

T H E  
Life of G O O D  
I N T H E  
*Soul of Man:*  
O R, T H E  
Nature and Excellency  
O F T H E  
Christian Religion.

With Nine other Discourses on  
important Subjects.

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By HENRY SCOUGAL, A. M. and S. T. P.

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To which is added,  
A SERMON Preached at his Funeral,  
by G. G. D. D.

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*Perfectionis ac felicitatis summum est uniri Deo.*

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L O N D O N:

Printed for J. DOWNING, in *Bartholomew-Close* near  
*West-Smithfield*; and G. STRAHAN, at the *Golden-*  
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M. DCC. XXVI.



## The PREFACE.

**I***t is but a reasonable compliance with custom, to give some account to the publick, of a book we present them with. The Treatise entitled, The Life of God in the Soul of Man : or, the nature and excellency of the Christian Religion, was first published during the Author's life, by Dr. Burnet, afterwards Lord Bishop of Sarum, who, because the Author's modesty would not permit him to put his name to it, usher'd it into the world with a preface, in which he gave this character of the Author, that the book was a transcript of those divine impressions that were upon his own heart, and that he had written nothing in it but what he himself did well feel and know; and added another Treatise to it, called, An Account of the Spiritual Life, supposed to be written by himself. Since the first Edition about the Year 1677, it has bore four Impressions more, the last of them encouraged by the honourable Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, who judg-*

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*ed it worthy a place in their Annual Packet to their Corresponding Members. Indeed the clear stile and easy method of our Author, the just and amiable representation he gives of Religion in this little Treatise, made it deservedly valued and esteemed by all judicious persons; and it became a happy means of giving right notions of Religion to many, making them in love with it, and putting them upon the practice of what they saw was infinitely desirable in it self, and with some pains and industry attainable by them. And among many others who have owned their obligations to our Author's little book, I cannot but mention a young gentleman of singular virtue and piety, who told me, that this book, which he met with accidentally in America, was the first thing that gave a serious turn to his mind, and took him off from the pursuit of the vanities and pleasures of the world. The esteem which many had conceived for our Author's genius and piety, made them inquisitive after his other compositions, and many copies had from time to time been taken, of the few sermons or discourses he had committed to writing. After I had collected together as many of them as could be procured, I was*

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*encouraged by some persons, no less eminent for their piety and virtue than for their birth and quality, to publish them with a new Edition of the printed Treatise; and have endeavoured to give them as correct as possible, tho' some of the Manuscripts I was obliged to make use of, had not been transcribed with that care and exactness they ought. It cannot be expected, that these discourses, which were never designed by the Author for the Press, can appear with the same advantage as the Treatise, which at the persuasion of his friends was published in his life-time, yet as they retain the same spirit and genius, and give the same clear and perswasive notions of Religion, it is hoped they will be favourably received, as well as that they may be very profitable to the candid and serious reader. I have also added the sermon preached at his funeral, the original and only copy whereof has been ever since religiously preserved by one to whom our Author was very dear by nearness of blood, but much more on account of his piety, and the strict friendship there was between them: To this sermon I must refer the Reader for an Account of our Author's life; tho' I believe that*



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*a more particular one than would have been proper in a sermon will be made publick hereafter in another Treatise.*

*The chief motive to my publishing this collection, was the hopes of its being serviceable to Religion in general; since our Author's scope and aim is to shew us, that the design of Religion is, by the rectifying our minds, and the regulating our appetites and desires, to exalt our natures, and transform us unto that likeness to the divine nature, which may render us capable of the nearest communion with the author of our being, which is the highest felicity and perfection our nature is capable of. And tho' mens dispositions and tempers are so various, that what is useful to one may not be so to another, but sometimes rather prejudicial, yet this book I think may be safely put into the hands of every one, tho' in my opinion it is likely to have the greatest influence upon such as are of a noble and generous spirit. It is possible indeed that some may object against what our Author advances in the fourth discourse, That there are but a small number saved; but it is to be considered, that the reasons given for this lamentable truth, do not at all affect the goodness and mercy of*  
God,

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God, but are shew'd to proceed from mens wretched negligence, and the hardned impenitence of sinners; and therefore as the reading of it cannot but tend to make men serious and diligent in the work of their salvation, so in this lukewarm age it is highly seasonable, and no more than necessary, to make them reflect upon their desperate condition with respect to eternity.

In this Edition I have left out the Account of the Spiritual Life, added to the former Impressions of the Life of God in the Soul of Man, not only because it was none of our Author's, but, as it was generally thought, not at all equal to the other; insomuch that a learned and worthy gentleman, who was at the pains to translate our Author's Treatise into French\*, did not think proper to joyn the other to it. Besides these discourses in English now printed, and some essays written when he was very young, in Manuscript our Author has left behind him three Tracts in Latin, viz. A short System of Ethicks, or moral Philosophy: A Preservative against the Artifices of the Romish Missionaries: and of the Pastoral Care. This last contains only four chapters of a large Treatise he designed upon that

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\* Printed  
at the  
Hague  
1722.

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*subject, for the use of the Students in Divinity, and Candidates for Holy Orders, for he lived not to finish it; the great Governour of the world having, in his wise providence, thought fit to remove him early from his post here, to give him the reward of his good and faithful service. He had taught philosophy four years before he enter'd into Holy Orders, after which he was one year Minister of a country parish, and four years Divinity Professor in King's-College in Aberdeen; in which See his father Bishop Scougal sat above twenty years from the Restoration. This his son was born about the end of June Anno 1650, and died on the 13th of the same month Anno 1678, having scarce compleated the 28th year of his age. But being made perfect in a short time, he fulfilled a long time, for wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age. That his bright example may excite in all his readers, especially in the Clergy, a holy emulation of becoming like unto him, who was eminently like unto our great pattern and example, the Lord Jesus, is the hearty wish of the publisher,*

Easter-Eve, St. John's  
Clerkenwell.

Pa. Cockburn,



T H E  
 LIFE of GOD  
 I N T H E  
 SOUL of MAN.



*My Dear Friend,*



HIS designation doth give you The occasion of this discourse,  
 a Title to all the endeavours  
 whereby I can serve your in-  
 terests; and your pious incli-  
 nations do so happily conspire  
 with my duty, that I shall not need to  
 step out of my road to gratifie you; but I  
 may at once perform an office of friendship,  
 and discharge an exercise of my function;  
 since the advancing of virtue and holiness  
 B (which



(which I hope you make your greatest study) is the peculiar business of my employment. This therefore is the most proper instance wherein I can vent my affection, and express my gratitude towards you, and I shall not any longer delay the performance of the promise I made you to this purpose: for though I know you are provided with better helps of this nature, than any I can offer you; nor are you like to meet with any thing here which you knew not before, yet I am hopeful, that what cometh from one whom you are pleased to honour with your friendship, and which is more particularly designed for your use, will be kindly accepted by you, and God's Providence perhaps may so direct my thoughts, that something or other may prove useful to you. Nor shall I doubt your pardon, if for moulding my discourse into the better frame, I lay a low foundation, beginning with the nature, and properties of Religion, and all along give such way to my thoughts in the prosecution of the subject, as may bring me to say many things which were not necessary, did I only consider to whom I am writing.

I cannot speak of Religion, but I must <sup>Mistakes about Religion.</sup> lament that among so many pretenders to it, so few understand what it means; some placing it in the understanding, in orthodox notions and opinions, and all the account they can give of their Religion is, that they are of this or the other persuasion, and have join'd themselves to one of those many Sects whereinto Christendom is most unhappily divided. Others place it in the outward man, in a constant course of external duties, and a model of performances; if they live peaceably with their neighbours, keep a temperate diet, observe the returns of worship, frequenting the Church, or their closet, and sometimes extend their hands to the relief of the poor, they think they have sufficiently acquitted themselves. Others again put all Religion in the affections, in rapturous heats and extatick devotion, and all they aim at, is to pray with passion, and think of Heaven with pleasure, and to be affected with those kind and melting expressions wherewith they court their Saviour, till they persuade themselves that they are mightily in love with him, and from thence assume a great

confidence of their salvation, which they esteem the chief of christian Graces. Thus are these things which have any resemblance of Piety, and at the best are but means of obtaining it, or particular exercises of it, frequently mistaken for the whole of Religion : nay sometimes wickedness and vice pretend to that name. I speak not now of those gross impieties wherewith the Heathens were wont to worship their Gods ; there are but too many Christians who would consecrate their vices, and hallow their corrupt affections, whose rugged humour, and swollen pride must pass for Christian severity, whose fierce wrath, and bitter rage against their enemies must be called holy zeal, whose petulancy towards their superiours, or rebellion against their governours, must have the name of Christian courage and resolution.

What Religion is,

But certainly Religion is quite another thing, and they who are acquainted with it, will entertain far different thoughts, and disdain all those shadows and false imitations of it : They know by experience that true Religion is an Union of the Soul with God, a real participation  
of

of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the Soul, or in the Apostle's phrase, *it is Christ formed within us.* Briefly, I know not how the nature of Religion can be more fully expressed than by calling it *a divine life*; and under these terms I shall discourse of it, shewing first how it is called *a life*, and then how it is termed *divine*.

I choose to express it by the name of *life*, first because of its permanency and stability: Religion is not a sudden start, or passion of the mind, not though it should rise to the height of a rapture, and seem to transport a man to extraordinary performances. There are few but have convictions of the necessity of doing something for the salvation of their souls; which may push them forward some steps with a great deal of seeming haste, but anon they flag and give over; they were in a hot mood, but now they are cooled; they did shoot forth fresh and high, but are quickly withered, because they had no root in themselves. These sudden fits may be compared to the violent and convulsive motions of bodies newly beheaded, caused by the agitations of the animal



spirits, after the Soul is departed, which however violent and impetuous, can be of no long continuance; whereas the motions of holy Souls are constant and regular, proceeding from a permanent, and lively principle. It is true, this divine life continueth not always in that same strength and vigour, but many times suffers sad decays, and holy men find greater difficulty in resisting temptations; and less alacrity in the performance of their duties; yet it is not quite extinguished, nor are they abandoned to the power of those corrupt affections, which sway and over-rule the rest of the world.

Its freedom and unconstrainedness.

Again, Religion may be designed by the name of life, because it is an inward, free, and self-moving principle, and those who have made progress in it, are not acted only by external motives, driven merely by threatnings, nor bribed by promises; nor constrained by laws; but are powerfully inclined to that which is good, and delight in the performance of it: The love which a pious man bears to God and goodness, is not so much by vertue of a command enjoining him so to do, as by a new nature instructing and prompting him

him to it; nor doth he pay his devotions as an unavoidable tribute, only to appease the divine justice, or quiet his clamorous conscience, but those religious exercises are the proper emanations of the divine life, the natural employments of the new born Soul. He prays, and gives thanks, and repents, not only because these things are commanded, but rather because he is sensible of his wants, and of the divine goodness, and of the folly and misery of a sinful life; his charity is not forced, nor his alms extorted from him, his love makes him willing to give; and though there were no outward obligation, his *heart would devise liberal things*; injustice or intemperance, and all other vices, are as contrary to *his* temper and constitution, as the basest actions are to the most generous spirit, and impudence and scurrility to those who are naturally modest: so that I may well say with St. John, *Who-<sup>1 Joh. 3. 9.</sup>soever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.* Though holy and religious persons do much eye the law of God, and have a great regard unto it, yet it is not so much the sanction

of the law, as its reasonableness and purity and goodness, which do prevail with them; they account it excellent and desirable in its self, and that in keeping of it there is great reward: and that divine love wherewith they are acted, makes them become a Law unto themselves.

