it often rival him in our affections, we are not to impute the halting of a Laodicean Christian to any persuasion of omnipotence or all-sufficiency, or any thing like divinity in the things he dotes on, serves, and worships; but we must find out some other reason of it. And that is generally this, We are willing to believe, that our fondness for the world, and our indulgence to the body, is consistent enough with religion; that it is no provocation to God, nor, consequently, prejudice to our eternal interest. And then it is no wonder if we blend religion and sensuality; and stand divided in our affections; and consequently halt in our service between God and the world. To prevent this, I will show,

(2.) That this is a great sin; which is sufficiently evident from this single consideration, That it frustrates the efficacy of the Gospel and the Spirit, and entirely defeats the great design of the Christian Religion. For,

[1.] Religion has no effectual influence upon the lukewarm; the Gospel works no thorough change in him. The sinner is not converted into a saint; nor human nature perfected by participation of a divine.

[2.] The Laodiceans can never offer up to God any gift, any sacrifice worthy of him; nor render him any service acceptable to him; the "kingdom of God is

righteousness, and peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST. He that in these things serveth CHRIST, is acceptable to GOD, and approved of men." (*Rom.* xiv. 17, 18.) But, alas! such men are utter strangers to these things; a few faint and irresolute wishes, formal and customary prayers, niggardly and grumbling alms, and an attendance upon GOD's word, rather out of spiritual wantonness, than devotion, these are the offerings they make GOD: and will GOD be better pleased with these, than he was with those of Israel that were deformed with maims and blemishes? "Offer now these to thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept of thy person? saith the LORD of hosts." (*Mal.* i. 8.) The primitive Christians offered up to GOD prayers and tears, labours and travails; nay, their honours, their fortunes, their lives, their blood. But, alas! what have these men to offer? They have not love enough to put them upon any expense; nor faith enough to put them upon any hardships. For though they think themselves rich and increased in goods, and to have need of nothing, yet are they poor, wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked. And shall these receive a crown of righteousness? Shall these share in the kingdom of JESUS? Shall these partake in the triumph of the last day? It can never be; they do nothing worthy of the Gospel, nothing worthy of the SPIRIT of GOD: nothing that can entitle them to the benefit of the cross of CHRIST.

[3.] The life of the Laodicean Christian will never do any credit to religion. No man will be ever able to discern the beauty of holiness, or the power of divine truths, from the practice and conversation of such. Had the carriage of the primitive times been such as this, I know not what miracles might have done, I am sure examples would never have made any proselytes. But the Christians then acted those virtues, which the Pagan only pretended to: this was that which made the world admire and love Christianity. (3.) After thus much said of the effects of this sort of carriage, I need scarcely put any one in mind, what will be the last and saddest effect of it; for if our Christianity

be such, that it neither set us free from our bondage to the world and flesh, nor enrich our soul with true and solid virtues; if it neither promote the honour of God, nor the good of man; it must unavoidably follow, that having no true title to God's favour, nor any rational ground on which to build an assurance of it, we can reap no true comfort from religion here, or any reward from it hereafter. Alas! what talk I of comfort and reward? "Distress and anguish must take hold of the sinners in Sion; and fearfulness must surprise the hypocrite:" and from the troubles and miseries of this life, they must go down into the everlasting torments of another.

The Scripture is plain; God will spue them out of his mouth, as he did the Laodicean: he will shut the gate of heaven against them, as against the foolish virgins that had no oil in their lamps: and their hell will have one torment in it, which is incident to no others, that they had once the hopes of heaven; and it is no small aggravation of misery to fall into it, even from the expectation of happiness.

This is not, as I observed above, to be applied to accidental dulness or deadness in duty; nor are the abatements of love, which good men sometimes suffer, immediately to be pronounced damnable. But yet these are to be put in mind of the danger they are in, in the words of the Spirit to the Church of Ephesus: "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." (*Rev.* ii. 4, 5.)

CHAPTER VI.

Of Zeal.

I AM arrived at the last stage of perfection, which I choose to call a state of zeal; not only because the Scripture seems to direct me to this expression, but also because it seems to me full and proper. That other expression, the state of love, suits my purpose well enough; but does not come up so exactly to it, as the state of zeal; for I take zeal to be love, in its utmost elevation and vivacity.

I will here discourse of three things:—1. What zeal is. 2. What is that perfection of holiness or righteousness, wherein it consists. And, 3. Of the efficacy or force of this holiness, as it exerts itself in good works.

1. Of zeal in general, what it is. I do not exclude some degrees of zeal, from every period of the Christian's life; sincerity cannot subsist wholly without it. Hunger and thirst after righteousness must be more or less in every child of GOD. But it may signify one thing in the infant, another in the adult Christian; in the one the conquest of sin, or of the remains of sinful habits, is the object of this hunger and thirst; in the other, it imports a vehement desire of whatever is yet wanting to a consummation of righteousness already fixed and established; the ultimate perfection of it in heaven; and the promoting the divine glory upon earth. By a state of zeal, then, I here mean virtue or holiness, not in the bud, or in the blossom, but in its full strength and stature, grown up, and ripe and loaded with blessed fruits: I mean that holiness which is the result of illumination, or clearness of judgment, of the strength and force of holy resolution, and the vigour and energy of holy passions. In a word, I mean that solid, spiritual, and operative religion, which may be felt and enjoyed by us ourselves, in the serenity and tranquillity of conscience, the longings and breathings of pious desires, the joys and pleasures of a rational assurance; discerned by the world in our lives and actions, in the modesty of

our garb, in the plainness and humility of all things else that pertain to the port of life; in the temperance of our meals, the purity and heavenliness of conversation, the moderation of our designs and enjoyments, the instruction of our families, with a tender and indefatigable watchfulness over them; the constancy of our attendance upon, and the devoutness of our deportment in, the public worship of God; and, finally, in the activity and generosity of our charity: or, to speak my thoughts in the language of St. Paul, a state of zeal is that maturity of holiness which abounds in "the works of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, and our Father." (1 *Thess.* i. 3.) Now the end of all this is, the advancing the glory of God; and therefore zeal is well defined, by an ardent or vehement desire of doing so. Now this is advanced two ways: First, By our personal and inherent holiness. And, Secondly, By the fruit of it, good works. Of both which I will now speak more particularly.

2. Of that perfection of holiness which constitutes zeal. Here I will inquire into two things:—(1.) Whether the perfect man must be possessed of all the treasures of goodness; whether he must be adorned by a confluence, and an accumulation of all virtues. (2.) What height of virtue, what degree of holiness, he may be supposed to arrive at.

(1.) Of the extent of righteousness. Universality is as essential a property of Gospel-righteousness, as sincerity. There is an inseparable connexion and union between all Christian virtues; so that he who wants any, must be concluded to have none: this want being, not like a blemish that diminishes the beauty, or a maim that weakens the strength, but like a wound that dissolves the frame and contexture of the natural body.

This is partly built upon reason, which tells us, that there is a native lustre and beauty in all virtues; and therefore, there is no one in the whole system of morality, but must be amiable to a good man. Partly upon Scrip-

ture, in which we find the Christian represented as "holy in all manner of conversation;" (1 *Pet.* i. 15;) "perfect in every good work;" (*Heb.* xiii. 21;) "as filled with all the fulness of God;" (*Eph.* iii. 19;) and exhorted in the most comprehensive terms imaginable, to the practice of every virtue. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." To which may be added numerous texts, importing that faith is a principle of universal righteousness; and that the fear and love of God equally oblige us to all his commandments; and that the violation of one involves us in the guilt of all. And the result of all seems to be plainly this, that the whole chain of graces is dissolved, if there be but one link wanting.

The least which is implied herein is this,—

[1.] The perfect man must not only be set free from the dominion of sin, but also abstain even from a single act of presumptuous wickedness; he must neither omit a duty, nor commit any thing repugnant to it.

[2.] He must be endued with spiritual wisdom and understanding, with faith, hope, charity, with the graces which I will call universal, because necessary to all as Christians, and that too in an eminent degree, so as to be "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." This will render him holy in all manner of conversation, and throughly furnished to all good works. These two things constitute universal righteousness, and complete the perfect man, or, if not, what follows will.

[3.] He must excel in those virtues which are most natural. I call those virtues natural, to which grace and nature most powerfully dispose and incline him. For these he seems to be designed by God; these will soon grow up to maturity; and much will be their fruit, and great their beauty.

[4.] The perfect man must be eminent in those virtues

which are most necessary. Such are those which his particular station, or any other dispensation of Providence he is under, requires of him. Whatever virtues may be more delightful, these are more important; others may be more natural, these have more of use. A man may fall short of perfection in others, without either disparagement or guilt; but deficiency in these can hardly escape both. Besides, every thing is lovely in its place, and in its time. There is a peculiar grace and lustre which attend the virtues of a man's station, that are scarcely to be found in any other. I would, therefore, have a perfect man truly great in his business, and shine with a dazzling lustre in his own sphere.

There is no doubt but the perfect man must love God to that degree, that he must always cleave to him; walk as always before him; ever meditate and contemplate on him and his works; contrive and study, labour and contend to please him; it must be an affliction to him to be divided from him but for a little while, and he must ever and anon, by day and night, break out into his praises, and rejoice and glory in him. He must love God to that degree, as that all things, in comparison of him, must appear blasted and withered, empty and contemptible, without pleasure, without beauty; and consequently, he must so thirst after the beatific vision, after the presence and fruition of God, that he must earnestly desire to be dissolved, and pant, and long to be dismissed from the pilgrimage of this world, and from the corruptible tabernacle of the body. Nor do I doubt, but that this love is often sensibly transporting; it is a fire within, that strives to break out, and exert itself in the fruitions of heaven; it is a rich and mighty cordial, that raises nature above itself, and makes it all purity or glory.

(2.) Thus have I considered the extent or compass of the perfect man's virtues. I am next to inquire, To what degrees of virtue he may advance.

And first, Reason and Scripture press us on towards an endless progress in virtue. Such a degree of ex-

cellence, to which nothing can be added,—such a height, above which there is no room to soar, if applied to man, and this world, is surely but an imaginary notion. To dream of such a perfection, were to forget our nature and our state; no sagacity of judgment, no strength of resolution, no felicity of circumstances, can ever advance us to this height. Such a perfection as this, that is incapable of any increase, belongs to God alone. It is hard to conceive how we should enjoy divine faith, without growing in spiritual wisdom and understanding; it is hard to conceive how we should give God, the world, and ourselves, repeated proofs of our integrity in the day of trial, without increasing our strength and assurance; and love must naturally increase with these. Whence it is that St. Paul, acknowledging himself not yet perfect, resolves, that "forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forward to those things that are before, he would press on towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (*Phil.* iii. 13, 14.)

CHAPTER VII.

Of Zeal, as it consists in Good Works.

And now, let not any one think that I have taken pains to advance the illumination of a sinner; to raise him as far as might be above the corruption of nature, and the defects and infirmities of life; to scatter those fogs and mists which hung upon his spirits, and to enrich him with heroic virtues;—let no man, I say, fancy that I have laboured to do all this, that after all my perfect man might sit down like an Epicurean god and enjoy himself, might talk finely of solitary shades and gardens fitted for the noblest designs, in a sluggish retirement. No, no. As virtue is the perfection of human life, so is action the

perfection of virtue; and zeal is that principle of action, which I require in a saint of God. Accordingly, the Scriptures describe this great, this happy man, as "fervent in spirit, zealous of good works." Such an one was Moses, "mighty in word and deed, as well as learned in all the knowledge of the Egyptians." Such an one was St. Stephen, as full of a divine ardour, as of an irresistible wisdom. What need I multiply instances? This is that which distinguishes the perfect man from all others: the victories of faith, the labours of charity, the constancy and patience of hope, and the ardours of devotion.