*Quis legem det amantibus?*

*Major est amor lex ipse sibi.*

*Who shall prescribe a Law to those that love?*

*Love's a more powerful Law which doth them move.*

In a word, what our blessed Saviour said of himself is in some measure applicable to his followers, that *it is their meat and drink to do their Father's will*: and as the natural appetite is carried out toward food, though we should not reflect on the necessity of it for the preservation of our lives; so are they carried with a natural and unforced propension toward that which is good and commendable. It is true, external motives are many times of great use to excite and stir up this inward principle, especially in its in-

*in the Soul of Man.*

infancy and weakness, when it is often so languid, that the man himself can scarce discern it, hardly being able to move one step forward, but when he is pusht by his hopes, or his fears, by the pressure of an affliction, or the sense of a mercy, by the authority of the law, or the persuasion of others. Now if such a person be conscientious and uniform in his obedience, and earnestly groaning under the sense of his dulness, and is desirous to perform his duties with more spirit, and vigour; these are the first motions of the divine life, which though it be faint and weak, will surely be cherished by the influences of Heaven, and grow unto greater maturity. But he who is utterly destitute of this inward principle, and doth not aspire unto it, but contents himself with those performances whereunto he is prompted by Education or Custom, by the fear of Hell, or carnal notions of Heaven, can no more be accounted a religious Person, than a puppet can be call'd a man. This forced and artificial Religion is commonly heavy and languid, like the motion of a weight forced upward; it is cold and spiritless, like the uneasy compliance of a wife



wife married against her will, who carries it dutifully toward the husband whom she doth not love, out of some sense of virtue or honour. Hence also this Religion is scant and niggardly, especially in those duties which do greatest violence to mens carnal inclinations, and those slavish spirits will be sure to do no more, than is absolutely required; 'tis a Law that compels them, and they will be loath to go beyond what it stints them to, nay, they will ever be putting such glosses on it, as may leave themselves the greatest liberty: whereas the spirit of true Religion is frank and liberal, far from such peevish and narrow reckoning; and he who hath given himself intirely unto God will never think he doth too much for him.

Religion a  
divine  
principle.

By this time I hope it doth appear, that Religion is with a great deal of reason termed *a life* or vital principle, and that it is very necessary to distinguish betwixt it, and that obedience which is constrained, and depends on external causes: I come next to give an account why I design'd it by the name of *divine life*; and so it may be called, not only in regard of its fountain and original, having God for its

its author, and being wrought in the Souls of men by the power of his Holy Spirit; but also in regard of its nature, Religion being a resemblance of the divine perfections, the image of the Almighty shining in the Soul of man: nay it is a real participation of his nature, it is a beam of the eternal light, a drop of that infinite ocean of goodness; and they who are endued with it, may be said to have *God dwelling in their Souls, and Christ formed within them.*

Before I descend to a more particular consideration of that divine life wherein true Religion doth consist, it will perhaps be fit to speak a little of that natural or animal life which prevails in those who are strangers to the other: and by this I understand nothing else, but our inclination and propension towards those things which are pleasing and acceptable to nature: or self-love issuing forth and spreading it self into as many branches as men have several appetites and inclinations: The root and foundation of the animal life I reckon to be *sense*, taking it largely, as it is opposed unto faith, and importeth our perception and sensation of things, that

that are either grateful or troublesome to us. Now these animal affections considered in themselves, and as they are implanted in us by nature, are not vicious or blameable; nay they are instances of the wisdom of the Creator furnishing his creatures with such appetites as tend to the preservation and welfare of their lives. These are instead of a law unto the brute beasts, whereby they are directed towards the ends for which they were made; but man being made for higher purposes, and to be guided by more excellent laws, becomes guilty and criminal when he is so far transported by the inclinations of this lower life, as to violate his duty, or neglect the higher and more noble designs of his creation. Our natural affections are not wholly to be extirpated and destroyed, but only to be moderated and over-ruled by a superiour and more excellent principle. In a word, the difference betwixt a religious and wicked man, is, that in the one the divine life bears sway, in the other the animal life doth prevail.

The different tendencies of the natural life. But it is strange to observe unto what different courses this natural principle will sometimes carry those who are wholly guided

guided by it, according to the divers circumstances that concur with it to determine them: and the not considering this doth frequently occasion very dangerous mistakes, making men think well of themselves by reason of that seeming difference which is betwixt them and others, whereas perhaps their actions do all the while flow from one and the same original. If we consider the natural temper, and constitution of mens Souls, we shall find some to be airy, frolicksome and light, which makes their behaviour extravagant and ridiculous; whereas others are naturally serious and severe, and their whole carriage composed into such gravity as gains them a great deal of reverence and esteem. Some are of an humorous, rugged, and morose temper, and can neither be pleased themselves, nor endure that others should be so; but all are not born with such lowre and unhappy dispositions, for some persons have a certain sweetness and benignity rooted in their natures, and they find the greatest pleasure in the endearments of society, and the mutual complacency of friends, and covet nothing more than to have every body obliged to them:



them: And it is well that nature hath provided this complectional tendernefs to fupply the defect of true charity in the world, and to incline men to do fomething for one another's welfare. Again, in regard of education, fome have never been taught to follow any other rules, than thofe of pleasure or advantage; but others are fo enured to obferve the ftrictest rules of decency and honour, and fome instances of virtue, that they are hardly capable of doing any thing which they have been accustom'd to look upon as bafe and unworthy.

In fine, it is no fmall difference in the deportment of meer natural men that doth arife from the ftrength or weaknefs of their wit or judgment, and from their care or negligence in using them. Intemperance and luft, injustice and oppreffion, and all thofe other impieties which abound in the world, and render it fo miserable, are the iffues of felf-love, the effect of the *animal life*, when it is neither overpower'd by Religion, nor govern'd by natural reason; but if it once take hold of reason, and get judgment and wit to be of its party, it will many times difdain  
the

the groffer fort of vices, and spring up unto fair imitations of virtue and goodness. If a man have but so much reason as to consider the prejudice which intemperance and inordinate lust do bring unto his health, his fortune and his reputation, self-love may suffice to restrain him; and one may observe the rules of moral Justice in dealing with others, as the best way to secure his own interest, and maintain his credit in the world. But this is not all; this natural principle by the help of reason may take a higher flight, and come nigher the instances of Piety and Religion: it may incline a man to the diligent study of divine truths; for why should not these as well as other speculations be pleasant and grateful to curious and inquisitive minds? it may make men zealous in maintaining and propagating such opinions as they have espoused, and be very desirous that others should submit unto their Judgment, and approve the choice of Religion, which themselves have made; it may make them delight to hear and compose excellent discourses about the matters of Religion; for eloquence is very pleasant whatever be the subject: nay some it may

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dispose to no small height of sensible devotion. The glorious things that are spoken of Heaven may make even a carnal heart in love with it, the metaphors and similitudes made use of in Scripture of crowns and scepters, and rivers of pleasure, &c. will easily affect a man's fancy, and make him wish to be there, though he neither understand nor desire those spiritual pleasures which are described and shadowed forth by them: and when such a person comes to believe that Christ has purchased those glorious things for him, he may feel a kind of tendernefs and affection towards so great a benefactor, and imagine that he is mightily inamour-ed with him, and yet all the while continue a stranger to the holy temper and spirit of the blessed Jesus: And what hand the natural constitution may have in the rapturous devotions of some melancholy persons, hath been excellently discovered of late by several learned and judicious pens.

To conclude, there is nothing proper to make a man's life pleasant, or himself eminent and conspicuous in the world; but this natural principle assisted by wit  
and

and Reason may prompt him to it; and tho' I do not condemn these things in themselves, yet it concerns us nearly to know and consider their nature, both that we may keep within due bounds, and also that we may learn never to value ourselves on the account of such attainments, nor lay the stress of Religion upon our natural appetites or performances.

It is now time to return to the consideration of that *divine life* whereof I was discoursing before, that *life which is hid with Christ in God*, and therefore hath no glorious shew or appearance in the world, and to the natural man will seem a mean and insipid notion. As the animal life consisteth in that narrow and confined love which is terminated on a man's self, and in his propension towards those things that are pleasing to nature; so the divine life stands in an universal and unbounded affection, and in the mastery over our natural inclinations, that they may never be able to betray us to those things which we know to be blameable. The root of the divine life is faith; the chief branches are love to God, charity to man, purity, and humility: For (as an excellent Per-



son hath well observed) however these names be common and vulgar, and make no extraordinary sound, yet do they carry such a mighty sense, that the tongue of man or angel can pronounce nothing more weighty or excellent. *Faith* hath the same place in the divine life which *sense* hath in the natural, being indeed nothing else but a kind of sense, or feeling persuasion of spiritual things: It extends itself unto all divine truths; but in our lapsed estate, it hath a peculiar relation to the declarations of God's mercy and reconcilableness to sinners thro' a Mediator, and therefore receiving its denomination from that principal object, is ordinarily termed *faith in Jesus Christ*.

The *love* of God is a delightful and affectionate sense of the divine perfections, which makes the Soul resign and sacrifice it self wholly unto him, desiring above all things to please him, and delighting in nothing so much as in fellowship and communion with him, and being ready to do or suffer any thing for his sake, or at his pleasure. Though this affection may have its first rise from the favours and mercies of God towards our selves, yet doth it

in its growth and progress transcend such particular considerations, and ground it self on his infinite goodness manifested in all the works of creation and providence. A Soul thus possessed with divine love, must needs be enlarged towards all mankind in a sincere and unbounded affection, because of the relation they have to God being his creatures, and having something of his image stamped upon them: and this is that *Charity* I named as the second branch of Religion, and under which all the parts of justice, all the duties we owe to our neighbour are eminently comprehended: for he who doth truly love all the world will be nearly concerned in the interest of every one, and so far from wronging or injuring any person, that he will resent any evil that befalls others, as if it happened to himself.

By *purity*, I understand a due abstractedness from the body, and mastery over the inferiour appetites: or such a temper and disposition of mind, as makes a man despise and abstain from all pleasures and delights of sense or fancy which are sinful in themselves, or tend to extinguish or lessen our relish of more divine and intel-

lectual pleasures, which doth also infer a resoluteness to undergo all those hardships he may meet with in the performance of his duty: so that not only chastity and temperance, but also christian courage and magnanimity may come under this head.

*Humility* imports a deep sense of our own meanness, with a hearty and affectionate acknowledgment of our owing all that we are to the divine bounty; which is always accompanied with a profound submission to the will of God, and great deadness towards the glory of the world, and applause of men.

These are the highest perfections that either men or Angels are capable of, the very foundation of Heaven laid in the Soul, and he who hath attain'd them needs not desire to pry into the hidden rolls of God's decrees, or search the volumes of Heaven to know what is determined about his everlasting condition; but he may find a copy of God's thoughts concerning him written in his own breast. His love to God may give him assurance of God's favour to him, and those beginnings of happiness which he feels in the conformity of the powers of his Soul to the nature of God,  
and

and compliance with his will, are a sure pledge that his felicity shall be perfected, and continued to all eternity: And it is not without reason that one said, *I had rather see the real impressions of a God-like nature upon my own Soul, than have a vision from Heaven, or an Angel sent to tell me that my name were enroll'd in the book of life.*

When we have said all that we can, the secret mysteries of a new nature and divine life can never be sufficiently expressed, language and words cannot reach them; nor can they be truly understood but by those souls that are enkindled within, and awakened unto the sense and relish of spiritual things, *There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth this understanding.* The power and life of Religion may be better expressed in actions than in words, because actions are more lively things, and do better represent the inward principle whence they proceed, and therefore we may take the best measure of those gracious indowments, from the deportment of those in whom they reside, especially as they are perfectly exemplified in the holy life of



our blessed Saviour, a main part of whose business in this world was to teach by his practice what he did require of others, and to make his own conversation an exact resemblance of those unparallel'd rules which he prescribed: So that if ever true goodness was visible to mortal eyes, it was then when his presence did beautifie and illustrate this lower world.

Divine  
Love ex-  
emplified  
in our Sa-  
viour.

His dili-  
gence in  
doing  
God's will.

That sincere and devout affection where-  
with his blessed Soul did constantly burn  
towards his heavenly Father, did express  
it self in an intire resignation to his will,  
it was this was his *very meat to do the will,  
and finish the work of him that sent him.*  
This was the exercise of his childhood, and  
the constant employment of his riper age;  
he spared no travail or pains while he was  
about his Father's business, but took such  
infinite content and satisfaction in the  
performance of it, that when being faint  
and weary with his Journey he rested him-  
self on *Jacob's well*, and intreated water of  
the *Samaritan* woman; the success of his  
conference with her, and the accession that  
was made to the kingdom of God; filled  
his mind with such delight, as seemed to  
have redounded to his very body, refresh-  
ing

ing his spirits, and making him forget the thirst whereof he complained before, and refuse the meat which he had sent his disciples to buy. Nor was he less patient and submissive in suffering the will of God, than diligent in doing of it: he endured the sharpest afflictions, and extreamest miseries that ever were inflicted on any mortal, without a repining thought, or discontented word. For tho' he was far from a stupid insensibility, or a phantastic or stoical obstinacy, and had as quick a sense of pain as other men, and the deepest apprehension of what he was to suffer in his Soul, (as his *bloody sweat*, and the *fore amazement and sorrow* which he profest do abundantly declare) yet did he intirely submit to that severe dispensation of providence, and willingly acquiesced in it.

His patience in bearing it.

And he prayed to God, that *if it were possible* (or as one of the evangelists hath it, *if he were willing*) *that cup might be removed*; yet he gently added, *nevertheless not my will but thine be done*. Of what strange importance are the expressions, *Job. 12. 27.* where he first acknowledgeth the anguish of his spirit, *Now is my Soul troubled*, which

would seem to produce a kind of demurre, *And what shall I say*; and then he goes to deprecate his sufferings, *Father, save me from this hour*; which he had no sooner uttered, but he doth, as it were, on second thoughts recal it in these words, *But for this cause came I into the world*; and concludes, *Father glorifie thy Name*. Now we must not look on this as any levity, or blameable weakness in the blessed Jesus; he knew all along what he was to suffer, and did most resolutely undergo it; but it shews us the unconceivable weight and pressure that he was to bear, which being so afflicting and contrary to nature, he could not think of without terrour; yet considering the will of God, and the glory which was to redound to him from thence, he was not only content, but desirous to suffer it.

His constant devotion,

Another instance of his love to God, was his delight in conversing with him by Prayer, which made him frequently retire himself from the world, and with the greatest devotion and pleasure spend whole nights in that heavenly exercise, though he had no sins to confess, and but few secular interests to pray for; which alas! are almost

most the only things that are wont to drive us to our devotions: nay, we may say his whole life was a kind of prayer, a constant course of communion with God: if the sacrifice was not always offering, yet was the fire still kept alive: nor was ever the blessed Jesus surprized with that dulness or tepidity of spirit which we must many times wrestle with, before we can be fit for the exercise of devotion.

In the second place I should speak of his love and charity towards all men; but he who would express it, must transcribe the history of the Gospel, and comment upon it: for scarce any thing is recorded to have been done or spoken by him, which was not designed for the good and advantage of some one or other. All his miraculous works were instances of his goodness as well as his power, and they benefitted those on whom they were wrought, as well as they amazed the beholders. His charity was not confined to his kindred, or relations; nor was all his kindness swallowed up in the endearments of that peculiar friendship which he carried towards the beloved disciple, but every one was his *friend* who obeyed his *holy commands*, Joh.



15. 4. and *whosoever did the will of his Father*, the same was to him as *his brother, and sister, and mother.*

Never was any unwelcome to him who came with an honest intention, nor did he deny any request which tended to the good of those that asked it: So that what was spoken of that *Roman Emperour*, whom for his goodnes they called the *darling of mankind*, was really performed by him, that never any departed from him with a heavy countenance, except that rich youth, *Mark 10.* who was sorry to hear that the kingdom of Heaven stood at so high a rate, and that he could not save his Soul and his money too. And certainly it troubled our Saviour to see that when a price was in his hand to get wisdom, yet he had no heart to it; the ingenuity that appeared in his first address, had already procured some kindness for him; for it is said, *And Jesus beholding him, loved him*: But must he for his sake cut out a new way to Heaven, and alter the nature of things, which make it impossible that a covetous man should be happy?

And

And what shall I speak of his meekness, who could encounter the monstrous ingratitude and dissimulation of that miscreant who betrayed him, in no harsher terms than these, *Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?* What further evidence could we desire of his fervent and unbounded charity, than that he willingly laid down his life even for his most bitter enemies; and mingling his prayers with his blood, besought the Father that his death might not be laid to their charge, but might become the means of eternal life to those very persons who procured it.

The third branch of the divine life is <sup>His purity.</sup> *purity*, which, as I said, consists in a neglect of worldly enjoyments and accommodations, and a resolute enduring of all such troubles as we meet with in the doing of our duty. Now surely if ever any person was wholly dead to all the pleasures of the natural life, it was the blessed Jesus, who seldom tasted them when they came in his way; but never stepped out of his road to seek them. Tho' he allowed others the comforts of wedlock, and honoured marriage with his presence, yet he chose the severity of a virgin

virgin life, and never knew the nuptial bed: and tho' at the same time he supplied the want of wine with a miracle, yet he would not work one for the relief of his own hunger in the wilderness. So gracious and divine was the temper of his Soul in allowing to others such lawful gratifications as himself thought good to abstain from, and supplying not only their more extream and pressing necessities, but also their smaller and less considerable wants; We many times hear of our Saviour's sighs and groans and tears; but never that he laught, and but once that he rejoiced in spirit: so that through his whole life he did exactly answer that character given of him by the prophet of old, that he was *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs*. Nor were the troubles and disaccommodations of his life other than matters of choice; for never did there any appear on the stage of the world with greater advantages to have raised himself to the highest secular felicity. He who could bring together such a prodigious number of fishes into his disciples net; and at another time receive that tribute from a fish which he was to pay to the temple, might easily

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have made himself the richest person in the world. Nay, without any mony he could have maintained an army powerful enough to have justled *Cesar* out of his throne: having oftner than once fed several thousands with a few loaves and small fishes. But to shew how small esteem he had of all the enjoyments in the world, he chose to live in so poor and mean a condition, that *though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, yet he who was Lord and Heir of all things, had not whereon to lay his head*: He did not frequent the courts of princes, nor affect the acquaintance and converse of great ones; but being reputed the son of a carpenter, he had fishermen, and such other poor people for his companions; and lived at such a rate as suited with the meanness of that condition.

And thus I am brought unawares to <sup>His High</sup> speak of his *humility*, the last branch of <sup>militie.</sup> the divine life, wherein he was a most eminent pattern to us, that we might *learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart*. I shall not now speak of that infinite condescension of the eternal son of God, in taking our nature upon him; but only re-  
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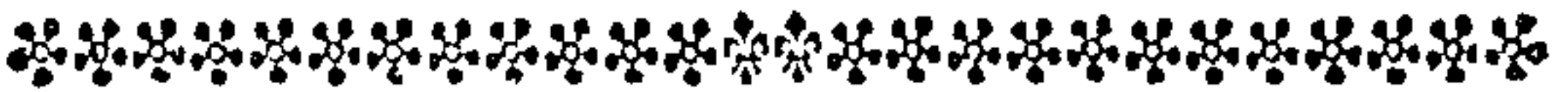
flect on our Saviour's lowly and humble deportment while he was in the world. He had none of those sins and imperfections, which may justly humble the best of men; but he was so entirely swallowed up with a deep sense of the infinite perfections of God, that he appeared as nothing in his own eyes, I mean, so far as he was a creature. He considered those eminent perfections which shined in his blessed Soul as not his own, but the gifts of God; and therefore assumed nothing to himself for them, but with the profoundest humility renounced all pretences to them. Hence did he refuse that ordinary compellation of *good Master*, when address'd to his human nature, by one who it seems was ignorant of his divinity: *Why callest thou me good? there is none good, but God only.* As if he had said, the goodness of any creature (and such only thou takest me to be) is not worthy to be named or taken notice of; 'tis God alone who is originally and essentially good. He never made use of his miraculous power for vanity or ostentation; he would not gratifie the curiosity of the *Jews* with a sign from Heaven, some prodigious appearance in the

the air : nor would he follow the advice of his countrymen and kindred, who would have had all his great Works performed in the eyes of the world for gaining him the greater fame. But when his charity had prompted him to the relief of the miserable, his humility made him many times enjoyn the concealment of the miracle ; and when the glory of God, and the design for which he came into the world, required the publication of them, he ascribeth the honour of all to his Father, telling them, *That of himself he was able to do nothing.*

I cannot insist on all the instances of humility in his deportment towards men ; his withdrawing himself when they would have made him a King, his subjection not only to his blessed mother, but to her husband during his younger years, and his submission to all the indignities and affronts, which his rude and malicious enemies did put upon him. The history of his holy life, recorded by those who conversed with him, is full of such passages as these : and indeed the serious and attentive study of it, is the best way to get right measures of humility, and all the other parts of

Religion, which I have been endeavouring to describe.

But now that I may lessen your trouble of reading a long letter by making some pauses in it; let me here subjoyn a prayer that might be proper when one who had formally entertain'd some false notions of Religion, begins to discover what it is.



## A Prayer.

INfinite and eternal majesty; author  
 and fountain of being and blessed-  
 ness, how little do we poor sinful crea-  
 tures know of thee, or the way to serve  
 and please thee? We talk of Religion,  
 and pretend unto it; but alas! how few  
 are there that know and consider what  
 it means? How easily do we mistake  
 the affections of our nature, and issues  
 of self-love, for those divine graces  
 which alone can render us acceptable in  
 thy sight? It may justly grieve me to  
 consider, that I should have wandered  
 so long, and contented my self so often  
 with vain shadows and false images of  
 Piety

‘ Piety and Religion: yet I cannot but  
‘ acknowledge and adore thy goodness,  
‘ who hast been pleased in some measure  
‘ to open mine eyes, and let me see what  
‘ it is at which I ought to aim. I rejoyce  
‘ to consider what mighty improvements  
‘ my nature is capable of, and what a  
‘ divine temper of spirit doth shine in  
‘ those whom thou art pleased to choose,  
‘ and caufest to approach unto thee.  
‘ Blessed be thine infinite mercy who  
‘ sentest thine own Son to dwell among  
‘ men, and instruct them by his example  
‘ as well as his laws, giving them a per-  
‘ fect pattern of what they ought to be.  
‘ O that the holy life of the blessed Jesus  
‘ may be always in my thoughts, and  
‘ before mine eyes, till I receive a deep  
‘ sense and impression of those excellent  
‘ graces that shined so eminently in him,  
‘ and let me never cease my endeavours  
‘ till that new and divine nature prevail  
‘ in my Soul, and Christ be formed with-  
‘ in me.

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The excellency and advantage of Religion.

AND now, my dear Friend, having discovered the nature of true Religion, before I proceed any further, it will not perhaps be unfit to fix our meditations a little on the excellency and advantages of it, that we may be excited to the more vigorous and diligent prosecution of those methods whereby we may attain so great a felicity. But alas! what words shall we find to express that inward satisfaction, those hidden pleasures which can never be rightly understood, but by those holy Souls who feel them? *a stranger intermeddeth not with their joy.* Holiness is the right temper, the vigorous and healthful constitution of the soul: its faculties had formerly been enfeebled, and disordered, so that they could not exercise their natural functions; it had wearied it self with endless tossings, and rollings, and was never able to find any rest: now that distemper being removed, it feels it self well, there is a due harmony in its faculties, and a sprightly vigour possesseth every part. The understanding can discern what is good, and the will can cleave unto it, the affections are not tied to the motions  
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Prov. 14.  
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of sense, and the influence of external objects; but they are stirred by more divine impressions, are touched by a sense of invisible things.

Let us descend, if you please, into a nearer and more particular view of Religion, in those several branches of it which were named before, let us consider that love and affection wherewith holy Souls are united to God, that we may see what excellency and felicity is involved in it. Love is that powerful and prevalent passion, by which all the faculties and inclinations of the Soul are determined, and on which both its perfection and happiness depend. The worth and excellency of a Soul is to be measured by the object of its love: he who loveth mean and sordid things, doth thereby become base and vile; but a noble and well-placed affection doth advance and improve the spirit unto a conformity with the perfections which it loves. The images of these do frequently present themselves unto the mind, and by a secret force and energy insinuate into the very constitution of the Soul, and mould and fashion it unto their own likeness. Hence we may see how easily lovers or friends

do slide into the imitation of the persons whom they affect, and how, even before they are aware, they begin to resemble them, not only in the more considerable instances of their deportment, but also in their voice and gesture, and that which we call their mien and air; and certainly we should as well transcribe the virtues and inward beauties of the Soul, if they were the object and motive of our love. But now as all the creatures we converse with have their mixture and alloy, we are always in hazard to be sullied and corrupted by placing our affection on them. Passion doth easily blind our eyes, so that we first approve, and then imitate the things that are blameable in them: the true way to improve and ennoble our Souls, is by fixing our love on the divine perfections, that we may have them always before us, and derive an impression of them on our selves, and *beholding with open face as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image from glory to glory.* He who with a generous and holy ambition hath raised his eyes towards that uncreated beauty and goodness, and fixed his affection there,

is quite of another spirit, of a more excellent and heroic temper than the rest of the world, and cannot but infinitely disdain all mean and unworthy things, will not entertain any low or base thoughts, which might disparage his high and noble pretensions. Love is the greatest and most excellent thing we are masters of, and therefore it is folly and baseness to bestow it unworthily; it is indeed the only thing we can call our own; other things may be taken from us by violence, but none can ravish our love. If any thing else be counted ours, by giving our love, we give all, so far as we make over our hearts and wills, by which we possess our other enjoyments. It is not possible to refuse him any thing, to whom by love we have given our selves; nay since it is the privilege of gifts to receive their value from the mind of the giver, and not to be measured by the event, but by the desire; he who loveth may in some sense be said not only to bestow all that he hath, but all things else which may make the beloved person happy, since he doth heartily wish them, and would really give them, if they were in his power: in which sense it is that one



makes bold to say, *That divine love doth in a manner give God unto himself, by the complacency it takes in the happiness and perfection of his nature*: But though this may seem too strained an expression, certainly love is the worthiest present we can offer unto God, and it is extremely debased when we bestow it another way.