Zeal is a perfection that shines with such a peculiar lustre, with such a heavenly majesty and sweetness, that nothing else can imitate it; it is always pursuing good, the honour of God, and the happiness of man; it "contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" but it contends as earnestly too to root out wickedness, and implant righteousness in the world; it is not eager for the articles of a sect or party, and unconcerned for catholic ones; when it presses for reformation, it begins at home, and sets a bright example of what it would recommend to others; it is meek and gentle under its own affronts, but warm and bold against those which are offered to God. In a word, though love fill its sails, divine wisdom and prudence give it ballast; and it has no heat, but what is tempered by charity and humility.

Need I fix the various degrees of zeal? Alas! it is not requisite; zeal being nothing else but an ardent thirst of promoting the divine glory by the best works. It is plain, the more excellent the work, and the more it cost, the more perfect, the more exalted the zeal that performs it. When, like Mary, we quit the cumber and distraction of this world, and choose religion for our portion, then do we love it in good earnest; when, with the disciples, we can say, "Lord, we have forsaken all and followed thee," or are ready to do so; when we are continually blessing and praising God; when, if the necessities of Christ's

Church require it, we are ready to call "nothing our own;" when we are prepared, if the will of GOD be so, to "resist even unto blood;" when nothing is dear, nothing delightful to us, but GOD and holiness; then have we reached the height of zeal. In a word, zeal is nothing else but the love of GOD made perfect in us; and if we would see it drawn to the life, we must contemplate it in the blessed JESUS, the pattern of heroic love. How boundless was his love, when the whole world, and how transcendant when a world of enemies, was the object of it! How indefatigable was his zeal! How wakeful, how meek, how humble, how firm and resolved! His labours and travails, his self-denial, prayers, and tears, his silence and patience, his agony and blood, and charitable prayers poured out with it for his persecutors, instruct us fully what divine love, what divine zeal is. And now, even at this time, love reigns in him as he reigns in heaven; love is still the predominant, the darling passion of his soul. Worthy art thou, O JESUS, to receive honour, and glory, and dominion! Worthy art thou to sit down with thy FATHER on his throne! Worthy art thou to judge the world, because thou hast loved, because thou hast been zealous unto death, because thou hast overcome! Some there are, indeed, who have followed thy bright example, though at a great distance. First, martyrs and confessors; next, those beloved Princes who have governed their kingdoms in righteousness; to whom the honour of GOD, and the good of the world, have been far dearer than pleasure, than empire, than absolute power. And next follow,——Hold! This is the work of angels; they must marshal the field of glory in the end of all things. O my GOD, may I, at least, be one, to fill the train of the triumphant procession of that blessed day, when thou shalt crown the zeal and patience of thy saints!

Thus have I given a short account of zeal. I will now endeavour to kindle it in every breast by some few considerations, which will at once evince the necessity, and declare the fruit of it. 1. Our own security and happi-

ness demand a zeal fruitful in good works. 2. It is indispensable to the good of our neighbour. 3. It ministers most effectually to the glory of God.

1. Our own salvation and happiness depend upon it; for without this, we frustrate "the counsel of God against our own souls." It was for this Christ died, "that he might purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This is the great end of our election: "God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love;" (*Eph.* i. 4;) which is to be explained by *Eph.* ii. 10, where God is said to have "before ordained that we should walk in good works." And the beginning of the verse reminds us, that it is for this end God imparts the light of his word, and the vigour of his Spirit; and for this end he sanctifies and renews our nature: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

What shall I say more? Our Lord, in his narrative of the last judgment, and elsewhere, and his Apostles, in almost innumerable places, have with great power and great earnestness inculcated this doctrine,—that we shall "be judged according to our works;" that immortality and glory are the portion, not of knowledge, but patience and charity; not of an orthodox belief, but of righteousness and zeal; for the incorruptible, the never-fading crown, is "a crown of righteousness." Or if men will be judged by their faith, which is not the language of the Gospel, this does not alter the matter at all; since faith itself will be judged by its works. "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works." (*James* ii. 18.) Dost thou believe in God? Why art thou not "holy as he is holy?" Dost thou believe in Jesus? Why dost thou not "deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow him?" Why dost thou not walk as he walked? Dost thou believe a judgment to come? Why dost thou not "work

out thy salvation with fear and trembling?" Why dost thou not "prepare to meet thy God?" Why art thou not "rich in good works, that thou mayest lay up a good foundation against the time to come, and lay hold on eternal life?"

Nor are good works less necessary to prove our love, than faith. Certainly, if we love God, we cannot but seek his glory; we cannot but be desirous to maintain communion with him. And if so, do we know any sacrifice that is more acceptable to God than good works? Do we know any that he delights in more than zeal? Do we love the blessed Jesus? Are not good works the very test of this love which himself has appointed? "If a man love me, he will keep my commandments." (*John* xiv. 15.) "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (*John* xv. 14.) "The love of Christ," saith the Apostle, "constrains us;"—What to do?—"To live not to ourselves, but to him that died for us, and rose again." (2 *Cor.* v. 15.) What other returns can we make to Jesus? What other way can we express our gratitude to him? He sits on the right hand of God; "all power is given him in heaven and in earth; he does not himself need our ministry, nor want our service and charity. But hear what he says: "Inasmuch as you did it to one of these, you have done it to me." (*Matt.* xxv. 40.)

2. Our zeal is indispensably necessary to the welfare and happiness of others. Do we regard our neighbour's eternal interest? It is zeal that represses sin, and propagates righteousness; it is zeal that defends the faith, and suppresses heresy and error; it is zeal that converts the unbeliever, and builds up the believer; it is zeal that awakens the drowsy, quickens the lukewarm, strengthens the weak, and inflames the good; it is zeal that baffles all objections, refutes all calumnies, vanquishes all opposition against religion, and oppresses its enemies with shame and confusion; it is, in a word, zeal, and zeal alone, that can make religion appear lovely and delightful, and that reconciles the world to it; for this alone can adorn the Gospel; it

renders virtue more conspicuous, more taking, in example than it can be in description.

Nor is zeal less serviceable to the temporal, than eternal interest of mankind. When God laid the foundations of the world, he laid the foundation of virtue too; and when he formed man, he wove the necessity of good works into his very nature. How indispensable is justice, to poor creatures who lie so open to wrongs and injuries! How indispensable is generosity, to those who are exposed to so many accidents, to so many wants, to such a vicissitude of fortune? And being all subject to so many follies and infirmities, to so many mistakes and fancies, how strong must be our obligation to mutual patience and gentleness! In a word, sin and misery abound in the world; and if there were not virtues and good works to balance the one, and to relieve and support us under the other, life would be intolerable. So that revealed and natural religion necessarily centre in a zeal for good works, as their ultimate end and utmost perfection in this life; and the rule of our Saviour, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them," is an abstract, not only of the Law and the Prophets, but of the code of nature too; and this single principle, if sincerely pursued, will work us up to the noblest heights of zeal.

I might here, if it were necessary, easily show, that zeal has as happy an influence on the public as the private; that this must animate that justice and mercy that supports the throne; that it is the soul of that honour, integrity, generosity, and religion, which support the states and kingdoms of the world; and without which, all political systems must needs tend to a dissolution. But I have said enough; and from what I have said, the truth of my third consideration naturally appears,—

3. Namely, That zeal ministers most effectually to the glory of God. For if zeal be in itself thus lovely, thus necessary; if the fruits of it be thus serviceable to the temporal and eternal interest of man; what a lovely, what an agreeable notion of God shall we form from this one

consideration of him,—That he is the great Author of it? That he is the origin and fountain of that light and heat, of that strength and power, of which it is compounded? He commands and exacts it; he excites and encourages to it, by the promise of an eternal crown. He has planted the seeds of it in our nature, and he cherishes them by the blessed influences of his SPIRIT. How gracious is the divine nature! how gracious is the divine government! when the substance of his laws is, that we should love as brethren, that we should clothe the naked, feed the hungry, deliver the captive, instruct the foolish, comfort the afflicted, forgive one another, if need be, seven times a day, and more! If to do all this be an argument of being regenerate; if this be a proof of his SPIRIT ruling in us, his nature communicated to us, and his image stamped upon us, how amiable must GOD be, when we discern so much benefit, and so much beauty, and so much loveliness in those qualities, which are but faint and imperfect resemblances of him? In a word, the holiness of his children and servants, is a demonstration of the holiness of GOD himself; and in this consists the very lustre of divine glory. Holiness is the flower of all his attributes; the most perfect, because the most comprehensive, of all his perfections: for holiness includes wisdom, power, and goodness. As to goodness, the case is so plain, that holiness and goodness are commonly used as terms equivalent. As to wisdom, it is evident, that no action is commendable and lovely, unless the principle, the motive of it, be wise and rational; therefore wisdom cannot be separated from the notion of holiness. Lastly, As to power, this must needs be comprised in it too; for beneficence, which is one great branch of holiness, must unavoidably imply power in the benefactor, and impotence and want in the beneficiary.

This is the notion wherein holiness, when ascribed to GOD in Scripture, is generally taken. "Holy, holy, holy LORD GOD of Hosts; heaven and earth are full of thy glory;" does express the greatness and majesty, as well as

the rectitude and purity of the divine nature; and to "sanctify the LORD GOD in our hearts" is, in the language of the Scripture, not only to love him for his goodness, but to revere him for his majesty and greatness.

Need I here add, that the excellencies of the creature, their subserviency to the great ends of their creation, is the glory of the Creator; just as the beauty, strength, and convenience of the work, is the honour of the architect? If the sun, moon, and stars, the irrational and inanimate parts of the creation, show forth the glory of GOD, how much more do spiritual and rational beings? And virtue is the perfection of reason, and zeal of virtue; for this is that which does directly and immediately advance those great ends that are dearest to GOD.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of Humility.

OUR SAVIOUR has so often pronounced the humblest the greatest in the kingdom of heaven; he has so often promised the greatest exaltation to the lowest condescensions; he was himself so illustrious an example of lowliness of heart, of poverty of spirit; and the Apostle has so expressly asserted his joy and crown to be the reward of his humility, that I can never think man can ever rise to a more eminent height, than that to which the imitation of this virtue of CHRIST will advance him.

The more perfect, therefore, man is, the more humble must he be too. The more he knows GOD, the nearer he is admitted into communion with him, the more plainly will he discern at how infinite a distance he stands from the divine majesty and purity, and will prostrate himself even into dust and ashes before him. The perfect man admires, adores, obeys, loves, relies, trusts, and resigns up

himself and all that is dear to him, to God. He is nothing in his own eyes; he pretends to nothing, he lays claim to nothing, on any other title than that of the goodness and bounty of God. Whatever virtues he has, he ascribes them to the grace of God; and the glory and immortality he expects, he expects only as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. And whatever he be in himself, he compares not himself with others, but he proves his own work, that he may have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Nothing but zeal for God, or charity for man, can put him upon the asserting his own service; but when he glories, it is like St. Paul, in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him.

Need I here insist on the fruit of humility? Surely it is conspicuous to every one that thinks at all. Great is the peace and rest of the humble soul here; and great will be his glory hereafter. He who loves not the world, nor the things of it, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," enjoys a perpetual calm and serenity of mind. There is nothing that can breed in him uneasy desires and fears. He is fixed on an immutable and perfect good; and he that now quits all for God, shall one day participate of the fulness of God, and that for ever.