When this affection is misplaced, it doth often vent it self in such expressions, as point at its genuine and proper object, and insinuate where it ought to be placed. The flattering and blasphemous terms of adoration, wherein men do sometimes express their passion, are the language of that affection which was made and designed for God: as he who is accustomed to speak to some great person, doth perhaps unawares accost another with those titles he was wont to give to him. But certainly that passion which accounteth its object a Deity, ought to be bestowed on him who really is so: those unlimited submissions, which would debase the Soul, if directed to any other, will exalt and ennoble it, when placed here: those chains and cords of love are infinitely more glorious than  
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liberty it self; this slavery is more noble than all the empires in the world.

Again, as divine love doth advance and The Advan-  
tages of  
divine  
love. elevate the Soul, so it is that alone which can make it happy; the highest and most ravishing pleasures, the most solid and substantial delights, that humane nature is capable of, are those which arise from the endearments of a well-placed and successful affection. That which imbitters love, and makes it ordinarily a very troublesome and hurtful passion, is the placing it on those who have not worth enough to deserve it, or affection and gratitude to requite it, or whose absence may deprive us of the pleasure of their converse, or their miseries occasion our trouble. To all these evils are they exposed, whose chief and supream affection is placed on creatures like themselves, but the love of God delivers us from them all.

First, I say, love must needs be miserable, and full of trouble and disquietude, The worth  
of the  
object. when there is not worth and excellency enough in the object to answer the vastness of its capacity: so eager and violent a passion cannot but fret and torment the spirit, when it finds not wherewith to sa-

tisfie its cravings. And indeed so large and unbounded is its nature, that it must be extreamly pinched and straitned, when confined to any creature: nothing below an infinite Good can afford it room to stretch it self, and exert its vigour and activity. What is a little skin-deep beauty or some small degrees of goodness to match or satisfie a passion which was made for God, designed to embrace an infinite Good? No wonder lovers do so hardly suffer any rival, and do not desire that others should approve their passion by imitating it: they know the scantiness and narrowness of the good which they love, that it cannot suffice two, being in effect too little for one. Hence love *which is strong as death* occasioneth *jealousie which is cruel as the grave*, the coals whereof, are coals of fire, which hath a most violent flame.

But divine love hath no mixture of this gall, when once the Soul is fixed on that supream and all-sufficient Good, it finds so much perfection and goodness, as doth not only answer and satisfie its affection, but master and over-power it too: it finds all its love to be too faint and languid for such a noble object, and is only sorry that  
it

it can command no more. It wisheth for the flames of a *Seraph*, and longs for the time when it shall be wholly melted and dissolved into love: and because it can do so little it self, it desires the assistance of the whole creation, that angels and men would concur with it in the admiration and love of those infinite perfections.

Again, love is accompanied with trouble, when it misseth a suitable return of affection: Love is the most valuable thing we can bestow, and by giving it, we do in effect give all that we have; and therefore it must needs be afflicting to find so great a gift despised, that the present which one hath made of his whole heart, cannot prevail to obtain any return. Perfect love is a kind of self-dereliction, a wandering out of our selves, it is a kind of voluntary death, wherein the lover dies to himself, and all his own interests, not thinking of them, nor caring for them any more, and minding nothing but how he may please and gratifie the party whom he loves. Thus he is quite undone unless he meets with reciprocal affection, he neglects himself, and the other hath no regard to him; but if he be beloved, he is revived,



revived, as it were, and liveth in the soul and care of the person whom he loves, and now he begins to mind his own concerns, not so much because they are his, as because the beloved is pleased to own an interest in them : he becomes dear unto himself, because he is so unto the other.

But why should I enlarge in so known a matter, nothing can be more clear than that the happiness of love depends on the return it meets with ; and herein the divine lover hath unspeakably the advantage, having placed his affection on him whose nature is love, whose goodness is as infinite as his Being, whose mercy prevented us, when we were his enemies, therefore cannot choose but embrace us, when we are become his friends. It is utterly impossible that God should deny his love to a Soul wholly devoted to him, and which desires nothing so much as to serve and please him : he cannot disdain his own image, nor the heart in which it is engraven : Love is all the tribute which we can pay him, and it is the sacrifice which he will not despise.

The presence of the beloved person,

Another thing which disturbs the pleasure of love, and renders it a miserable and

and unquiet passion, is absence and separation from those we love. It is not without a sensible affliction that friends do part, though for some little time, it is sad to be deprived of that society which is so delightful; our life becomes tedious, being spent in an impatient expectation of the happy hour wherein we may meet again: but if death have made the separation, as some time or other it must, this occasions a grief scarce to be parallell'd by all the misfortunes of humane life, and wherein we pay dear enough for the comforts of our friendship. But O how happy are those who have placed their love on him who can never be absent from them! they need but open their eyes, and they shall every where behold the traces of his presence and glory, and converse with him whom their Soul loveth; and this makes the darkest prison, or wildest desert, not only supportable, but delightful to them.

In fine, a lover is miserable if the person whom he loveth be so: They who have made an exchange of hearts by love, get thereby an interest in one anothers happiness and misery: and this makes love a troublesome passion, when placed

The divine love makes us partake of an infinite happiness.

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on earth. The most fortunate person hath grief enough to marr the tranquillity of his friend, and it is hard to hold out, when we are attacked on all hands, and suffer not only in our own person, but in another's. But if God were the object of our love, we should share in an infinite happiness without any mixture or possibility of diminution: we should rejoyce to behold the glory of God, and receive comfort and pleasure from all the praises wherewith men and angels do extol him. It should delight us beyond all expression to consider, that the beloved of our Souls is infinitely happy in himself, and that all his enemies cannot shake or unsettle his throne: *That our God is in the Heavens, and doth whatsoever he pleaseth.*

Behold! on what sure foundations his happiness is built, whose Soul is possessed with divine love, whose will is transformed into the will of God, and whose greatest desire is that his Maker should be pleased: O the peace, the rest, the satisfaction that attendeth such a temper of mind!

He that  
loveth  
God finds  
sweetness  
in every  
dispensa-  
tion.

What an infinite pleasure must it needs be, thus as it were to lose our selves in him, and being swallowed up in the over-  
coming

coming sense of his goodness, to offer our selves a living sacrifice always ascending unto him in flames of love. Never doth a Soul know what solid joy and substantial pleasure is; till once being weary of it self, it renounce all propriety, give it self up unto the author of its being, and feel it self become a hallowed and devoted thing, and can say from an inward sense and feeling, *My beloved is mine, (I account all his interest mine own) and I am his*: I am content to be any thing for him, and care not for my self, but that I may serve him. A person moulded into this temper, would find pleasure in all the dispensations of providence: temporal enjoyments would have another relish, when he should tast the divine goodness in them, and consider them as tokens of love sent by his dearest Lord and Maker: And chastisements, though they be not joyous but grievous, would hereby lose their sting, the rod as well as the staff would comfort him: he would snatch a kiss from the hand that was smiting him, and gather sweetness from that severity: nay he would rejoyce that though God did not the will of such a worthless and foolish creature as himself,



self, yet he did his own will, and accomplished his own designs, which are infinitely more holy and wise.

The duties of Religion are delightful to him.

The exercises of Religion, which to others are insipid and tedious, do yield the highest pleasure and delight to Souls possessed with divine love: they rejoyce when they are called to *go up to the house of the Lord*, that they may *see his power and his glory, as they have formerly seen it in his sanctuary*. They never think themselves so happy as when, having retired from the world, and gotten free from the noise and hurry of affairs, and silenced all their clamorous passions, (those troublesome guests within) they have placed themselves in the presence of God, and entertain fellowship and communion with him: they delight to adore his perfections, and recount his favours, and to protest their affection to him, and tell him a thousand times that they love him, to lay out their troubles or wants before him, and disburthen their hearts in his bosom. Repentance it self is a delightful exercise, when it floweth from the principle of love; there is a secret sweetness which accompanieth those tears of remorse, those melt-

ings

ings and relentings of a Soul returning unto God, and lamenting its former unkindness.

The severities of a holy life, and that constant watch which we are obliged to keep over our hearts and ways, are very troublesome to those who are only ruled and acted by an external law, and have no law in their minds inclining them to the performance of their duty; but where divine love possesseth the Soul, it stands as sentinell to keep out every thing that may offend the beloved, and doth disdainfully repulse those temptations which assault it: it complieth cheerfully, not only with explicite commands, but with the most secret notices of the beloved's pleasure, and is ingenious in discovering what will be most grateful and acceptable unto him: it makes mortification and self-denial change their harsh and dreadful names; and become easie, sweet and delightful things.

But I find this part of my letter swell bigger than I designed, (indeed who would not be tempted to dwell on so pleasant a theme) I shall endeavour to compensate it by brevity in the other points.

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The excellency of charity.

The next branch of the divine life is an universal charity and love: The excellency of this grace will be easily acknowledged; for what can be more noble and generous than a heart enlarged to imbrace the whole world, whose wishes and designs are levelled at the good and welfare of the universe, which considereth every man's interest as its own? He who loveth his neighbour as himself, can never entertain any base or injurious thought, or be wanting in expressions of bounty: he had rather suffer a thousand wrongs, than be guilty of one; and never accounts himself happy, but when some one or other hath been benefitted by him: the malice or ingratitude of men is not able to resist his love; he overlooks their injuries, and pities their folly, and overcomes their evil with good, and never designs any other revenge against his most bitter and malicious enemies, than to put all the obligations he can upon them, whether they will or not. Is it any wonder that such a person be revered and admired, and accounted the darling of mankind? This inward goodness and benignity of spirit reflects a certain sweetness and serenity upon the very coun-

countenance, and makes it amiable and lovely: it inspireth the Soul with a noble resolution and courage, and makes it capable of enterprizing and effecting the highest things. Those heroick actions which we are wont to read with admiration, have for the most part been the effects of the love of ones country, or of particular friendships; and certainly a more extensive and universal affection, must be much more powerful and efficacious.

Again, as *charity* flows from a noble and excellent temper, so it is accompanied with the greatest satisfaction and pleasure: it delights the Soul to feel it self thus enlarged, and to be delivered from those disquieting as well as deformed passions, malice, hatred, and envy; and become gentle, sweet, and benign. Had I my choice of all things that might tend to my present felicity, I would pitch upon this, to have my heart possessed with the greatest kindness and affection towards all men in the world. I am sure this would make me partake in all the happiness of others; their inward endowments and outward prosperity, every thing that did be-



nefit and advantage them, would afford me comfort and pleasure : and though I should frequently meet with occasions of grief and compassion, yet there is a sweetness in commiseration which makes it infinitely more desirable than a stupid insensibility : and the consideration of that infinite goodness and wisdom which governs the world, might repress any excessive trouble for particular calamities that happen in it : and the hopes or possibility of mens after-happiness, might moderate their sorrow for their present misfortunes. Certainly next to the love and enjoyment of God, that ardent charity and affection wherewith blessed Souls do imbrace one another, is justly to be reckoned as the greatest felicity of those regions above, and did it universally prevail in the world, it would anticipate that blessedness, and make us taste of the Joys of Heaven upon earth.

The excellency of purity.

That which I named as a third branch of Religion was *Purity*, and you may remember I described it to consist in a contempt of sensual pleasures, and resoluteness to undergo those troubles and pains we may meet with in the performance of

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our duty: Now the naming of this may suffice to recommend it as a most noble and excellent quality. There is no slavery so base as that whereby a man becomes a drudge to his own lusts; nor any victory so glorious as that which is obtained over them. Never can that person be capable of any thing that is noble and worthy, who is sunk in the gross and feculent pleasures of sense, or bewitched with the light and airy gratifications of fancy; but the religious Soul is of a more sublime and divine temper, it knows it was made for higher things, and scorns to step aside one foot out of the ways of holiness, for the obtaining any of these.