Need I invite and exhort man to humility? Need I guard him against spiritual pride? One would think it were altogether useless to attempt it. Is it possible that the creature should think himself so independent of his Creator, that he should be able to pay him more service than were due to him? Is it possible that man should set such a rate upon his own righteousness, as to think it capable of deserving the utmost rewards that an infinite God can bestow upon him? Is it possible, in a word, that man,—poor, frail, sinful man,—man that can do nothing that is good, but by the assistance of divine grace,—man, depraved and corrupted in his nature, and but a very ill husband of grace;—is it possible, I say, that man should be proud towards God; towards that glorious

and incomprehensible Being, who is the Creator and the LORD, the monarch and patron, the GOD and Father of heaven and earth? But as absurd as this is, universal experience teaches us, that humility, true humility, is a hard lesson; and that very excellent persons are not out of the danger of falling into elation of mind. In order therefore to promote the one, and secure us against the other, I will propose two or three considerations. (1.) There never was mere man yet that did not fall short of his duty. (2.) Man is the creature of GOD, depends upon him, and has received all from him; and therefore let him do the utmost he can, he does no more than his duty. (3.) GOD stands in no need of our service; and it is our own, not his interest we promote by it.

(1.) There never was a mere man yet, that did not fall short of his duty. For proof of this, I will not fly to original corruption, or sins of infirmity. Alas! I need not. The Apostle (*Rom.* i. ii. and iii.) lays the foundation of justification by faith, in the universal defection and depravation of mankind. "They are altogether gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good, no, not one." And what sins he there charges the world with, the catalogue he gives us of them will inform us. But are we no better than they? I answer, The light of the Gospel, and the preventing grace of GOD, have undoubtedly given a great check to the progress of sin in the world: but since no man can be justified but through faith in the blood of JESUS, it is plain that we too must be concluded under sin. And though our sins may not in number equal theirs, yet we ought to remember too, that every sin is the more provoking, the greater the grace is which it resists and despises.

But what need I compare ourselves with the Jew or Gentile? What need I prove by argument and authority, that no man ever yet lived without sin? Whoever yet looked back diligently into his past life, and did not meet with stains and deformities enough? When I consider what legions of sins are ranged under those two banners of the Devil, the filthiness of the flesh, and of the spirit; when

I call to mind envy, discontent, murmuring, distrust, pride, covetousness, ambition, wilfulness, contention, frowardness, passion, dissimulation, falsehood, flattery, and a thousand other sins; and when I reflect upon the propensions of nature, and the almost innumerable temptations to which we are exposed, I must confess I am not at all surprised to think that no flesh can be justified in the sight of God by a covenant of works: and whenever I find any upon a death-bed, as I do some, acquitting themselves from the guilt of any deliberate wickedness, I rather admire their ignorance and partiality, than their innocence. And yet, after all, a good man is not to examine himself only concerning the evil that he has done, but also, concerning the good which he has omitted. He must inquire how far he has fallen short of that purity of heart, which he ought to have come up to: and how far he has been wanting in those duties which a thorough zeal would have pushed him on to. And when he has done this, let him be proud if he can.

(2.) Man is the creature of God, depends upon him, and has received all from him. And therefore, let him do the utmost he can, he does no more than his duty: and, strictly speaking, cannot merit of him. He that will pretend to merit, must be his own master; he must have a right over his own actions; he must be free to dispose of his affections and services as he pleases. For if he be antecedently bound, if he have no right to dispose of himself, or any thing he is possessed of, it is plain such a one cannot merit. And this is the direct case between God and man. God is the great Lord, the proprietor of heaven and earth. He that gives alms, does but restore part of what God lent him: he that takes patiently the loss of goods, or health, or friends, does but give back what he had no right to retain: he was but tenant at will, and had no right to any thing longer than God thought fit to continue it. And in all other instances of duty the case will be still plainer. If he worship God, there is infinite reason that he should; for he depends upon him for his being and preservation. If he love God never so much, God has deserved much more than he can pay him: not

only the enjoyments of life, but even life itself, being derived from him. From this argument it will follow, that it is impossible for a creature to merit of its Creator: angels themselves never could. For might it not be said with as much truth concerning them, as concerning man, "Who made thee to differ? Or what hast thou which thou didst not receive? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou boast as if thou hadst not received it." (1 *Cor.* iv. 7.)

And the same may be concluded concerning ADAM in Paradise. For I demand, had he kept the covenant of GOD, had he done this by divine grace, or by his own strength? If by the grace of GOD, as Divines generally hold, then may we apply the expression of ST. AUGUSTINE to ADAM, as well as to any one now under the dispensation of the Gospel: "That when GOD rewards the works of man, he does only crown in him his own gifts." But suppose he had done this by his own natural strength: were not the endowments of nature, as much the gifts of GOD, as the endowments of grace? The one was natural, the other super-natural gifts: both gifts still, though of a different kind. If it be here objected, If this be so, how comes ST. PAUL to affirm, "to him that worketh is the reward due, not of grace, but of debt?" (*Rom.* iv. 4.)

I answer, First, GOD seems, when he enters into covenant with man, to suspend the natural right which he has over him as his creature; and to transact with him as free, and master of himself: but this is all infinite condescension.

Secondly, It seems unsuitable to the infinite goodness of GOD, to bereave man of the life and happiness he has once conferred upon him, unless he forfeits it by some demerit: "the gifts and calling of GOD are without repentance;" nor can I think how death, which has so much evil in it, could have entered the world, if sin had not entered in it first. In this sense, unsinning obedience gives a kind of right to the continuance of those good things, which are at first the mere effects of divine bounty.

Lastly, a covenant of works being once established, it is plain, that as sin forfeits life, so obedience must give a

right to it: and as the penitent could not be restored, but by an act of grace, so he that commits no sin, would need no pardon. But then, life itself, and an ability to work righteousness, must be owing to grace antecedent to the covenant: and so such a one would have whereof to boast comparatively, with respect to others who fell; but not before God. The sum of all is, man has nothing to render to God, but what he has received from him: and therefore, can offer him nothing but his own, which is no good foundation for merit. But suppose him absolute master of himself; suppose him holding all things independent of God; can the service of a few days merit immortality, angelical perfection, add a crown? He must be made up of vanity and presumption, that dares affirm this.

(3.) God stands in no need of our service; and it is our own, not his interest we promote by it. The foundation of merit amongst men is impotence and want: the Prince wants the service and tribute of the subject; the subject the protection of the Prince: the rich needs the ministry and the labour of the poor; the poor, support and maintenance from the rich. And it is thus in imaginary, as well as real wants. The luxury and pleasure of one must be provided for and supported by the care and vigilance of others: and the pomp and the pride of one part of the world cannot subsist, but on the servitude of the other. In these cases, therefore, mutual wants create mutual rights, and mutual merit.

But this is not the case between God and man. God is not subject to any wants or necessities: nor is his glory or happiness capable of diminution or increase. He is a monarch, that needs no tribute to support his grandeur, nor any strength but his own, to guard his throne. If we revolt, or rebel, we cannot injure him: if we be loyal and obedient, we cannot profit him. He has all fulness, all perfection in himself: he is an Almighty and All-sufficient God. But on the quite contrary, though God have no wants, we have many; and though his majesty and felicity be subject to no vicissitude, we are subject to many. Our service to God, therefore, is our own interest; and our

obedience is designed to procure our own advantage. We need, we daily need his support and protection; we depend entirely on his favour and patronage: "In him we live, and move, and have our being;" and from him, as from an inexhaustible fountain, we derive all the streams of good, by which we are refreshed and improved. To know and love him is our wisdom; to depend upon him, our happiness and security; to serve and worship him, our perfection and liberty; to enjoy him will be our heaven; and those glimpses of his presence, which we are vouchsafed through the SPIRIT in this life, are the pledges and foretaste of it.

This is the constant voice of Scripture: "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights." (*James* i. 17.) If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto GOD thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." (*Psa.* l. 12, 13.)

SECTION III.

OF THE IMPEDIMENTS OF PERFECTION.

THOUGH I have been all along removing the obstacles of Perfection; yet I easily foresaw there might be some which would not fall under the foregoing heads: for these, therefore, I reserved this place; these are five.

1. Some seem to have entertained such a notion of religion, as if moderation here were as necessary, as any where else. They look upon zeal as an excess of righteousness; and can be well enough content to want degrees of glory, if they can but save their souls. To which end they can see no necessity of Perfection. Now I would

beseech such seriously to lay to heart, that salvation and damnation are things of no common importance: and therefore it highly concerns them not to be mistaken in the notion they form of religion. For the nature of things will not be altered by their fancies; nor will God be mocked or imposed on. If we will deal sincerely with ourselves, as it certainly behoves us to do, we must frame our idea of religion, not from the opinions, manners, or fashions of the world, but from the Scriptures. And we must not interpret these by our own inclinations; but we must judge of the duties they prescribe, by those descriptions of them, by those properties and effects, which we find there. We must weigh the design and end of religion, which is to pronounce the glory of God, and the good of man, and to raise us above the world and the body; and see how our model of religion suits with it.

And if after we have done this, we are not fully satisfied in the true bounds which part vice and virtue, it cannot but be safest for us to err on the right hand. We ought always to remember too, that the repeated exhortations in Scripture to diligence, and that the most earnest and indefatigable to vigilance, to fear and trembling, to patience, to steadfastness, are utterly inconsistent with an easy, lazy, genteel religion; that the life of Jesus is the fairest and fullest comment on his doctrine; and that we never are to follow the examples of a corrupt world, but of the best men, and the best ages. This one thing alone will convince us, what endeavours, what virtues, are necessary to gain an incorruptible crown.

See with what eagerness the disciples of Jesus pressed towards the mark! See with what courage, nay, joy, they "took up their cross and followed him!" How generous were their alms! So that the riches of their liberality were conspicuous in the very depth of their poverty. What plainness and singleness of heart; what grace and warmth, what peace and joy, showed itself in their conversation! What modesty, what humility, in their garb, deportment, and the whole train of life! How frequent, how fervent,

and how long too, were their prayers and retirements! In one word, the spirit and genius of a disciple of CHRIST, discovered itself in all they said and did; and the virtues of their lives did as evidently distinguish a Christian, from a Jew or Pagan, as their faith. How lovely was religion then! How full its joy, how strong its confidence! Then did Christians truly overcome the world; then did they live above; then was the cross of CHRIST more delightful than the ease or honour, the pride or pleasure, of a sinful life; then did they truly, through the SPIRIT, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Let us now compare our lives with theirs, and then sit down content with poor and beggarly entertainments if we can. Let us put our virtues in the scale against theirs; and, if we have any modesty, the inequality will put us out of countenance: we shall blush at our vanity, and shall not have the confidence to expect the same crown, the same kingdom, with them. But as too lax a notion of religion will be apt to beget too much indifference; so will it be said, too exalted a one is apt to beget despair; which is a second and no less obstacle of Perfection.

2. Many there are who, forming their judgment upon the defects of good men, conceive Perfection to be a mere imaginary notion. They believe, indeed, that, considering how apt man is to fall short of his duty, the rule prescribed him should be exact, and that he should be frequently pressed and exhorted to Perfection; but that the thing itself is too difficult for man to attain. But to this objection I must oppose these few things:—

(1.) The beginning of virtue is the most difficult part of it: the nearer we approach to perfection, the easier, as well as pleasanter, is religion. (2.) The avoiding the difficulties of religion does but plunge us into worse. We are necessarily under this dilemma: if we will attain peace and tranquillity of mind, we must mortify the appetites of the body: If on the other hand, we will gratify the appetites of the body, we cannot do so without offering much violence to the mind. And if this be so; if such be the opposition between the soul and the body, that there is no way to true

peace and pleasure, but by the mortification of the one or the other, then it will be easy to resolve what we are to do. For those appeals which atheists themselves make to reason, proclaim the soul of man to be the nobler part of him. Besides, the soul is the more vital, the more tender, and sensible part of us: and consequently, the affliction of this must render us far more miserable than any hardships virtue can impose upon the body. (3.) Whatever be the difficulties of virtue, they will soon vanish if we often call to mind, that peace and joy are the fruit of virtue; but shame and remorse, of sin: that no man ever yet repented of his resisting and conquering his lusts; but no man ever yet did not repent of following them, unless he died as much a brute as he lived: that heaven is a cheap purchase, whatever it cost us; but the pleasure of sin is a very dear one, how easily soever we come by it: and, finally, that we are not our own masters: there is a God to whom we stand accountable for our actions: and consequently, whether we will or will not, we must either undergo the hardship and discipline of virtue, or the eternal plagues and punishments of sin. Lastly, the truth is, this opinion of the impossibility of perfection, has both been begotten and cherished by wild schemes of it. But I have here recommended to the world, no fantastic or enthusiastic Perfection: I have advanced no heights of virtue, but what many at this day actually feel in themselves: none, I am sure, but what the followers of the blessed Jesus actually attained and practised. "Be ye followers of us," said the Apostles, "as we are of Christ." Their lives were as bright a rule as their doctrine: and by their own actions they demonstrated the power of the faith they taught. They did not, like the Scribes and Pharisees, "bind heavy burdens upon others, and not move them with their finger;" they did not, like Aristotle, magnify temperance and modesty at the palaces and carnivals of Princes; nor commend the pleasure of wisdom in the gardens of Epicurus: but they lived as they taught, unspotted by the pleasures, unbroken by the troubles of the world; modest, serene, equal, and heavenly-minded, in honour or dishonour, want or abundance;

liberty or prison, life or death. Let us then no longer object or dispute, but, with faith and patience, be followers of those who have inherited the promises. "Being encompassed with a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto JESUS, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of GOD."