And this purity is accompanied with a great deal of pleasure, whatsoever defiles the Soul disturbs it too; all impure delights have a sting in them, and leave smart and trouble behind them. Excess and intemperance, and all inordinate lusts, are so much enemies to the health of the body, and the interests of this present life, that a little consideration might oblige any rational man to forbear them on that very score: And if the religious person go higher, and do not only abstain from

noxious pleasures, but neglect those that are innocent, this is not to be look'd upon as any violent and uneasie restraint, but as the effect of better choice, that their minds are taken up in the pursuit of more sublime and refined delights, so that they cannot be concerned in these. Any person that is engaged in a violent and passionate affection, will easily forget his ordinary gratifications, will be little curious about his diet, or his bodily ease, or the diversifements he was wonted to delight in. No wonder then if Souls overpower'd with divine love, despise inferiour pleasures, and be almost ready to grudge the body its necessary attendance for the common accommodations of life, judging all these impertinent to their main happiness, and those higher enjoyments they are pursuing. As for the hardships they may meet with, they rejoyce in them, as opportunities to exercise and testifie their affection: and since they are able to do so little for God, they are glad of the honour to suffer for him.

The excellency of  
humility.

The last branch of Religion is *Humility*; and however to vulgar and carnal eyes this may appear an abject, base and despicable

cable quality, yet really the Soul of man is not capable of an higher and more noble endowment. It is a silly ignorance that begets pride, but humility arises from a nearer acquaintance with excellent things, which keeps men from doating on trifles, or admiring themselves because of some petty attainments. Noble and well educated Souls have no such high opinion of riches, beauty, strength, and other such like advantages, as to value themselves for them, or despise those that want them: and as for inward worth and real goodness, the sense they have of the divine perfections, makes them think very meanly of any thing they have hitherto attain'd, and be still endeavouring to surmount themselves, and make nearer approaches to those infinite excellencies which they admire.

I know not what thoughts people may have of humility, but I see almost every person pretending to it, and shunning such expressions and actions as may make them be accounted arrogant and presumptuous, so that those who are most desirous of praise, will be loath to commend themselves. What are all those complements and modes of civility, so frequent in our



ordinary converse, but so many protestations of the esteem of others, and the low thoughts we have of our selves? And must not that humility be a noble and excellent endowment, when the very shadows of it are accounted so necessary a part of good breeding?

The pleasure and sweetness of an humble temper,

Again, this grace is accompanied with a great deal of happiness and tranquility: the proud and arrogant person is a trouble to all that converse with him, but most of all unto himself: every thing is enough to vex him; but scarce any thing sufficient to content and please him. He is ready to quarrel with every thing that falls out, as if he himself were such a considerable person, that God Almighty should do every thing to gratifie him, and all the creatures of heaven and earth should wait upon him, and obey his will. The leaves of high trees do shake with every blast of wind, and every breath, every evil word will disquiet and torment an arrogant man: but the humble person hath the advantage when he is despised, that none can think more meanly of him, than he doth of himself, and therefore he is not troubled at the matter, but can easily bear

bear those reproaches which wound the other to the Soul. And withal as he is less affected with injuries, so indeed he is less obnoxious unto them: *Contention which cometh of pride* betrays a man into a thousand inconveniencies, which those of a meek and lowly temper seldom meet with. True and genuine humility begetteth both a veneration and love among all wise and discerning persons, while pride defeateth its own design, and depriveth a man of that honour it makes him pretend to.

But as the chief exercises of humility are those which relate unto Almighty God, so these are accompanied with the greatest satisfaction and sweetness. It is impossible to express the great pleasure and delight which religious persons feel in the lowest prostrations of their Soul before God, when having a deep sense of the divine Majesty and Glory, they sink (if I may so speak) to the bottom of their beings, and vanish and disappear in the presence of God, by a serious and affectionate acknowledgment of their own nothingness, and the shortness and imperfections of their attainments; when they understand the full sense and emphasis of the psalmist's

exclamation, *Lord, what is man?* and can utter it with the same affection. Never did any haughty and ambitious person receive the praises and applauses of men with so much pleasure, as the humble and religious do renounce them, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, &c.*

Thus I have spoken something of the excellencies and advantage of Religion in its several branches; but should be very injurious to the subject, did I pretend to have given any perfect account of it. Let us acquaint our selves with it, my dear friend, let us acquaint our selves with it, and experience will teach us more than all that ever hath been spoken or written concerning it. But if we may suppose the Soul to be already awaken'd unto some longing desires after so great a blessedness, it will be good to give them vent, and suffer them to issue forth in some such aspirations as these.

## A Prayer.

GOOD God! what a mighty felicity  
is this to which we are called?  
How graciously hast thou joyn'd our du-  
ty and happiness together, and prescri-  
bed that for our work, the performance  
whereof is a great reward? And shall  
such silly worms be advanced to so  
great a height? Wilt thou allow us to  
raise our eyes to thee? Wilt thou admit  
and accept our affection? Shall we re-  
ceive the impression of thy divine excel-  
lencies by beholding and admiring them,  
and partake of thy infinite blessedness  
and glory, by loving thee, and rejoyc-  
ing in them? O the happiness of those  
Souls that have broken the fetters of  
self-love, and dis-intangled their affection  
from every narrow and particular good;  
whose understandings are inlightned by  
thy holy Spirit, and their wills enlarged  
to the extent of thine, who love thee  
above all things, and all mankind for  
thy sake! I am perswaded, O God, I am  
perswaded that I can never be happy,  
till my carnal and corrupt affections be

mor-



' mortified, and the pride and vanity of  
 ' my spirit be subdued, and till I come se-  
 ' riously to despise the world, and think  
 ' nothing of my self. But O when shall  
 ' it once be? O when wilt thou come  
 ' unto me, and satisfie my Soul with thy  
 ' likeness, making me holy as thou art  
 ' holy, even in all manner of conversa-  
 ' tion? Hast thou given me a prospect  
 ' of so great a felicity, and wilt thou not  
 ' bring me unto it? Hast thou excited  
 ' these desires in my Soul, and wilt thou  
 ' not also satisfie them? O teach me to  
 ' do thy will, for thou art my God, thy  
 ' spirit is good, lead me unto the land of  
 ' uprightnes. Quicken me, O Lord, for  
 ' thy name's sake, and perfect that which  
 ' concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord,  
 ' endureth for ever, forsake not the works  
 ' of thine own hands.



The de-  
 spondent  
 thoughts  
 of some  
 newly a-  
 waken'd  
 to a right  
 sense of  
 things,

' **I** Have hitherto considered wherein  
 true Religion doth consist, and how  
 desirable a thing it is; but when one sees  
 how infinitely distant the common temper  
 and frame of men is from it, he may per-  
 haps

haps be ready to despond, and give over and think it utterly impossible to be attain'd : he may sit down in sadness, and bemoan himself, and say in the anguish and bitterness of his spirit, “ They are  
“ happy indeed whose Souls are awaken'd  
“ unto the divine life, who are thus re-  
“ newed in the spirit of their minds ; but  
“ alas ! I am quite of another constitution,  
“ and am not able to effect so mighty a  
“ change : if outward observances could  
“ have done the business, I might have  
“ hoped to acquit my self by diligence  
“ and care ; but since nothing but a new  
“ nature can serve the turn, what am I  
“ able to do ? I could bestow all my goods  
“ in oblations to God, or alms to the poor,  
“ but cannot command that love and cha-  
“ rity, without which this expence would  
“ profit me nothing. This gift of God Act. 8. 20.  
“ cannot be purchased with money ; if a  
“ man should give all the substance of his Cant. 8. 7.  
“ house for love, it would utterly be con-  
“ temned : I could pine and macerate my  
“ body, and undergo many hardships and  
“ troubles, but I cannot get all my cor-  
“ ruptions starved, nor my affections wholly  
“ weaned from earthly things : there is  
“ still

“ still some worldly desires lurking in my  
 “ heart, and those vanities that I have  
 “ shut out of the doors, are always get-  
 “ ting in by the windows. I am many  
 “ times convinced of my own meanness,  
 “ of the weaknes of my body, and the  
 “ far greater weaknes of my Soul; but  
 “ this doth rather beget indignation and  
 “ discontent, than true humility in my  
 “ spirit: and though I should come to  
 “ think meanly of my self, yet I cannot  
 “ endure that others should think so too.  
 “ In a word, when I reflect on my highest  
 “ and most specious attainments, I have  
 “ reason to suspect that they are all but  
 “ the effects of nature, the issues of self-  
 “ love acting under several disguises: and  
 “ this principle is so powerful and so  
 “ deeply rooted in me, that I can never  
 “ hope to be delivered from the dominion  
 “ of it. I may tofs and turn as a door  
 “ on the hinges, but can never get clear  
 “ off, or be quite unhing’d of *Self*, which  
 “ is still the center of all my motions:  
 “ So that all the advantage I can draw  
 “ from the discovery of Religion, is but  
 “ to see at a huge distance that felicity  
 “ which I am not able to reach; like a  
 “ man

“ man in a shipwreck, who discerns the  
“ land, and envies the happiness of those  
“ who are there, but thinks it impossible  
“ for himself to get ashore.

These, I say, or such like desponding thoughts may arise in the minds of those persons who begin to conceive somewhat more of the nature and excellency of Religion than before : they have spy'd the land, and seen that it is exceeding good; that it floweth with milk and honey ; but they find they have the children of *Anak* to grapple with, many powerful lusts and corruptions to overcome, and they fear, they shall never prevail against them. But why should we give way to such discouraging suggestions ? why should we entertain such unreasonable fears, which damp our spirits, and weaken our hands, and augment the difficulties of our way ? Let us encourage our selves, my dear friend, let us encourage our selves with those mighty aids we are to expect in this spiritual warfare, for greater is he that is for us, than all that can rise up against us ; *The eternal God is our refuge,* and underneath are the everlasting arms. *Let us be strong in the Lord, and the power of his might,*

The unreasonableness of these fears.

Dent. 33.  
27.



*might*, for he it is that shall *tread down*  
*our enemies*: God hath a tender regard  
 unto the Souls of men, and is infinitely  
 willing to promote their welfare: he hath  
 condescended to our weakness, and de-  
 clared with an oath, that he hath no plea-  
 sure in our destruction. There is no such  
 thing as despight or envy lodged in the  
 bosom of that ever blessed Being, whose  
 name and nature is love. He created us  
 at first in a happy condition, and now  
 Psal. 89, when we are fallen from it, *he hath laid*  
 19. *help upon one that is mighty to save*, hath  
 committed the care of our Souls to no  
 meaner person than the eternal Son of his  
 love. It is he that is the captain of our  
 salvation, and what enemies can be too  
 strong for us, when we are fighting under  
 his banners? Did not the Son of God come  
 down from the bosom of his Father, and  
 pitch his tabernacle amongst the sons of  
 men, that he might recover and propagate  
 the divine life, and restore the image of  
 God in their Souls. All the mighty works  
 which he performed, all the sad afflictions  
 which he sustained had this for their scope  
 and design, for this did he labour and toil,  
 for this did he bleed and die: *He was*  
*with*

*with child, he was in pain, and hath he* Esay 26.  
ver. 19.  
*brought forth nothing but wind, hath he  
wrought no deliverance in the earth? shall  
he not see of the travail of his Soul? Cer-* Esay 53.  
ver. 11.  
*tainly it is impossible that this great con-  
trivance of heaven should prove abortive,  
that such a mighty undertaking should  
fail and miscarry: it hath already been  
effectual for the salvation of many thou-  
sands, who were once as far from the  
kingdom of Heaven as we can suppose our  
selves to be, and our High Priest continu-* Heb. 7.  
24, 25.  
*eth for ever, and is able to save them to the  
uttermost that come unto God by him: He  
is tender and compassionate, he knoweth  
our infirmities, and had experience of our  
temptations, A bruised reed will he not* Matt. 12.  
20.  
*break, and smoking flax will he not quench,  
till he send forth judgment unto victory.  
He hath sent out his holy Spirit, whose  
sweet but powerful breathings are still  
moving up and down in the world, to  
quicken and revive the Souls of men, and  
awaken them unto the sense and feeling  
of those divine things for which they were  
made, and is ready to assist such weak and  
languishing creatures as we are in our  
essays towards holiness and felicity; and  
when*

when once it hath taken hold of a Soul, and kindled in it the smallest spark of divine love, it will be sure to preserve and  
 Cant. 8.7. cherish, and bring it forth into a flame, which many waters shall not quench, neither shall the floods be able to drown it.

Whenever this day begins to dawn, and  
 2 Pet: 1. 19. the *day-star to arise in the heart*, it will easily dispel the powers of darkness, and make ignorance and folly, and all the corrupt and selfish affections of men flee away as fast before it as the shades of night, when the sun cometh out of his chambers:

Prov. 4. 18. for *the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the*

Psal. 84.7. *perfect day: They shall go on from strength to strength, till every one of them appear before God in Sion.*

Why should we think it impossible that true goodness and universal love should ever come to sway and prevail in our Souls? Is not this their primitive state and condition, their native and genuine constitution as they came first from the hands of their Maker? Sin and corruption are but usurpers, and though they have long kept the possession, yet *from the beginning it was not so.* That inordinate self-love which one  
 would

would think were rooted in our very being, and interwoven with the constitution of our nature, is nevertheless of foreign extraction, and had no place at all in the state of integrity. We have still so much reason left as to condemn it; our understandings are easily convinced that we ought to be wholly devoted to him from whom we have our being, and to love him infinitely more than our selves; who is infinitely better than we; and our wills would readily comply with this, if they were not disordered and put out of tune: and is not he who made our Souls, able to rectifie and mend them again? Shall we not be able by his assistance to vanquish and expel those violent intruders, *and turn* Heb. 11: *unto flight the armies of the aliens?* 34.

No sooner shall we take up arms in this holy war, but we shall have all the Saints on earth, and all the Angels in Heaven, engaged on our party: the holy Church throughout the world is daily interceding with God for the success of all such endeavours, and doubtless those heavenly hosts above are nearly concerned in the interests of Religion, and infinitely desirous to see the divine life thriving and



prevailing in this inferiour world; and that the will of God may be done by us on earth, as it is done by themselves in Heaven: and may we not then encourage our selves as the Prophet did his servant, when he shewed him the horses and cha-

<sup>2</sup>Kings 6.  
16, 17.

riots of fire, *Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be against us.*

We must do what we can, and depend on the divine assistance.

<sup>1</sup>Chron.  
22. 16.

Away then with all perplexing fears and desponding thoughts: to undertake vigorously, and rely confidently on the divine assistance is more than half the conquest: *Let us arise and be doing, and the Lord will be with us.* It is true, Religion in the Souls of men is the immediate work of God, and all our natural endeavours can neither produce it alone, nor merit those supernatural aids by which it must be wrought: The Holy Ghost must come upon us, and the power of the highest must overshadow us, before that holy thing can be begotten, and Christ be formed in us. But yet we must not expect that this whole work should be done without any concurring endeavours of our own: we must not lye loitering in the ditch, and wait till Omnipotence pulls us from thence: no, no; we must bestir our selves, and

and actuate those powers which we have already received: We must put forth our selves to our utmost capacities, and then we may hope that *our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* All the art and industry of man cannot form the smallest herb, or make a stalk of corn to grow in the field; it is the energy of nature, and the influences of Heaven which produce this effect; it is God *who causeth the grass to grow, and herb for the service of man;* and yet no body will say that the labours of the husbandman are useless or unnecessary. So likewise the human Soul is immediately created by God; it is he who both formeth and enliveneth the child, and yet he hath appointed the marriage-bed as the ordinary mean for the propagation of mankind. Though there must intervene a stroke of Omnipotence to effect this mighty change in our Souls, yet ought we to do what we can to fit and prepare our selves; for we must break up our fallow ground, and root out the weeds, and pull up the thorns, that so we may be more ready to receive the seeds of grace and the dew of Heaven. It is true, God hath been found of some who sought

F z him

him not; he hath cast himself in their way, who were quite out of his; he hath laid hold upon them, and stopt their course on a sudden; for so was *S. Paul* converted in his journey to *Damascus*. But certainly, this is not God's ordinary method of dealing with men, though he hath not tied himself to means, yet he hath tied us to the use of them; and we have never more reason to expect the divine assistance, than when we are doing our utmost endeavours. It shall therefore be my next work to shew, what course we ought to take for attaining that blessed temper I have hitherto described. But here, if in delivering my own thoughts, I shall chance to differ from what is or may be said by others in this matter, I would not be thought to contradict and oppose them, more than physicians do when they prescribe several remedies for the same disease, which perhaps are all useful and good. Every one may propose the method he judges most proper and convenient, but he doth not thereby pretend that the cure can never be effected unless that be exactly observed. I doubt it hath occasioned much unnecessary disquietude to some holy persons, that

they

they have not found such a regular and orderly transaction in their Souls, as they have seen described in books; that they have not passed through all those steps and stages of conversion, which some (who perhaps have felt them in themselves) have too peremptorily prescribed unto others: God hath several ways of dealing with the Souls of men, and it sufficeth if the work be accomplish'd, whatever the methods have been.

Again, though in proposing directions, I must follow that order which the nature of things shall lead to; yet I do not mean that the same method should be so punctually observed in the practice; as if the latter rules were never to be heeded till some considerable time have been spent in practising the former: The directions I intend are mutually conducive one to another, and are all to be perform'd as occasion shall serve, and we find our selves unable to perform them:

But now that I may detain you no longer, if we desire to have our Souls moulded to this holy frame, to become partakers of the divine nature, and have Christ formed in our hearts, we must seriously

We must shun all manner of sin.



resolve and carefully endeavour to avoid  
 and abandon all vicious and sinful practi-  
 ces. There can be no treaty of peace, till  
 once we lay down these weapons of rebel-  
 lion wherewith we fight against Heaven :  
 nor can we expect to have our distempers  
 cured, if we be daily feeding on poison.  
 Every wilful sin, gives a mortal wound to  
 the Soul, and puts it at a greater distance  
 from God and goodness; and we can never  
 hope to have our hearts purified from cor-  
 rupt affections, unless we cleanse our  
 hands from vicious actions. Now in this  
 case we cannot excuse our selves by the  
 pretence of impossibility; for sure our out-  
 ward man is some way in our power, we  
 have some command of our feet and hands  
 and tongue, nay and of our thoughts and  
 fancies too, at least so far as to divert  
 them from impure and sinful objects, and  
 to turn our mind another way: and we  
 should find this power and authority much  
 strengthened and advanced, if we were  
 careful to manage and exercise it. In the  
 mean while I acknowledge our corruptions  
 are so strong, and our temptations so many,  
 that it will require a great deal of sted-  
 fastness and resolution, of watchfulness  
 and

and care, to preserve our selves, even in this degree of innocence and purity.

And first let us inform our selves well, We must know what things are sinful. what those Sins are from which we ought to abstain. And here we must not take our measures from the maxims of the world, or the practices of those whom in charity we account good men. Most people have very light apprehensions of these things, and are not sensible of any fault unless it be gross and flagitious, and scarce reckon any so great as that which they call preciseness: and those who are more serious, do many times allow themselves too great latitude and freedom. Alas! how much pride and vanity, and passion and humour, how much weakness and folly and sin, doth every day show it self in their converse and behaviour? It may be they are humbled for it, and striving against it, and are daily gaining some ground; but then the progress is so small, and their failings so many, that we had need to choose an exacter pattern. Every one of us must answer for himself, and the practices of others will never warrant and secure us. It is the highest folly to regulate our actions by any other standard

than that by which they must be judged.  
 Psal. 119. If ever we would *cleanse our way*, it must  
 9. be *by taking heed thereto according to the*  
 Heb. 4. *word of God: and that word which is quick*  
 12. *and powerful, and sharper than any two-*  
*edged sword, piercing even to the dividing*  
*asunder of soul and spirit, and of the*  
*joynts and marrow, and is a discerner of*  
*the thoughts and intents of the heart,* will  
 certainly discover many things to be sinful  
 and heinous, which pass for very innocent  
 in the eyes of the world: Let us therefore  
 Psal. 17. imitate the Psalmist, who saith, *Concerning*  
 4. *the works of men, by the words of thy lips,*  
*I have kept my self from the path of the*  
*destroyer.* Let us acquaint ourselves well  
 with the strict and holy laws of our Re-  
 ligion: Let us consider the discourses of  
 our blessed Saviour, (especially that divine  
 sermon on the mount) and the writings of  
 his holy Apostles, where an ingenuous and  
 unbyassed mind may clearly discern those  
 limits and bounds by which our actions  
 ought to be confined. And then let us  
 never look upon any sin as light and in-  
 considerable; but be fully perswaded, that  
 the smallest is infinitely heinous in the  
 sight of God, and prejudicial to the Souls

of men; and that if we had the right sense of things, we should be as deeply affected with the least irregularities, as now we are with the greatest crimes.

But now amongst those things which we discover to be sinful, there will be some, unto which, through the disposition of our nature, or long custom, or the indearments of pleasure, we are so much wedded, that it will be like cutting off the right hand, or pulling out the right eye, to abandon them. But must we therefore sit down and wait till all difficulties be over, and every temptation be gone? this were to imitate the fool in the poet, who stood the whole day at the river side, till all the water should run by. We must not indulge our inclinations, as we do little children, till they grow weary of the thing they are unwilling to let go: We must not continue our sinful practices in hopes that the divine grace will one day over-power our spirits, and make us hate them for their own deformity.

We must resist the temptations to sin, by considering the Evils they will draw on us.

Let us suppose the worst, that we are utterly destitute of any supernatural principle, and want that tast by which we should discern and abhor perverse things; yet



yet sure we are capable of some considerations which may be of force to persuade us to this reformation of our lives. If the inward deformity and heinous nature of sin cannot affect us, at least we may be frightened by those dreadful consequences that attend it: That same selfish principle which pusheth us forward unto the pursuit of sinful pleasures, will make us loath to buy them at the rate of everlasting misery. Thus we may encounter self-love with its own weapons, and employ one natural inclination for repressing the exorbitancies of another. Let us therefore accustom ourselves to consider seriously what a fearful thing it must needs be to irritate and offend that infinite Being on whom we hang and depend every moment, who needs but to withdraw his mercies to make us miserable, or his assistance to make us nothing. Let us frequently remember the shortness and uncertainty of our lives, and how that after we have taken a few turns more in the world, and conversed a little longer amongst men, we must all go down unto the dark and silent grave, and carry nothing along with us but anguish and regret for all our sinful enjoyments, and then  
think

think what horror must needs seize the guilty Soul, to find it self naked and all alone before the severe and impartial judge of the world, to render an exact account not only of its more important and considerable transactions, but of every word that the tongue hath uttered, and the swiftest and most secret thought that ever passed through the mind. Let us sometimes represent unto our selves the terrors of that dreadful day, when the foundations of the earth shall be shaken, and the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the present frame of nature be dissolved, and our eyes shall see the blessed Jesus (who came once into the world in all humility to visit us, to purchase pardon for us, and beseech us to accept of it) now appearing in the Majesty of his glory, and descending from Heaven in a flaming fire to take vengeance on those that have despised his mercy, and perished in rebellion against him: when all the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the counsels of the heart shall be made manifest: when those secret impurities and subtile frauds where-  
of

<sup>2</sup> Pet. 3.  
10.

1 Cor. 4. 5.

of the world did never suspect us, shall be exposed and laid open to publick view, and many thousand actions which we never dreamed to be sinful, or else had altogether forgotten, shall be charged home upon our consciences with such evident convictions of guilt, that we shall neither be able to deny nor excuse them. Then shall all the Angels in Heaven, and all the Saints that ever liv'd on the earth, approve that dreadful sentence which shall be passed on wicked men, and those who perhaps did love and esteem them when they liv'd in the world, shall look upon them with indignation and abhorrence, and never make one request for their deliverance. Let us consider the eternal punishments of damned Souls, which are shadowed forth in scripture by metaphors taken from those things that are most terrible and grievous in the world, and yet all do not suffice to convey unto our minds any full apprehension of them. When we have joyn'd together the importance of all these expressions, and added unto them whatever our fancy can conceive of misery and torment, we must still remember that all this comes infinitely short of the truth and reality of the thing. It's

It's true, this is a sad and melancholy subject, there is anguish and horror in the consideration of it; but sure it must be infinitely more dreadful to endure it; and such thoughts as these may be very useful to fright us from the courses that would lead us thither; how fond soever we may be of sinful pleasures, the fear of hell would make us abstain: our most forward inclinations will startle and give back, when pressed with that question in the prophet, *Who amongst us can dwell with everlasting burnings?* Isa. 33. 14.