3. There are others who look on this doctrine of Perfection, as a design against the pleasures of mankind. What, says such a one, shall I let go my present pleasure out of my hands, to hunt after I know not what? Shall I quit pleasures that are obvious, for such as have no being, it may be, but in speculation? Or, at least, are never to be enjoyed by any, but some few favourites of GOD? Pleasures that have matter and substance in them, for such as I can no more grasp than I can dreams and visions? But this, I answer, this pretty talk, is all but stupid ignorance, and gross mistake. For, (1.) As to innocent and virtuous pleasure, no man need part with it. I endeavour not to deprive man of this, but to refine and purify it. And he that prefers either silly or vicious pleasure before religion, is wretchedly mistaken. For, (2.) Perfect religion is full of pleasure. Had we but once arrived at true purity of heart, what could be so full of pleasure as religion? What can be more delightful to a grateful soul, than blessing and praising GOD; hallelujahs to a soul snatched from the brink of destruction into the bosom of its master? What can be more transporting than the tendernesses of a holy contrition, made up, like MARY MAGDALENE's, of sorrow and love, humility and glory, confusion and confidence, shame and joy? What can be more transporting than love, the love of a Christian, when he is all love, "as GOD is love;" when he "desires nothing in heaven nor on earth, but GOD;" when "all things are dung and dross to him in comparison of JESUS?" (3.) If the pleasures of the world be more transporting than those of

religion, it is because we have not faith. Lastly, What is insinuated in the objection, that the pleasures of the world are more numerous, or obvious, than those of religion, is altogether a false and groundless fancy. In every place, and in every state, the pleasures of virtue wait upon the perfect man. They depend not, like those of the body, on a thousand things that are not in our power, but only on God, and our own integrity. These obstacles being removed, and the mind fully convinced of the happiness that results from a state of perfection, and of his obligation to surmount the difficulties which obstruct his way to it, there seems to be nothing now left to disappoint him of it, but too much fondness for the world, or too much indulgence to the body; which I am next, though but briefly, to consider.

4. There is a love of the world, which if it do not utterly destroy our hope of eternal salvation, yet it abates our vigour, hinders our perfection, and bereaves us of many degrees of pleasure at present, and glory hereafter. The indications of this, are too much concern for the pomp and show of life; too much exactness in the modes and customs of it; too quick a sense of reputation, pre-eminence, and praise; too much industry to grow rich, to "add house to house, and land to land;" too brisk a relish of the pleasures of the world; too great a gaiety of mind upon success; too much dejection upon disappointments; too much care and too much diligence; an encumbering and embroiling one's self too far in worldly affairs; too much levity, too much ease. These, I say, are the symptoms of a mind still tainted with a love of the world, though perhaps not to death. However, it will be enough to check the vigour, and dilute the relish of the mind. Now the only way to overcome this defect, and to captivate the mind entirely to the service of religion, is to consider frequently and seriously, the rewards of perfection, the pleasure that will attend it in another life. They who duly think, how soon the fashion, the pomp and grandeur of this world passes away, and how much better their heavenly country is than their earthly, will neither weep nor

rejoice with too much passion; neither buy nor possess with too much application of mind. In one word, he that so thinks of that day, wherein "CHRIST, who is our life, shall appear, and we also appear with him in glory," that he comes to love and long for it, will have no great taste for the honours, or the pleasures, or the interests of life; nor will he be slothful or remiss, but "fervent in spirit, serving the LORD;" whatever degrees of affection he had for any thing of that nature, they will all vanish; he will have no emulation but for good works, no ambition but for glory; I mean that which is eternal. In the pursuit of this will he lay out the strength and vigour of his mind, for this he will retrench his profit, for this he will deny his pleasure, for this he will be content to be obscure, mean, and laborious; for if the world be once crucified to him, he will the more easily bear the being crucified to it.

5. After all, there is an infirmity of the flesh, against which, if we do not struggle heartily, we shall miscarry. "The spirit is willing," said our SAVIOUR, "but the flesh is weak." Without much care, and much watchfulness, the vigour of our minds will be relaxed, the force of our spirits will flag and droop, and we shall soon lose the relish of religion. The effectual remedies against this frailty and fickleness of our nature are two: First, Godly Fear: and this, the purity and presence of GOD, the strictness and impartiality of a judgment to come, the loss of an eternal crown, the terrors of eternal punishment, the number and strength of temptations, and the conscience of our own weakness, may work in us. Let us then, not only begin, but also "perfect holiness in the fear of GOD." "Blessed is he that feareth always." Secondly, The steadfastness of hope; of hope that waits and longs for the coming of our LORD. This will invite us often to take a view of Canaan; this will fill the mind often with the beauties and the glories of eternity; this will often call to our thoughts the security, the rest, the transports of another world, the love of GOD and of JESUS, incorruptible crowns, the hallelujahs of angels, the shouts of victory, the

fruit of the tree of life, the streams that water the paradise of God. And every such object will chide us out of our weakness and cowardice; every such thought will upbraid us out of our laziness and negligence; we shall hear always sounding in our ears the words of Jesus to his disciples: "What! can ye not watch with me one hour?" and do you expect to reign with me for ever! Or those to the Church of Laodicea: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne; as I have overcome, and am sat down with my Father in his throne."

And now, Reader, if you find I have done you any service, the return I beg from you is, that you will offer praise and thanks unto God; and next, whenever you are in the vigour of the Spirit, and the ardours of faith and love, before God in prayer, put up these, or the like petitions for me, which I now offer up for myself.

"O my God, and my Father, increase the knowledge of thy word, and the grace of thy Spirit in me. Enable me to perfect holiness in thy fear, and to hold fast the steadfastness of my hope unto the end. Pardon all the sins and errors of my life; and accept of my imperfect services through Jesus Christ. And because (though after all we can do, we are unprofitable servants) thy infinite bounty will yet recompense our sincere endeavours to promote thy glory; let me find my reward from thee; or, rather, do thou thyself vouchsafe to be my reward. I should have ever thought myself unworthy to have put up this petition to thee, O thou glorious and incomprehensible Majesty, had not thine own goodness, thine own Spirit, kindled this ambition in me. Behold, what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God! These are the words of thy servant, St. John; and now therefore my soul can never be at rest, until I awake after thy likeness. I can never be satisfied, until I behold thy glory: which vouchsafe me, I beseech thee, by thy mercy and thy faithfulness; by the sufferings and intercession of thy dearly beloved Son."

A SERMON

BY

DR. ANNESLEY

A SERMON.

THE ADHERENT VANITY OF EVERY CONDITION IS MOST EFFECTUALLY ABATED BY SERIOUS GODLINESS.

ECCLES. vi. 11, 12.

Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? For who knoweth what is good for man in this life.

SOLOMON, upon the review of his life, the honours, pleasures, wealth, and wisdom he had so abundantly enjoyed; the many observations of things natural, moral, domestical, civil, sensual, and divine; the curious, critical inquiries he had made after true happiness, and what contribution all things under the sun afford towards it; at last demonstrates the utter insufficiency of all things *merely* worldly to make us happy. In the first six chapters of this book, he shows wherein happiness doth *not* consist, confuting the opinions of all sorts of irreligious persons; and in the last six chapters, he shows wherein it *doth* consist, rectifying the judgment of all those that seek after it.

In this chapter is continued a further description of the vanity of riches, and honours, and children, and long life. And in these last two verses he takes up a general conclusion of all the preceding vanities: "Since there are so many things that increase vanity, what is man the better" for them all? You will all grant, that SOLOMON was the fittest man that ever lived to extract what was possible to be extracted out of worldly vanities; and he doth, upon both his own impartial scrutiny, and the infallible guidance of the HOLY GHOST, give you the total sum at the head of the account: "Vanity of vanities; vanity of vanities;"

(*Eccles.* i. 2;) *i. e.*, extreme vanity. This he demonstrates by an induction of particulars: but to dispel as much as it is possible, that vexation of spirit that steams from such multiplication of vanity, he doth upon his own experience, and the HOLY GHOST's direction, commend this prescription at the foot of the account, *viz.*, Serious Godliness: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Fear GOD, and keep his commandments." (*Eccles.* xii. 13.) And do it now, as you will wish you had done it when you come to judgment. For the discussing my question, I shall lay down these propositions:—

I. Every condition is clogged with vanity. All things that men generally set their hearts upon are vanity: vanity is that which seemeth to be something, and is nothing; it is a shadow, empty, without substance, unprofitable, without fruit; if you put any confidence in it, it will not only deceive you, but hurt you; we are loath to think so, more loath to believe it; every one hath a kind of unaccountable confidence about the things of this world, that if they might but be their own carvers, they doubt not of an earthly happiness; whereas they cannot but be mistaken. For,

1. GOD never made the world, nor any condition in it, to be a place of rest and satisfaction: and since sin hath so far marred the beauty of the universe, there is a judicial vanity upon the whole creation. (*Rom.* viii. 20.) Now men must needs fail of their expectation, when they look for that in the creature, that GOD never placed there; as if we could mend the works of Creation and Providence. I confess, it is ordinary for persons to attempt it, and to glory in their achievements: for example; GOD made man only to have the use of speech; but how do persons please themselves with teaching birds to speak some few words, which they cannot possibly furnish them with reason to make use of; and yet they are delighted to hear them speak what they understand not, more than to hear the most edifying discourse of a serious Christian. How have others cried up some chemical extracts to make men immortal, when their

own life being cut off in the midst of their days unanswerably confuted their ill-grounded boasting! How do others prate of governing the world by stars, as if they would ease GOD of the trouble of it, while they know not one star of a thousand, nor what is their influence! Just as the old world would fence themselves against another deluge, when GOD did nothing to defeat them, but let them forget their mother-tongue, and so speak gibberish one to another, that they might run up and down like persons distracted, till they could find out any to understand them, and run away from the rest as savages. So true is that of the Psalmist: "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain show." (*Psa.* xxxix. 5, 6.)

2. We know but very little of the true nature of things, nor of ourselves, nor of our temptations, nor of our interests; and therefore, we cannot find out that good that is possible to be had in the creature. There must be some distinct knowledge of these things, or we can never find out what is best for us. For example: Let one that is utterly unacquainted with the *Materia Medica*, go into a physic-garden, where are all manner of simples, and thence into an Apothecary's shop, where are all manner of drugs and compounds with which medicines are made for all diseases; he knows not what to do with them; his disease may be to him incurable, though surrounded with remedies: "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow." (*Job* viii. 9.)