To this very purpose it is that the terrors of another world are so frequently represented in holy writ, and that in such terms as are most proper to affect and influence a carnal mind: These fears can never suffice to make any person truly good; but certainly they may restrain us from much evil, and have often made way for more ingenuous and kindly impressions.

But it will not suffice to consider these things once and again, nor to form some resolutions of abandoning our sins, unless we maintain a constant guard, and be continually watching against them. Sometimes the mind is awakened to see the  
We must keep a constant watch over our selves.  
dismal



dismal consequences of a vicious life, and straight we are resolved to reform: but alas! it presently falleth asleep, and we lose that prospect which we had of things, and then temptations take the advantage; they sollicit and importune us continually, and so do frequently engage our consent before we are aware. It is the folly and ruin of most people to live at adventure, and take part in every thing that comes in their way, seldom considering what they are about to say or do. If we would have our resolutions take effect, we must take heed unto our ways, and set a watch before the door of our lips, and examine the motions that arise in our hearts, and cause them to tell us whence they come, and whither they go; whether it be pride or passion, or any corrupt and vicious humour that prompteth us to any design, and whether God will be offended, or any body harmed by it. And if we have no time for long reasonings, let us at least turn our eyes towards God, and place ourselves in his presence, to ask his leave and approbation for what we do: Let us consider our selves under the all-seeing eye of that divine Majesty, as in the midst of an  
in.

infinite globe of light, which compasseth us about both behind and before, and pierceth to the innermost corners of our Soul. The sense and remembrance of the divine presence, is the most ready and effectual means, both to discover what is unlawful, and to restrain us from it. There are some things a person could make a shift to palliate or defend, and yet he dares not look Almighty God in the face and adventure upon them. If we look unto him we shall be lightned; if we *set him always before us*, he will *guide us by his eye, and instruct us in the way whercin we ought to walk.*

This care and watchfulness over our actions, must be seconded by frequent and serious reflections upon them, not only that we may obtain the divine mercy and pardon for our sins, by an humble and sorrowful acknowledgment of them; but also that we may reinforce and strengthen our resolutions, and learn to decline or resist the temptations, by which we have been formerly foyl'd. It is an advice worthy of a Christian, though it did first drop from a Heathen pen; that before we betake our selves to rest, we renew and examine

We must often examine our actions.

all

all the passages of the day, that we may have the comfort of what we have done aright, and may redress what we find to have been amiss, and make the shipwrecks of one day be as marks to direct our course in another. This may be called the very art of virtuous living, and would contribute wonderfully to advance our reformation, and preserve our innocency. But withal we must not forget to implore the divine assistance, especially against those sins that do most easily beset us: and though it be supposed that our hearts are not yet moulded into that spiritual frame, which should render our devotions acceptable, yet methinks such considerations as have been proposed to deter us from sin, may also stir us up to some natural seriousness, and make our prayers against it as earnest at least, as they are wont to be against other calamities: and I doubt not, but God, who heareth the cry of the ravens, will have some regard even to such petitions as proceed from those natural passions which himself hath implanted in us. Besides that those prayers against sin will be powerful engagements on ourselves to excite us to watchfulness and  
care;

care; and common ingenuity will make us ashamed to relapse into those faults, which we have lately bewail'd before God, and against which we have begged his assistance.

Thus are we to make the first essay for recovering the divine life, by restraining the natural inclinations, that they break not out into sinful practices: but now I must add, that christian prudence will teach us to abstain from gratifications that are not simply unlawful, and that not only, that we may secure our innocence, which would be in continual hazard, if we should strain our liberty to the utmost point; but also that hereby we may weaken the forces of nature, and teach our appetites to obey. We must do with our selves as prudent parents with their children, who cross their wills in many little indifferent things, to make them manageable and submissive in more considerable instances. He who would mortifie the pride and vanity of his spirit, should stop his ears to the most deserved praises, and sometimes forbear his just vindication from the censures and aspersions of others, especially if they reflect only upon his prudence



and conduct, and not on his virtue and innocence. He who would check a revengeful humour, would do well to deny himself the satisfaction of representing unto others the injuries which he hath sustained; and if we would so take heed to our ways, that we sin not with [our tongue,] we must accustom our selves much to solitude and silence, and sometimes with the Psalmist, *Hold our peace even from good,* till once we have gotten some command over that unruly member. Thus, I say, we may bind up our natural inclinations, and make our appetites more moderate in their cravings, by accustoming them to frequent refusals: But it is not enough to have them under violence and restraint.

We must strive to put our selves out of love with the world,

Our next essay must be to wean our affections from created things, and all the delights and entertainments of the lower life, which sink and depress the Souls of men, and retard their motions toward God and Heaven: And this we must do by possessing our minds with a deep persuasion of the vanity and emptiness of worldly enjoyments. This is an ordinary theme, and every body can make declamations

clamations upon it; but alas! how few understand and believe what they say? These notions float in our brains, and come sliding off our tongues, but we have no deep impression of them on our spirits; we feel not the truth which we pretend to believe. We can tell that all the glory and splendour, all the pleasures and enjoyments of the world, are vanity and nothing; and yet these nothings take up all our thoughts, and ingross all our affections, they stifle the better inclinations of our Soul, and inveigle us into many a sin. It may be in a sober mood, we give them the slight, and resolve to be no longer deluded with them; but these thoughts seldom out-live the next temptation, the vanities which we have shut out at the door get in at a postern: there are still some pretensions, some hopes that flatter us; and after we have been frustrated a thousand times, we must continually be repeating the experiment: The least difference of circumstances is enough to delude us, and make us expect that satisfaction in one thing, which we have missed in another: but could we once get clearly off, and come to a real and serious con-

tempt of worldly things, this were a very considerable advancement in our way. The Soul of man is of a vigorous and active nature, and hath in it a raging and unextinguishable thirst, an immaterial kind of fire, always catching at some object or other, in conjunction wherewith it thinks to be happy; and were it once rent from the world, and all the bewitching enjoyments under the sun, it would quickly search after some higher and more excellent object, to satisfy its ardent and importunate cravings, and being no longer dazzled with glittering vanities, would fix on that supreme and all-sufficient Good, where it would discover such beauty and sweetness as would charm and over-power all its affections. The love of the world, and the love of God, are like the scales of a ballance, as the one falleth, the other doth rise: when our natural inclinations prosper, and the creature is exalted in our Soul, Religion is faint, and doth languish; but when earthly objects wither away, and lose their beauty, and the Soul begins to cool and flagg in its prosecution of them, then the seeds of grace take root, and the divine life begins to flourish and  
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prevail. It doth therefore nearly concern us to convince our selves of the emptiness and vanity of creature-enjoyments, and reason our heart out of love with them: let us seriously consider all that our reason, or our faith, our own experience, or the observation of others can suggest to this effect; let us ponder the matter over and over, and fix our thoughts on this truth, till we become really persuaded of it. Amidst all our pursuits and designs, let us stop and ask our selves, for what end is all this? At what do I aim? Can the gross and muddy pleasures of sense, or a heap of white and yellow earth, or the esteem and affection of silly creatures like my self, satisfy a rational and immortal Soul? Have I not tried these things already? Will they have a higher relish, and yield me more contentment tomorrow than yesterday, or the next year than they did the last? There may be some little difference betwixt that which I am now pursuing, and that which I enjoy'd before; but sure my former enjoyments did shew as pleasant, and promise as fair before I attained them: like the rain-bow they looked very glorious at a distance, but



when I approached, I found nothing but emptiness and vapour. O what a poor thing would the life of man be, if it were capable of no higher enjoyments!

I cannot insist on this subject, and there is the less need when I remember to whom I am writing. Yes (my dear friend) you have had as great experience of the emptiness and vanity of humane things, and have at present as few worldly engagements as any that I know. I have sometimes reflected on those passages of your life wherewith you have been pleased to acquaint me; and methinks through all I can discern a design of the divine providence to wean your affections from every thing here below. The trials you have had of those things which the world doats upon, have taught you to despise them, and you have found by experience that neither the endowments of nature, nor the advantages of fortune are sufficient for happiness: that every rose hath its thorn, and there may be a worm at the root of the fairest gourd, some secret and undiscerned grief which may make a person deserve the pity of those who perhaps do admire or envy their supposed felicity.

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If any earthly comforts have got too much of your heart, I think they have been your relations and friends, and the dearest of these are removed out of the world, so that you must raise your mind towards Heaven, when you would think upon them. Thus God hath provided that your heart may be loosed from the world, and that he may not have any rival in your affection, which I have always observed to be so large and unbounded, so noble and dis-interested, that no inferiour object can answer or deserve it.

When we have got our corruptions restrain'd, and our natural appetites and inclinations towards worldly things in some measure subdued, we must proceed to such exercises as have a more immediate tendency to excite and awaken the divine life: And first let us endeavour conscientiously to perform those duties which Religion doth require, and whereunto it would incline us if it did prevail in our Souls. If we cannot get our inward disposition presently changed, let us study at least to regulate our outward deportment: if our hearts be not yet inflam'd with divine love, let us however own our alle-

We must do those outward actions that are commanded.

giance to that infinite Majesty, by attending his service, and listening to his word, by speaking reverently of his name, and praising his goodness, and exhorting others to serve and obey him. If we want that charity and those bowels of compassion which we ought to have towards our neighbours, yet must we not omit any occasion of doing them good: If our hearts be haughty and proud, we must nevertheless study a modest and humble deportment. These external performances are of little value in themselves, yet may they help us forward to better things: The Apostle indeed telleth us, *that bodily exercise profiteth little*; but he seems not to affirm that it is altogether useles; it is always good to be doing what we can, for then God is wont to pity our weakness, and assist our feeble endeavours: and when true charity and humility and other graces of the divine spirit come to take root in our Souls, they will exert themselves more freely and with the less difficulty, if we have before been accustomed to express them in our outward conversations. Nor need we fear the imputation of hypocrisy, tho' our actions do thus somewhat

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out-run our affections, seeing they do still proceed from a sense of our duty, and our design is not to appear better than we are, but that we may really become so.

But as inward acts have a more immediate influence on the Soul, to mould it to a right temper and frame, so ought we to be most frequent and sedulous in the exercise of them. Let us be often lifting up our hearts towards God; and if we do not say that we love him above all things, let us at least acknowledge that it is our duty and would be our happiness so to do: Let us lament the dishonour done unto him by foolish and sinful men, and applaud the praises and adorations that are given him by that blessed and glorious company above: Let us resign and yield our selves up unto him a thousand times to be governed by his laws, and disposed of at his pleasure; and though our stubborn hearts should start back and refuse, yet let us tell him we are convinced that his will is always just and good, and therefore desire him to do with us whatsoever he pleaseth whether we will or not. And so, for begetting in us an universal charity towards men, we must be frequently putting

We must endeavour to form internal acts of devotion, charity, &c.

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ting up wishes for their happiness, and blessing every person that we see; and when we have done any thing for the relief of the miserable, we may second it with earnest desires that God would take care of them, and deliver them out of all their distresses.

Thus should we exercise our selves unto godliness, and when we are imploying the powers that we have, the Spirit of God is wont to strike in, and elevate these acts of our Soul beyond the pitch of nature, and give them a divine impression; and after the frequent reiteration of these we shall find our selves more inclined unto them, they flowing with greater freedom and ease.

Consideration a great instrument of Religion.