3. That little that we do know of any thing, we come so droppingly to the knowledge of it, that ere we can lay things together, so as to compare them, and separate them, and sort them, and compound them, so as to make a judgment; either things themselves, or our circumstances are altered, or upon alteration there is such a mutability both in persons, and things, and times, that it is as if one would undertake to gather at the same time primroses and violets, and roses and gilliflowers, to make a nosegay, when some of these are withered, ere the others be budded. When

we call in the help of wiser heads than our own, there is nothing more ordinary than when wise men give good advice, those they give it to want wisdom to receive it, suspecting some over-reaching design, and therefore dare not trust them, and who can say how soon? "his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." (*Psa.* cxlvi. 4.) The Prince's thoughts perish, and the thoughts of him that trusted in him perish.

II. All things on this side religion, whereby men endeavour to get above vanity, increase it. The multiplication of ciphers amounts to nothing. "All nations," (the persons and things of all nations,) "before him," (compared with God, yea, and in the esteem of the godly,) "are as nothing, and they are counted to him," (and so far as they are godly, to them,) "less than nothing and vanity." (*Isa.* xl. 17.) Happiness is that which every one aims at: now that which can make us happy, must supply all the wants, satisfy all the desires, fill all the capacities of the soul, and, above all these, be of equal duration and continuance with the soul: now none of all these are to be found in any thing on this side serious godliness, but the quite contrary, and therefore every thing that pretends to it, doth but increase vanity. Can any thing of the world supply the soul with grace? Satisfy the desires in so much as any one thing? Or fill any one faculty of the soul with sstisfaction? Can the world fill the mind with heavenly light? Or the will with heavenly love? Or the conscience with that "peace that passeth understanding?"

III. It is only serious godliness that can really abate the vanity that cleaves to every condition. Other things may, like topical medicines, (as plasters to the wrists,) repel the disease, but while they do not remove the cause, they cannot cure it. We may exchange one vanity for another, and the novelty may please us for a while; but when that is over, the vexation returns. It is true, God alone can cure us; but whatever method he takes to do it, whether of indulgence or severity, it is always by framing the heart

and life to serious godliness; to hate sin, and love holiness, to live a life of faith, in dependance upon GOD, and resignation to him; to live above the transports of hopes and fears, about things temporal; and to grow up in the graces and comforts of the HOLY GHOST, for things eternal: in short, to be blessings to the world while we live, and to be blessed with GOD when we die: this is the business and fruit of serious godliness; and this alone is that which at present can effectually abate the vexatious vanities which every condition swarms with.

The wisest man in the world cannot tell what is good for man in this life. No man can tell what worldly condition is better for him, than that which is his present condition. Among the variety of things under the sun, which the heart of man is apt to be drawn out unto, neither he himself, nor any other for him, is able certainly to inform him, which of all those it is best for him to enjoy; whether it be better for him to be rich or poor, high or low, in private retirement, or in public service. Some men's greatness hath undone them; they had never been so wicked, had not their wealth been fuel for their lusts: AHITHOPHEL might have lived longer, had he not been so wise. No man can tell, whether that he snatcheth at with most greediness, have not a hook under the bait, or be not tempered with poison. Turn your eyes to those that are most accomplished for human wisdom and knowledge. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools;" (*Rom.* i. 22;) drowning their some way right (though every way short) notions they had of GOD, in unreasonable idolatry. You will say, these were but heathens, and therefore no marvel if "they did not like to retain GOD in their knowledge;" it is better with Christians: look upon Christians, and those of the highest notions and form of godliness, on this side the power of it: "While they speak great swelling words of vanity, (about that they call Christian liberty,) they themselves are the servants of corruption; and it had been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness, than not to have walked

in it." (2 *Pet.* ii. 18, 19, 21.) Whatever persons may hope or fancy, "if they fear not God, nor obey the voice of his servants," though they are not at present "in trouble like other men, but can speak loftily, setting their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth; though they compass themselves about with some sparks or blaze of comfort, yet this shall they have of God's hand, they shall lie down in sorrow."

Now thus when every one is rummaging among heaps of vanities, that pretend to be good for man upon earth, will you accept of a guide to direct you to what cannot but be good for you, and that in every condition; that shall not only abate the vanity, but discover the excellency that is in every condition? This will be most distinctly done by an induction of particulars, and setting contrary conditions one against another, what may be said for and against each condition, and how serious godliness makes every condition amiable.

I. Who knows whether riches or poverty be best for man in this life?

1. For riches, I need say but little, because most persons are ready to say too much: they seem to be the cause without which there cannot be so much as the fancying an earthly happiness. What pleasure or esteem can worldlings have without an estate to feed them? The riches of the mind are too spiritual to be seen by carnal eyes.

But when you consider these, or such like inseparable attendants on a great estate, you will see the desirableness to shrink, as the vanity swells. Some run out the greatest part of their life, before they reach what they can call an estate: (to say nothing of those that die the world's martyrs, in the pursuit of that they never attain:) those that have got an estate, or have an estate left them, have ordinarily as great care and difficulty in keeping, as they or others have had in the getting of it. O the tiresome days, the restless nights, the broken sleeps, the wild passions, the fretting disquiet of those troublesome occur-

rences which they cannot possibly prevent! And when you come to speak of an enjoyment, to speak strictly they have nothing worth the name of an enjoyment, which they may not have as well (if not better) without what they call an estate: yet though it is thus while they have it, they are not able to bear the parting with it; the very thoughts of losing, puts them into heart-convulsions. So that an estate can neither be got, nor kept, nor lost, without manifold vanity and vexation of spirit. Alas! what remedy?

Serious godliness carries a person above all heart-breaking vexations of getting the world; for his thoughts are filled about getting something better; about keeping, for comparatively he cares for keeping nothing but "faith and a good conscience;" about enjoying, for he counts nothing on this side of God worth the name of an enjoyment; and as for parting with the world, he impartially considers that he cannot have possession of his heavenly inheritance, till the world and he shake hands for ever: so that there is no room without the regret of grace, to edge in so much as a distracting thought about worldly vanities. Faith treads the world under foot, and alone makes it know its place. When riches capacitate a godly person for those offices and employments from which the poor are excluded, the power of godliness not only teacheth, but enforceth them to employ all their capacities for God, and to do good; they know they are God's stewards, to whom they must be accountable, God's almoners, and God makes the poor their creditors, to whom they must pay alms as debtors. In short, it is only the holy person that receives this for a maxim: 'That a worldly estate is no other way desirable, but to capacitate him to do that good with it which he cannot do without it.' This for riches. What may be said for poverty?

2. Poverty is so desirable to many thinking persons, that they have, not only in words, for discourse' sake, but in practice, for happiness' sake, preferred it before the greatest wealth and grandeur in the world; and this hath

been done not only by melancholy persons, but by men of great name for wisdom and learning, and that upon great deliberation, upon weighing of circumstances, and trying experiments: and further yet, not only bookish men, to whom beloved retirement is much the same, whether they are rich or poor; but those that have worn an imperial diadem, that have commanded victorious armies, swayed the sceptres of flourishing kingdoms, and some of the *then* greatest empires of the world: and some of these, even after their self-deposition, have been importuned to re-accept their dominion, but have refused it. What greater demonstration can you expect of the preference of poverty before riches, and to be a cipher rather than to bear the greatest figure in the world? All this is true:—

But, alas! the world is full of the miserable effects of poverty: the poor have great temptations pressing them to the use of unlawful means for their livelihood; they are generally despised; and contempt is one of the things most intolerable to human nature; and, which is yet more, they are under an impossibility of being so serviceable as otherwise they might be. "There was a poor wise man, who by his wisdom delivered the city, yet no man remembered that same poor man.—The poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard." (*Eccles.* ix. 15, 16.) As to all the instances that have been, or can be given of persons quitting troublesome riches for a quiet poverty; in those great men that have done it, it hath plainly proceeded from vexation of mind: and as for the several orders of friars, that have vowed poverty, and renounced property, this is to be reckoned among the damnable cheats of Romish apostasy, whose religion is made up of "lying wonders, and doctrines of devils;" their prodigious wealth, and abominable luxury, sufficiently confuting their pretence of poverty: what help then in this case?

Serious godliness sweetens all the bitterness of a poor condition, bears up the heart under all those difficulties that were otherwise intolerable; God makes up their

worldly poverty with riches of grace. It is the "poor that receive the Gospel," and the blessings of it; it is the poor that are best contented with their condition; and without content, every condition is uneasy: what though the poor are excluded from serving offices, they are also excluded from the snares that attend them. At first, when Christianity was managed without artifice, when the disciples of CHRIST used a compassionate levelling, it is said, "great grace was upon them all;" they were greatly in GOD's favour, they were greatly enriched with the graces of the HOLY GHOST, and they were greatly honoured by those that did but gaze at them. You may easily observe, that very few grow better by growing rich; but it is ordinary for GOD to advance holiness by worldly abasement: and who live more in heaven, who have more satisfying communion with GOD, than those that are mean in the world? In short, to be poor and wicked, is to be in some respect more miserable than devils; to be poor and good, is to be conformable to our blessed JESUS, and his chief Apostle, "who was poor, yet made many rich, who had nothing, yet possessed all things."

Thus I have endeavoured to set forth the vanity of the first pair, riches and poverty, and how serious godliness wears off the vanity that cleaves to them. I need not be so large in the rest.

II. Who knows whether a life of pleasure, or a life of sorrow, be best for him? Vain persons will presently determine, without weighing one against the other; yet it is only the practical Christian that can improve either.

1. For pleasure. To live without pleasure, seems, in some respect, worse than to be buried alive: most prefer a short life and a merry, before a long life and a sad; and those that are not sensualists, yet would fain have their lives comfortable in all the circumstances of it, in every change of life, from the birth to the grave, in every new employment, relation, preferment, it is the universal salutation,

to wish them joy: so that a life of comfort is the desire of mankind.

But when we consider the cravings of a carnal mind, we find it is never to be satisfied; and when most satisfied, is soonest cloyed: most of his pleasures are the same with brutes; only they have the better relish of them in the use, and no after-claps when past; they eat, and drink, and frisk, and sleep, without any disturbing cares, or subsequent reflections. And for those pleasures that are above sensual, I say no more at present but this, The better the objects of our delights are on this side God, and the pleasing of God, the more our carnal wisdom is fortified against the true method of real happiness. Upon the whole matter then, pleasures are a kind of dangerous fruit, which, if not well corrected, are poison, and such as we can scarce taste, without danger of surfeiting.

But what doth the power of godliness in this case? What? It will not meddle with unlawful pleasures, though never so tempting; it will strain out the dregs of lawful pleasures, that they may not be unwholesome; it will moderate the use of unquestionable delights, that they may not be inordinate; and it will teach us to be thankful to God, for making our pilgrimage any way comfortable: it will raise the soul to prepare and long for heaven, where are pure and full joys, and that for evermore. This for a life of pleasure.

2. What shall we say to a life of sorrow and pensiveness? To live a recluse from the flattering vanities of this world? And why not? "I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it? What music is the flighty mirth of the world to a serious soul? Those that the frothy part of the world count melancholy, the sober part of the world count wise.

But yet to give way to sorrow, disspirits us for any considerable service either to God or man; it unfits us for every thing: "the sorrow of the world worketh death." Such are burdensome to themselves and others; they are

weary of themselves, and every body else is weary of them. If a melancholy temper be not checked, it will lead to hard thoughts of GOD, to blasphemy, to infidelity. In short, a life of sorrow is a degree of hell upon earth, and such persons torment themselves before their time. But what can religion do in this case?

Serious godliness bears up the soul from sinking under worldly sorrow. Religion will teach us how to turn "worldly sorrow into sorrow for sin;" and "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of." It is serious godliness that teacheth how to mourn for the sins and dangers of the times we live in. And pray take special notice, that this is our present great duty; a duty that every Christian not only ought, but may perform, and none can hinder it. And O that this duty were frequently thought of, and more universally practised! The land is even drowned in pleasure; the conscientious performance of this duty would be a token for good, for the abating of the deluge: and though the times should be such that their own sorrows should be increased, yet then, even then, how cheering would the forethoughts of heaven be! How may they chide their hearts out of their own dejections! "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in GOD, for I shall yet," yea, and ever, "praise him;" (*Psa.* xlii. 11;) who now is, and for ever will be, the "health of my countenance, and my GOD;" because thou art 'my GOD, my own GOD; my exceeding great (not only rewarder, but) reward.' And thus much for the second pair, pleasure and sorrow.

III. Who knows whether honour or obscurity be best for man in this life? At first sight it seems easy to determine, but when both sides are heard, it will seem otherwise.

For honour: Every one would be esteemed and preferred before others: disgrace and infamy seem intolerable. When JOB had done contesting with his censorious friends, he is greatly concerned about the contempt poured upon

him, though but by infamous enemies. (*Job* xxix. and xxx.) Matter of honour and reputation is a tender point: men of what rank soever, deeply resent the being slighted.

But for honour, consider how hazardous it is to get, and when it is got, how slippery to hold: then add the falling from it, that is worse than if they never had it. And yet there is worse than all this, the violent temptation to pride, oppression, and impertinency; all which nothing but grace can prevent or cure. And for that lesser reputation and esteem, which comes short of the name of honour, it is troublesome to carry it, like a Venice glass, that the least touch may not crack it. What can religion do in this case?

Serious godliness will never be beholden to sin nor SATAN, for worldly honour. It values it no more than as it adds to a capacity of honouring GOD.

He that is truly religious, is neither so fond of honour, as to sin to get or keep it, neither doth he count himself undone to lose it; he values the privilege of adoption, beyond all the honours in the world: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable." (*Isai.* xliii. 4.) He is graciously ambitious of doing GOD and CHRIST some service in the world; he appears for GOD, to discountenance, prevent, or remove sin; to encourage, promote, and advance holiness: this, GOD in condescension, accounts an honouring of him, and hath accordingly promised, "Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." (1 *Sam.* ii. 30.) This for honour. Some prefer

Obscurity in the world; to live retired and reserved out of the vexatious hurry of a captious world; to keep in the shade out of the scorching sun; to steal out of the world, without any noise or notice. O how sweet is this to many wise and judicious persons, that are every way above what is vulgar!

But how do these in running from one vanity fall into another! They debase the human nature, and the rea-

sonable soul, while they industriously conceal themselves from being serviceable; they are guilty of a civil self-excommunication, while they shut out themselves from those employments wherein they might be useful.

God hath made every thing for use; to rust in a corner for avoiding of trouble, can proceed from nothing but uncharitable pride, or wilful ignorance: from base pride,—you think the neighbourhood not good enough to be blessed with your endowments; or slothful weakness,—which you are conscious of, but will not take pains to cure: in short, to choose retirement for love of ease, is an envious kind of life, and therefore far from happiness: but what can religion do in this case?

One that is serious in religion, can best manage an obscure station, whether it be forced or voluntary. It is only he that is crucified to the world, that can contemn the world's contempt. He that hath learned the great lesson of self-denial, in the school of Christ, is well pleased with his secrecy for communion with God: in short, his religion keepeth him from being fond, or weary, of worldly obscurity.

Thus I have run over the beloved Disciple's summary of all worldly vanities, and their contraries, and how godliness in the power of it, corrects the vanity, and extracts the excellency of all those. But let these pass, and let us examine things of a higher nature, for which more may be pleaded; and yet here you will find, that without serious godliness their vanity is intolerable.

IV Who knows whether wisdom, and learning, and the endowments of the mind, be best for a man; or to be without these, and their troublesome attendants? Now we come to a close and inward search.

1. For wisdom, and learning, and intellectual accomplishments, are of such incomparable excellency, that he is scarce worthy the name of a man that slights them: "Wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness." (*Eccles.* ii. 13.) This is Solomon's sentence, even then, when he is sentencing all worldly vanities.

Yet the wiser men are, the more they are exempted from the ordinary comforts of human society; they meet with but few that they can converse with to any satisfaction; the more learning they have, the more sense of, and sorrow for, their ignorance. "In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." (*Eccles.* i. 18.)

Hence it is, they affect an uncomfortable solitude, that they are fain to force themselves into a sociable compliance, where they seldom meet with any thing but what they slight or pity; they are ordinarily the objects of their own grief, and of others' envy. There is nothing more ordinary than for persons of lower accomplishments, to carry their designs, and attain their ends, before them. While they are pursuing a notion, others catch preferment; and while they are enriching their minds, others are filling their coffers.

What doth serious godliness in this case? It is this alone that makes wise men truly wise, and learned men truly learned. Unsanctified parts and learning may, in some respects, be reckoned among CHRIST's worst enemies; they furnish a man with cavils (which he calls unanswerable reasons) against the simplicity of the Gospel; they fill him with those prejudices, that nothing but grace can remove: "The carnal mind is enmity against GOD: for it is not subject to the law of GOD, neither indeed can it be:" (*Rom.* viii. 7:) but where grace is graffed upon good natural parts, there wisdom and learning are excellently beneficial; it is they that have the clearest understanding of Gospel mysteries; it is these who are the most substantial, grounded Christians; these are the only Christians who are able to defend the truth, and convince gainsayers; it is their lips that can "utter knowledge clearly:" (*Job* xxxiii. 3:) it is they that can best speak or write, to "edification, and exhortation, and comfort." (1 *Cor.* xiv. 3.)

2. What then can be said for the want of parts and learning? Those that have them not do not trouble themselves nor others about the difficulties of knowledge,

but take those things to be truth, that are commonly received, and are more satisfied, than those that are more inquisitive: besides, these better suit the generality they live among: they are wise enough to get estates, and they are esteemed in the world, and what care they? They do not impair their health by study, nor perplex themselves with great matters.

But, alas! what use do these make of their souls? A lazy neglect of improving of parts, and of getting learning, who is able to express the sin and mischief of it? To be contented to live and die, but one remove from a brute, who can express the baseness of it? Ignorance may well be the mother of their devotion whose religion is a cheat. But the Scripture tells us, "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul:" (*Prov.* ii. 10:) and without it neither heart nor state can be good.

But what doth serious godliness in this case? These, though they have not any considerable parts and learning, yet they bewail their ignorance, and are willing to learn: They get a savoury knowledge of necessary truths, and they increase the knowledge of them by practice: though they are fools to the world, they are wise for their souls, and wise for eternity; and this is the best wisdom: they have learned CHRIST, which is the best learning.

This you shall find, as to those great doctrines of Christianity, which learned men bandy to and fro in doubtful disputation: serious Christians, of but ordinary knowledge, are so far satisfied, as to admire the grace of GOD in CHRIST, and press after such holiness of life, as adorns their profession, and muzzles revilers. So that by what hath been said, you may plainly see, that both the excellency and deficiency of intellectual endowments, are best managed by serious godliness; without which, whatever can be said for either, is not worth the mentioning.

Serious godliness, in the lowest degree of it, expels Atheism. I grant, those that are eminently godly, may be

tempted to Atheism; but they reckon these among SATAN's fiery darts, and accordingly set themselves presently to quench them; which though they cannot so easily do, as they imagine, who have not experience of such temptations, yet there is this palpable difference between them and Atheists, *viz.*, The Atheist is inquisitive for arguments to promote his atheism; the tempted Christian as inquisitive for arguments and grace to destroy it: those that are seriously godly, do not only seek a perfect cure of their own (in part) mortified Atheism, but mournfully bewail the insolent Atheism of the age they live in.

If it be (as it is) "as a sword in their bones" for their enemies to reproach them, while they say daily unto them, "Where is your GOD?" (*Psa.* xlii. 10.) If it (as it were) break their bones, to have their interest in GOD, and GOD's peculiar care of them, so much as questioned; it must needs be as a sword to their heart, (killing wound,) to hear the fear of GOD ridiculed, and the being of GOD denied.

Certainly as grace is heightened, a gracious personis next to being overwhelmed: though GOD hath an evidence of his Deity that lies lieger in the worst of his enemies, yet upon the miracles of mercy he works for and in his own people, GOD may say to them, "They are his witnesses, that he is GOD." (*Isai.* xliii. 12.) And the more eminent any one is in grace, the more experimental witness he is that the LORD is GOD. This may not only be sufficient for the instances already given; but be sufficiently instructive, what to do in all other cases that might be named.

I shall but just name a few more particulars.

1. Who knows whether a full or a vacant employment be best for him? A full employment is that which every one that hath dealings in the world gapes after. This leaves no room for melancholy nor idleness, each of which are unspeakably mischievous.

But those that live in a hurry of business, neither enjoy GOD nor themselves: it is tiresome both to body and mind. The truth is, the desire of it is ordinarily naught

in the progress,—it neglects GOD and godliness; and naught in the close,—it ends at best in disappointment.

But here religion gives relief: for a heavenly-minded person to be full of worldly business, it is he alone that minds the main business of his life, to work out his salvation; it is he alone that both will and can keep the world from justling out what is better. The world, in this, is like the gout: though you keep it at your feet, it is troublesome, but if it reach the heart, it is mortal: the world, through grace, may be a good servant, but it is impossible it should be a good master.

Is vacancy from employment better? It is tedious to be always drudging, for we know not who or what; to have no time to spare for refreshment and recreation, that we may enjoy what we have, be it more or less. But yet to have little or nothing to do, exposeth us to we cannot say what. Idleness is an inlet to the most monstrous abominations; relaxation from business, and recreation after weariness, is at best but a banquet, no way fit for ordinary food: beside this, SATAN watcheth, and never misseth prevailing upon an idle person.

What can serious godliness do in this case? When one whose heart is set upon godliness, hath but little to do with the world, he finds enough to do as a Christian. The considerate Christian hath not one hour in his life wherein he hath nothing to do. He alone can make a virtue of necessity; he alone can redeem time for GOD; he alone can fill his life with duty and comfort. In short, it is through grace alone that a man hath never too much, nor too little business: it is the power of godliness that is thus powerful.

2. Who knows whether many or few friends be best for him? For many friends, man is a sociable creature, and cannot live of himself; to be destitute of friends seems very doleful. A friend is born for adversity; a friend may be better than an estate; to have many dear friends and relations, carries us through our lives with comfort; it is a

duty to prize them, it is a sin to slight them; and therefore this seems unquestionably best.

But friends themselves are troublesome, apt to take exceptions, to mistake, to be weary of us if we have long need of them; and besides this, there is none in the world, whose friendship is not founded on grace, can be so much my friend now, but he may be as much my enemy hereafter; and if you can find any friend above these exceptions, how do the thoughts of parting abate the comfort of enjoying? Alas! we dare not think of it.

Can serious godliness stand us in any stead here? Much every way. If our friends be irreligious, this necessitates us to do what is possible to make them friends to CHRIST and to religion. And this attempt is always successful, if not to make them gracious, yet to make ourselves more gracious. And if thy friends are already religious, thou wilt have a foretaste of heaven in the communion of saints.

Some think it is best to have few, or no friends. We are too apt to flatter ourselves, and to bear upon our friends, to reckon upon their interest, when we ordinarily find disappointments: whereas, expecting nothing from them, makes us learn to live without them, and in some sort above them.

But to be friendless, is very uncomfortable; a friend greatens all the joys, and lessens all the sorrows we meet with in this world; it argues a crooked and perverse disposition, to be without friends, or not to care for them. Besides this, we had need to have every man our friend; for we know not into whose hands our life may come before we die: that person must needs be miserable, who lives undesired, and dies unlamented.

What can serious godliness do in this case? A serious, holy person, though he have but few, or perhaps no worldly friends, hath the most, and the best friends. He hath GOD to be his friend; he hath an interest in the whole household of faith; and he can make up in GOD what he wants in other persons, or things of the world.

What though he hath no friend to stand by him? Innocency and independency dare do, and can suffer any thing.

3. Who knows whether freedom from affliction, or an afflicted condition, be at present best for him? Freedom from afflictions seems most desirable both to nature and grace. We naturally love our ease, and would have nothing to befall us that is grievous to flesh and blood; and gracious persons pray and strive to prevent and remove afflictions. But yet the experience of all, good and bad, in all ages of the world, proclaims this upon the house-tops, that more have good by afflictions, than by being without them. "The prosperity of fools destroys them." (*Prov.* i. 32.)

What doth religion in this case? The truth is, there needs great religion to carry us safe through freedom from affliction. (*Job* i. 5.) JOB's extraordinary devotion, upon his children's ordinary rejoicing in their prosperous condition, may convincingly instruct us, that there is more danger in freedom from affliction, than we are willing to suspect; and it is more difficult to love, and fear, and trust GOD, when we have the world, than when we want it.

So that without serious godliness, it is impossible to withstand the pleasing temptation of flattering prosperity. What then? Is an afflicted condition to be preferred? Some that have had experience of both, say, Yes. They have been afraid to come from under their afflictions: some sick persons have been even afraid of health, though they desired it; lest what they got in their sickness, they should lose in their health.

But yet the continuance of affliction breaks the spirits, and hinders that cheerful serving and praising GOD, which is the life of a Christian. Though many are bettered by afflictions, yet none are allowed to pray for afflictions, but against them, and use all good means to avoid and remove them. One thing which makes heaven desirable, is the putting an end to all our afflictions. In short, "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous,

whatever be the fruits of it." (*Heb.* xii. 11.) This, therefore is clogged with vanity. But what doth religion in this case?

Serious godliness by afflictions becomes more serious. God makes great use of afflictions for the working and promoting of piety; and in this, I think, all experienced Christians are agreed; they reckon sanctified afflictions amongst the choicest providences. I commend the enlargement of this by your own thoughts out of your own experiences. And thus, including these three cases as in a large parenthesis; there is one case more that I would cautiously speak to, which the Church catholic (truly so called) may have more cause than ever tremblingly to consider, and to seek more satisfying resolution than I can give for its determination.

V What man upon earth can peremptorily assert, whether peace or persecution be just at such a time best for the Church of Christ? It is easily granted, that we must at all times pray for, and endeavour the universal (both outward and spiritual) peace of the Church; and this, that we may at all times do any thing but sin, to avoid or put an end to persecution. But let us consider each as in the former instances.

That the peace of the Church is beyond expression desirable, he is no Christian that denies. Those that are the greatest troublers of the Church's peace, usually proclaim their friendship to it; calling their affection to a party, love to the Church; and the welfare of their party, that of the Church.

Now, though their charity is too narrow to contract the Church into a party, their notion of peace is large enough; they would have it commensurate with the Church. So that I need not be large to prove what nobody denies. Outward prosperity was so much the blessing of the old covenant, that some confine it to that; but others, upon better grounds, expect more under the Gospel. For this was no inconsiderable end of Christ's coming into the world, "to deliver us out of the hands of our" worldly

"enemies;" to serve him without" affrighting fears of men, "in holiness before GOD, and righteousness" before men, "all the days of our life:" (*Luke* i. 74, 75:) which prosperity when the Church hath enjoyed, according to CHRIST's purchase and promise, when they have walked in the filial fear of the LORD, and in the encouraging "comforts of the HOLY GHOST, they were multiplied" both in number of converts, and increase of their graces that were formerly converted. (*Acts* ix. 31.)

But, alas, the Church of CHRIST can as little bear continual prosperity as long adversity. A calm is sometimes as dangerous as a storm. Many are the temptations and snares of a prosperous condition: it breeds hypocrites; errors and heresies spring up like weeds in rank ground; professors are apt to grow remiss and careless, wanton and secure; to be too fond of the present, and to hanker after more temporal happiness than GOD judges good for them. How hardly were the very Apostles awakened from dreaming of CHRIST's temporal kingdom! O the divisions among brethren, when pride makes them quarrelsome! When the world favours the Church, the Church slides into the world; then their worldliness spoils their Christianity, and their Christianity palliates their worldliness; and so those things are mixed which can never be compounded.

But serious godliness is the best preservative against surfeiting on prosperity. This powerfully enables, and necessarily provokes, to improve the Church's peace to all spiritual advantages. The Church of the Jews was never in such a flourishing condition as in SOLOMON's reign; and is it not well worthy our observation, that the prosperity of his servants, who became proselytes to the Jewish religion, was, several ages after his death, doubly recorded by the SPIRIT of GOD, above the proselytes of former ages?

It is serious godliness that keeps them humble, and always upon their watch against flattering temptations; that keeps them low in their own eyes, and from despising

others. To have "our conversation in heaven," when it is best with us upon earth, this can only be effected by the power of godliness.

Much good God doth in, and for, and by his children, by bringing them into, by his presence in, and deliverance out of, persecution: God increaseth their graces, heightens their comforts, multiplies their experiences, beyond what he doth at any other time of their lives. Our great Exemplar, though he was the Son of God, yet as he was the Son of Man, he experimentally learned obedience by the things which he suffered. And the Holy Ghost tells us, "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." It is hard to say what kind of perfection Christ had by suffering, but it is easy to observe how sufferings tend to the perfecting of Christians. They force them to a more severe examination of heart and life, and to a more thorough repentance of what provoked God to lay them under sufferings; then their prayers are more fervent, and their whole conversation more regular than at other times. Their greatest sufferings are medicinal, not destructive; the more they exercise their graces, the more they increase them. For here is the difference between an earthly and a heavenly treasure: the one, the more you spend, the less you have; the other, the more you lay out, the more you augment the treasure.

God doth not only this in and for themselves, but hereby he makes them more eminently useful to others. Persecution was the occasion of spreading the Gospel all the world over. Blessed Paul wrote more Epistles in his bonds, than any one of the other Apostles in their liberty; and it was in one of those Epistles that he appeals to his readers, to "understand his knowledge in the mystery of Christ." It was in the time of the beloved disciple's banishment into Patmos, that Christ gave him a prospect of the state of the Church from his time to the end of the world; through all the times of the heathen persecutions;

and through the rise, reign, and ruin of the antichristian apostasy; with peculiar prophecies, suitable directions, terrible threatenings, and cheering promises, through the several visions; all which, though not very easy to be understood, yet well deserve the name of Revelation; evidencing CHRIST's peculiar care of his persecuted servants, that nothing befalls them by chance, but that the main outrage of enemies is ordered and bounded by CHRIST's infinite wisdom and compassionate love.

Yet present persecution is grievous, and that upon many accounts. In times of persecution, hell seems to be let loose as to all manner of wickedness; when nothing but the service of GOD is criminal, the service of the Devil seems meritorious. Some will be frighted from the entertainment of the Gospel, and die in their infidelity, and be lost for ever: others so far shrink that they lose their peace, (if not their souls,) and never recover it more: and the spirits of the strongest will be apt to faint, if the sufferings be sharp and long. When persecution comes to its height, "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." But what is to be done at that time, that what is intolerable to flesh and blood may be borne with triumph; that we may be so far from stumbling at the cross of CHRIST, as humbly to glory in it; "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name?" In a word, How may the time of their persecution be the best time of their life?

By serious godliness; by a more vigorous exercise of all the graces of the HOLY GHOST. When we feel what there is in that life of faith, we have at other times but talked of; what though the furnace be heated seven times hotter than ordinary, may we be but seven times more purified than ordinary! Let this be your great care, "never to suffer as evil doers;" but so walk, that your enemies may find no occasion against you, except concerning the law of your GOD.

And now, though I have made out what I proposed in behalf of serious godliness, yet I am sensible it is not done

beyond contradiction. I shall therefore next endeavour to remove the objections that are of moment, and leave the cavils to die of themselves.

Object. 1. If our present condition be best for us, why should we seek to alter it? Why should we seek health when we are sick, or right ourselves when we are wronged? Or why should we seek peace of conscience, when we are under trouble of conscience? This seems to make a confusion in our very prayers, to hinder praying, and to stagger our very faith in prayer.

(1.) This is so far from hindering or confounding our prayers, that, next to the SPIRIT of GOD, it is our best guide and instructor for prayer. This will teach us, that our petitions are not to direct GOD what to do; nor may we expostulate with GOD in a quarrelling manner, as if GOD wronged us if he did not humour us. Whatever we pray for, that cannot but be good for us; *e. g.*, renewing, strengthening, stablishing grace; for these we may insist with so much earnestness as not to take a denial. GOD hath no where made it our duty to be willing to be damned, to hate him, and blaspheme him for ever; and therefore, if a pretended angel from heaven should tell us that GOD would not hear us, nor bestow his grace upon us; we might tell him, GOD never denied his grace to any that were not willing to be denied; where GOD hath, by preventing grace, engaged the will restlessly to desire grace, he hath given a token for good that he is pleased with our importunity. Peremptorily then resolve humbly to lie at GOD's feet, and to live and die with this petition for grace, your endeavours being answerable to your prayers. But in things not necessary to salvation, we must pray in another manner. We are to consider our circumstances, the promises that suit them, how far GOD useth to fulfil such promises in the letter of them, how in his wise love he fulfils a spiritual promise when we are earnest for a temporal; and we shall never have hard thoughts of GOD, though he deny us any thing in this world.

The truth is, let but serious praying Christians deeply reflect upon their own hearts, how they have been differently affected in prayer, according to the things they prayed for, and they will certainly find, that whatever their expressions have been about things less necessary, yet their hearts have been more thoroughly broken, and more inexpressibly longing for spiritual supplies. So that the more spiritual any Christians are, the more they lose their will in the will of GOD; and the less they quarrel with GOD, let him do what he will with them. This is the temper and practice of the most serious Christians.

(2.) This will teach us to observe GOD's answering of prayer, so as to be thankful or penitent, to retract, alter, or urge our petitions, as our case requires. And this I think I may say, One of the choicest exercises of grace, is about the improving the return of prayer; *e. g.*, I think such a thing to be good for me: suppose a better frame of health; for this I fill my mouth with arguments, and my heart with faith, but GOD answers me with disappointment; this puts me upon reflection; I find causes more than are good why GOD should deny me. Suppose further, I beg the pardon of sin, yet have less hopes every day than other. Well, this puts me upon a more thorough scrutiny, and I find I have not observed GOD's method for pardon. I would have the comfort of a pardon, without a suitable sense of the evil of sin, which, if I should obtain, I should not be so shy of sin as when I have felt the smart of it; I should not look upon myself as so much beholden to CHRIST, but that I might venture upon sin, and have a pardon at pleasure; I should not so much pity others under their inward troubles. In a word, the more we consider, the more cause we shall see why GOD answers prayer according to his own wisdom, not our folly.

Object. 2. We do not see that religion doth any great matter in fact towards the bettering of every condition.

To our grief we must acknowledge, that Christians are shamefully defective in living up to such heavenly-mindedness, as to have the experiences they might have; and

shall we, when we are injurious to ourselves, expect God to fulfil conditional promises, when we neglect the condition of them? God doth not only in displeasure, but in kindness, make a people feel a difference in their comforts, from the difference in their walking. You may as well expect to buy things without money, because money answers all things, as to expect promises fulfilled to godliness, when you want that godliness to which the promise is made. Make conscience of performing the condition, and make conscience of believing the promise; for God will certainly fulfil that promise or a better; so that the fault is our own that we do not inherit the promises.

When I have granted this, do but impartially observe, and you will find, that notwithstanding all the defects of Christians, it is they only that have received those "exceeding great and precious promises, whereby they are partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust;" and though they have not already attained that heavenly frame they hope for, neither are already perfect, "yet this one thing they do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, they press towards" a full experience of what is to be found in the ways of holiness. If this be not a sufficient answer to this objection, what I shall add will be more than enough.

Whereas I have in several cases demonstrated the excellency of serious godliness; I shall now in several instances, beyond all comparison, and beyond contradiction, demonstrate the superlative excellency of the power of it.

1. Serious godliness will make your present condition good for you, be it what it will. Every thing but religion will make you think any condition better than your present condition. Those that are destitute of the truth, suppose that gain is godliness; but "godliness with contentment is great gain:" *q. d.*, Those that only talk of religion, have no higher design than to make a gain of it; but to those that are sincerely religious, that know, and fear,

and worship GOD aright, there is a treasure, a great treasure, a constant revenue, an unexhaustible spring; and then content is not mentioned as a condition added to piety, as if piety were not great gain without content added to it, but content is mentioned as the very genuine effect of piety. The godly man is so well contented with his condition, that he is not so solicitous as others for the bettering of it; whatsoever is wanting to him, is made up by tranquillity of mind, and hope in GOD, that GOD will supply him with necessaries, and he acquiesceth in his will. Now where is that man in the world that can do this beside the Christian?

2. Serious godliness will make every change of condition good for us, though the change shock both nature and grace. A change of condition is either the hope or fear of every one in this world; and it is not the least part of heaven's happiness, that there is no fear of change. Alas! we change more or less every day; and who is it that meets not with some (almost) overwhelming changes in his life, and doth, or should, preparingly expect his greatest change at death? And let the conscience of all that are not worse than dead say, whether any thing on this side now-despised godliness, can so much as endure the thoughts of such a change? In the comparatively petty changes of our life, when we but change plenty into want, or credit into disgrace, or health into sickness, how do persons fret and toss like a wild bull in a net, or lie down sullen under GOD's hand, as if he had done us wrong, or were to give us account why he grieves us! But grace turns our eyes inward, and shows us what we have more cause to lament; no evil comparable to the evil of sin. Whatever GOD doth against us on this side hell, it is less than sin deserves. Will GOD any way prepare us for our unchangeable condition? Glory be to free grace!

3. Serious godliness will make relative afflictions (which of all outward afflictions are the most grievous) good for us, and nothing else can do it. I confess it is morally

worse for all the relations of a family to go the broad way to ruin. It was sad in Egypt, when "there was not a house where there was not one dead;" but it is far worse to have whole families, where there is not one spiritually alive. It is most dolefully afflictive, to have those whose souls' welfare we desire as our own, to be devils incarnate.

If serious godliness can keep us from sinking under this burden, you need fear no other. To be inseparably related to one that is loaded with infamy, or even famished through poverty, loathsomely diseased, or incurably distracted, these are but flea-bitings to the stabbing wounds of wicked relations; but serious godliness doth not only support, but grow under this burden; which is a privilege they are injurious to themselves to overlook. CHRIST takes upon him all those relations that are impossible to meet in any other, that what is grievous in any relation, may be comfortably made up in him; and GOD usually increaseth their graces, though not always their present comforts.

4. Serious godliness will force something good out of the evil of sin. Here it concerns me to speak with more caution; for we must not dare to venture upon sin, through hopes of extracting good out of it. No; the Apostle tells us, that those that do "but say we may do evil that good may come of it, the damnation of those slanderers is just."

In short, I understand this instance then to refer to sins past, not future; to sins already committed, that there is no other possible way of undoing what is done, but by repentance; not of sins not yet committed, as if I gave so much as the least encouragement to so much as the least sin. Thus understanding the instance, I dare say it over again, Serious godliness will force something of good out of the evil of sin. These are the persons that cannot forget the wormwood and the gall of their mortification; "their soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in them." These are the persons that put a due

estimate upon pardoning mercy, and love CHRIST the more, for the more sins he hath forgiven them: as CHRIST said of MARY MAGDALENE, "Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

I beseech you, let not any one take encouragement hence to sin; but let the worst of sinners take encouragement hence to repent: what though thou hast been one of the vilest wretches upon earth, thou mayest through grace be one of the highest saints in heaven.

I have endeavoured to be so practical in the doctrinal part, that there needs but little to be added for application; the LORD make that little to be more effectual than a greater quantity! Rouse up yourselves to do your part, that it may be so.

(1.) Set your hearts upon serious godliness. This must be the first use; for you can make no use at all of this doctrine, till you have made this use of it. Every thing without this is but an abuse of it: you do not only wrong the truth, but you wrong yourselves, whatever you say or do about it, till you make it your business to experience the truth of what hath been spoken; and this I can assure you, never any one repented of his downright godliness. Therefore live in the practice of those plain duties, without which it is in vain to pretend to religion: daily read some portion of the Old and New Testament, not as your child reads it for his lesson, but as GOD's child reads it for his profit.

Be more frequent in prayers, not as those that pass their prayers by number, but as those that pour out their hearts to GOD in holy fervour. Let your thoughts be so filled with heavenly objects, that you may in some respect make all things such, you think of. Discourse of the things of GOD, not in a captious or vain-glorious manner, but as those that feel the truths they speak of. Receive the Sacrament, as sealing that covenant, wherein you will be as careful to fulfil the conditions, as you would have GOD

faithful in fulfilling the promises. Look out so sharp to the progress of your sanctification, that sin may not expire; but be mortified; and that grace may be so lively, as to confute the reproach of enemies, and exceed the commendation of friends. Bear afflictions, not as a malefactor goes to execution, because he cannot help it, but so as not to miss the fruit of affliction, the participation of God's holiness. Though you look first to yourselves, be not only selfish, though in the most gracious manner, but endeavour to be blessings, as far as your name is heard of. In short, perform all your duties to God, yourselves, and others, in the name of Christ, through his strength, according to his command, relying upon his promises, that you may feel what it is to be accepted in God's, and your Beloved. This is to be serious in religion.

(2.) Learn to be more than barely contented with your present condition: it is that which God in wisdom chooseth for you, preferring it before any other condition. Every condition hath some lessons peculiar to it, which are better learned in that condition, than in any other; and those things that may be best learned in thy condition, are the things you most need learning; which when you have learned, then God will put thee into other circumstances, to teach thee something else. Every condition hath something grievous in it, by reason of the sin and vanity that cleave to it; but that which is most grievous, if it be used as physic, will help to cure thee. We all grant it is best to take physic when we need it: "Now for a season (if need be) you are in heaviness:" and when we take physic, we imprison ourselves in our chamber, as much as others in a gaol; we abstain from excess, as much as they that want bread; we tend our physic, and need no argument to do so. Christians, let God be your Physician, and prescribe what physic he pleaseth; we have nothing else to do, but observe his instructions for its beneficial operation: apply this to any condition that is uneasy to you, and you will see cause

not only to justify, but to praise your wise Physician. But if this arguing be not cogent, I will commend one that is, (I confess I love those directions that will apply themselves, that will work their way for application,) that you may so far like your present condition, as to perform the duties of it, before you desire an alteration of it: Take this course: Sit down and consider, should God so far humour thee, as to let thee frame thine own condition to thine own mind, to give thee thy choice for a worldly happiness; suppose he allowed thee time to think, to consult friends, to alter and add upon your second and third, yea, upon your twentieth thought, whatever the wit of man could suggest, or the heart of man desire, and all this for a whole month together, before you fixed your choice: I suppose when you choose, it should be wealth without care, pleasure without weariness, honour without hazard, health without sickness, friends without mistake, relations without crosses, old age without infirmities; and if God should thus alter the course of his Providence, unto what would your own pride, and the world's envy, expose you? O! but you will say, All this with grace will do so well: Do you think so? But would not grace without all this, do better? Can you think that such a condition would wean you from the world, and fit you for heaven? Or is earth the place where you would live for ever, and have no more happiness than that can afford you? Return, poor soul, return to thyself, and to thy God; acknowledge that God is wise, and thou art a fool: and it is better to be employed in the present duty of thy present condition, than to doze out thy life in wild imaginations.

(3.) Make conscience of both sorts of duties, religious and worldly; and allot fit and distinct times for heavenly and worldly business; but with this difference, let religion mix itself with worldly business, and spare not; but let not the world break in upon religion. Religion will perfume the world, but the world will taint reli-

gion. Though every thing in the world be clogged with vanity, yet there is something of duty about every thing we meddle with, and we must not call neglect of duty, contempt of the world. Use the world as you do your servants, to whom you would give due liberty, as the best way to prevent their taking more than is due: so to take a due care about the world, is the best way to prevent religion's being justled out by worldly cares. Count not any sin or duty about the least matters so small, as to venture upon the one, or neglect the other; but proportion your carefulness according to the business before you. I see more cause every day than other, to commend both the truth and weight of the observation, that "all over-doing is undoing." You cannot bestow much diligence about one thing, but you must rob something else of what diligence is necessary, and mar that about which you are over-solicitous. "This I say, then, brethren, the time is short," we have none to spare; "it remaineth," for the future, "that both they that have wives, be as though they had none,"—let them not be uxorious; "and they that weep, as if they wept not,"—if God bring them under sorrow, let them but water their plants, not drown them; "and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not,"—we must at best rejoice with trembling; "and they that buy as if they possessed not,"—there is nothing we can purchase worth the name of a possession; "and they that use this world, as not abusing it,"—to any other use than what God hath appointed; "for the fashion of this world passeth away,"—the pageantry of this world will soon be over; "but I would have you without carefulness,"—without distracting carefulness about worldly things.

(4.) Whatever you do for the bettering of your condition, follow God, but do not go before him. This is a direction of great moment, being a necessary caution against that sin that doth always beset us. Every man is an orator to aggravate his own grievances, and thinks

himself a politician, for fitting them with remedies; yea, hath the confidence of a Prophet, that they shall certainly be effectual, if GOD will but take his time and method for their operation. "Vain man would be wise, though he be born like a wild ass's colt," to kick up his heels against GOD's unsearchable wisdom. You may see both your proneness to the sin, and CHRIST directing to this remedy, in one and the same instance. When PETER had made such a confession of faith, that CHRIST never commended any like it, but would prescribe to CHRIST an exemption from suffering, not considering that mankind would have been undone by that advice; CHRIST with a short reproof bids, "Get thee behind me." In all cases, about settling in the world, getting estates, seeking preferment, entering into marriage, removing from one place to another, be not self-conceited, nor hasty to run before GOD, nor to go out of his way; but follow him; follow his commands in a way of obedience; follow his Providence in a way of observance; follow GOD, and you may expect his blessing.

(5.) Remember these two words, though you forget all the rest of the Sermon, *viz.*, "CHRIST and Holiness, Holiness and CHRIST:" interweave these all manner of ways, in your whole conversation. Press after holiness as much as is possible, had you no CHRIST to befriend you; (for it is a shame to mind holiness the less, for any benefits you expect from CHRIST;) and rest as entirely upon CHRIST, as if there were nothing else required: (for the best of your holiness doth not merit acceptance.) It is serious Christianity that I press, as the only way to better every condition: it is Christianity, downright Christianity, that alone can do it: it is not morality without faith; that is but refined Heathenism: it is not faith without morality; that is but downright hypocrisy: it must be a divine faith, wrought by the HOLY GHOST, where GOD and man concur in the operation; such a faith as works by love, both to GOD and man; a holy

faith, full of good works. "For we are his workmanship, created in CHRIST JESUS unto good works, which GOD hath before ordained, that we should walk in them: Worshipping GOD in the Spirit, rejoicing in CHRIST JESUS, and having no confidence in the flesh; yea, doubtless, counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS, that we may be found in him, not having" (not trusting in) "our own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of CHRIST, the righteousness which is of GOD by faith."

END OF VOL. XXIV.

Printed by T. CORDEUX, 14, City-Road, London.