I shall mention but two other means for begetting that holy and divine temper of spirit, which is the subject of the present discourse: And the first is a deep and serious consideration of the truths of our Religion, and that both as to the certainty and importance of them. The assent which is ordinarily given to divine truths is very faint and languid, very weak and ineffectual, flowing only from a blind inclination to follow that religion which is  
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in fashion, or a lazy indifferency and unconcernedness whether things be so or not. Men are unwilling to quarrel with the religion of their country, and since all their neighbours are christians, they are content to be so too; but they are seldom at the pains to consider the evidences of those truths, or to ponder the importance and tendency of them: and thence it is that they have so little influence on their affections and practice. Those *spiritless and paralitick thoughts* (as one doth rightly term them) are not able to move the will, and direct the hand. We must therefore endeavour to work up our minds to a serious belief and full persuasion of divine truths, unto a sense and feeling of spiritual things: Our thoughts must dwell upon them till we be both convinced of them, and deeply affected with them. Let us urge forward our spirits, and make them approach the invisible world, and fix our mind upon immaterial things, till we clearly perceive that these are no dreams, nay that all things are dreams and shadows besides them. When we look about us and behold the beauty and magnificence of this goodly frame, the order and harmony

mony of the whole creation, let our thoughts from thence take their flight towards that omnipotent wisdom and goodness which did at first produce, and doth still establish and uphold the same. When we reflect upon our selves, let us consider that we are not a meer piece of organized matter, a curious and well-contrived engine: that there is more in us than flesh, and blood, and bones, even a divine spark, capable to know, and love, and enjoy our Maker; and tho' it be now exceedingly clogged with its dull and lumpish companion, yet ere long it shall be delivered, and can subsist without the body, as well as that can do without the cloaths which we throw off at our pleasure. Let us often withdraw our thoughts from this earth, this scene of misery, and folly, and sin, and raise them towards that more vast and glorious world, whose innocent and blessed inhabitants solace themselves eternally in the divine presence, and know no other passion, but an unmixed joy, and an unbounded love. And then consider how the blessed Son of God came down to this lower world to live among us and die for us, that he might bring us to a

portion of the same felicity; and think how he hath overcome the sharpness of death, and opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers, and is now set down on the *right hand of the Majesty on high*, Heb. 1. 3. and yet is not the less mindful of us, but receiveth our prayers, and presenteth them unto his father, and is daily visiting his church with the influences of his Spirit, as the sun reacheth us with his beams.

The serious and frequent consideration <sup>To beget</sup> of these and such other divine truths, is <sup>divine</sup> the most proper method to beget that <sup>love, we</sup> lively faith which is the foundation of <sup>must consi-</sup> Religion, the spring and root of the di- <sup>der the</sup> vine life. Let me further suggest some <sup>excellency</sup> particular subjects of meditation for pro- <sup>of the di-</sup> ducing the several branches of it. And <sup>vine na-</sup> first to inflame our Souls with the love of God, let us consider the excellency of his nature, and his love and kindness towards us. It is little we know of the divine perfections, and yet that little may suffice to fill our Souls with admiration and love, to ravish our affections, as well as to raise our wonder; for we are not meerly creatures of sense, that we should be incapable of any other affection but that which en-  
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treth by the eyes. The character of any excellent person whom we have never seen will many times engage our hearts, and make us hugely concerned in all his interests : and what is it I pray you that engages us so much to those with whom we converse? I cannot think that it is meerly the colour of their face, or their comely proportions, for then we should fall in love with statues, and pictures, and flowers : these outward accomplishments may a little delight the eye, but would never be able to prevail so much on the heart, if they did not represent some vital perfection. We either see or apprehend some greatness of mind, or vigour of spirit, or sweetness of disposition, some sprightliness, or wisdom, or goodness, which charm our spirit, and command our love. Now these perfections are not obvious to the sight, the eyes can only discern the signs and effects of them ; and if it be the understanding that directs the affection, and vital perfections prevail with it, certainly the excellencies of the divine nature (the traces whereof we cannot but discover in every thing we behold) would not fail to engage our hearts, if we did seriously view  
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and regard them. Shall we not be infinitely more transported with that almighty wisdom and goodness which fills the universe, and displays it self in all the parts of the creation, which establisheth the frame of nature, and turneth the mighty wheels of providence, and keepeth the world from disorder and ruin; than with the faint rays of the same perfections which we meet with in our fellow-creatures? Shall we doat on the scattered pieces of a rude and imperfect picture, and never be affected with the original beauty? This were an unaccountable stupidity and blindness: whatever we find lovely in a friend or in a saint ought not to engross; but to elevate our affection: we should conclude with our selves, that if there be so much sweetness in a drop, there must be infinitely more in the fountain; if there be so much splendor in a ray, what must the sun be in its glory?

Nor can we pretend the remoteness of the object, as if God were at too great a distance for our converse or our love: *he is not far from every one of us, for in him* Act. 17.27. *we live and move and have our being: we cannot open our eyes, but we must behold*  
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some footsteps of his glory, and we cannot turn them toward him, but we shall be sure to find his intent upon us, waiting as it were to catch a look, ready to entertain the most intimate fellowship and communion with us. Let us therefore endeavour to raise our minds to the clearest conceptions of the divine nature: Let us consider all that his works do declare or his word doth discover of him unto us; and let us especially contemplate that visible representation of him which was made in our own nature by his Son; who

*John. 1. 3. was the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and who appeared in the world to discover at once what God is, and what we ought to be.* Let us represent him unto our minds as we find him described in the Gospel; and there we shall behold the perfections of the divine nature, though covered with the vail of humane infirmities: and when we have fram'd unto our selves the clearest notion that we can of a Being, infinite in power, in wisdom, and goodness, the author and fountain of all perfections, let

*Lam. 3. 51. us fix the eyes of our Soul upon it, that*

*Psal. 39. 3. our eyes may affect our heart, and while we are musing the fire will burn.* Espe

Especially if hereunto we add the con-<sup>We should meditate on his goodness and love,</sup>sideration of God's favour and good-will towards us : nothing is more powerful to engage our affection than to find that we are beloved. Expressions of kindness are always pleasing and acceptable unto us, though the person should be otherways mean and contemptible : but to have the love of one who is altogether lovely, to know that the glorious Majesty of Heaven hath any regard unto us, how must it astonish and delight us, how must it overcome our spirits, and melt our hearts, and put our whole Soul into a flame ! Now as the word of God is full of the expressions of his love towards man, so all his works do loudly proclaim it : he gave us our Being, and by preserving us in it, doth renew the donation every moment. He hath placed us in a rich and well furnished world, and liberally provided for all our necessities : he raineth down blessings from Heaven upon us, and causeth the earth to bring forth our provision : he giveth us our food and raiment, and while we are spending the productions of one year, he is preparing for us against another. He sweetneth our lives with innumerable comforts,

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and gratifieth every faculty with suitable objects : The eye of his providence is always upon us, and he watcheth for our safety when we are fast asleep, neither minding him nor our selves. But least we should think these testimonies of his kindness less considerable, because they are the easie issues of his omnipotent power, and do not put him to any trouble or pain, he hath taken a more wonderful method to endear himself to us: he hath testified his affection to us, by suffering as well as by doing; and because he could not suffer in his own nature, he assumed ours. The eternal Son of God did cloath himself with the infirmities of our flesh, and left the company of those innocent and blessed spirits, who knew well how to love and adore him, that he might dwell among men, and wrestle with the obstinacy of that rebellious race, to reduce them to their allegiance and felicity, and then to offer himself up as a sacrifice and propitiation for them. I remember one of the poets hath an ingenious fancy to express the passion wherewith he found himself overcome after a long resistance; That the God of love had shot all his golden arrows  
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at him, but could never pierce his heart, till at length he put himself into the bow, and darted himself straight into his breast. Methinks this doth some way adumbrate God's method of dealing with men: he had long contended with a stubborn world, and thrown down many a blessing upon them, and when all his other gifts could not prevail, he at last made a gift of himself, to testifie his affection, and ingage theirs. The account which we have of our Saviour's life in the Gospel doth all along present us with the story of his love; all the pains that he took and the troubles that he endured were the wonderful effects and uncontrollable evidences of it. But O that last, that dismal scene! Is it possible to remember it and question his kindness, or deny him ours? Here, here it is (my dear friend) that we should fix our most serious and solemn thoughts, *that* Eph. 3. 17; *Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith,* 18, 19. *that we being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God.*

We ought also frequently to reflect on those particular tokens of favour and love, which God hath bestowed on our selves; how long he hath born with our follies and sins, and waited to be gracious unto us, wrestling, as it were, with the stubbornness of our hearts, and essaying every method to reclaim us. We should keep a register in our minds of all the eminent blessings and deliverances we have met with, some whereof have been so conveyed, that we might clearly perceive they were not the issues of chance, but the gracious effects of the divine favour, and the signal returns of our prayers. Nor ought we to imbitter the thoughts of these things with any harsh or unworthy suspicion, as if they were designed on purpose to enhance our guilt, and heighten our eternal damnation. No, no, my friend, God is love, and he hath no pleasure in the ruine of his creatures: if they abuse his goodness, and turn his grace into wantonness, and thereby plunge themselves into the greater depth of guilt and misery, this is the effect of their obstinate wickedness, and not the design of those benefits which he bestows.

If these considerations had once beget-  
ten in our hearts a real love and affection  
towards Almighty God, that would easily  
lead us unto the other branches of Reli-  
gion, and therefore I shall need say the  
less of them.

We shall find our hearts enlarged in cha-  
rity towards men, by considering the rela-  
tion wherein they stand unto God, and the  
impreses of his image which are stamped  
upon them. They are not only his crea-  
tures, the workmanship of his hands, but  
such of whom he taketh special care, and  
for whom he hath a very dear and tender  
regard, having laid the designs of their  
happiness before the foundations of the  
world, and being willing to live and con-  
verse with them to all the ages of eter-  
nity. The meanest and most contemptible  
person whom we behold, is the off-spring  
of Heaven, one of the children of the  
most High; and however unworthy he  
might behave himself of that relation, so  
long as God hath not abdicated and dis-  
owned him by a final sentence, he will  
have us to acknowledge him as one of  
his, and as such to imbrace him with a  
sincere and cordial affection. You know

To beget  
charity, we  
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what a great concernment we are wont to have for those that do any ways belong to the person whom we love, how gladly we lay hold on every opportunity to gratifie the child or servant of a friend; and sure our love towards God would as naturally spring forth in charity towards men, did we mind the interest that he is pleased to take in them, and consider that every Soul is dearer unto him, than all the material world; and that he did not account the blood of his Son too great a price for their redemption.

That they  
carry his  
image up-  
on them.

Again, as all men stand in a near relation to God, so they have still so much of his image stamped on them, as may oblige and excite us to love them: In some this image is more eminent and conspicuous, and we can discern the lovely tracts of wisdom and goodness; and though in others it be miserably sullied and defaced, yet is it not altogether rased, some liniments at least do still remain. All men are endued with rational and immortal Souls, with understandings and wills capable of the highest and most excellent things; and if they be at present disordered and put out of tune by wickedness  
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and folly, this may indeed move our compassion, but ought not in reason to extinguish our love. When we see a person of a rugged humour and perverse disposition, full of malice and dissimulation, very foolish and very proud; it is hard to fall in love with an object that presents it self unto us under an idea so little grateful and lovely. But when we shall consider these evil qualities as the diseases and distempers of a Soul which in it self is capable of all that wisdom and goodness wherewith the best of Saints have ever been adorned, and which may one day come to be raised unto such heights of perfections as shall render it a fit companion for the holy Angels, this will turn our aversion into pity, and make us behold him with such resentments, as we should have when we did look on a beautiful body that were mangled with wounds, or disfigured by some loathsome disease; and however we hate the vices, we shall not cease to love the man.

In the next place, for purifying our Souls, and dis-intangling our affections from the pleasures and enjoyments of this lower life, let us frequently ponder the excellency

To begin purify, we should consider the dignity of our nature.

lency and dignity of our nature, and what a shameful and unworthy thing it is for so noble and divine a creature as the Soul of man, to be sunk and immerfed in brutish and sensual lusts, or amused with airy and phantastical delights, and so to lose the relish of solid and spiritual pleasures; that the beast should be fed and pampered, and the man and the christian be starved in us. Did we but mind who we are, and for what we were made, this would teach us in a right sense to reverence and stand in awe of our selves, it would beget a holy modesty and shamefacedness, and make us very shy and reserved in the use of the most innocent and allowable pleasures.

We should meditate oft on the joys of Heaven.

It will be very effectual to the same purpose, that we frequently raise our minds towards heaven, and represent to our thoughts the joys that are at God's right hand, *those pleasures that endure for evermore; for every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.* If our heavenly country be much in our thoughts, it will make us as *strangers and pilgrims to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the Soul,* and keep our selves

*unspotted from this world*, that we may be fit for the enjoyments and felicities of the other. But then we must see that our notions of Heaven be not gross and carnal, that we dream not of a *Mahometan* paradise, nor rest on those metaphors and similitudes by which these joys are sometimes represented, for this might perhaps have a quite contrary effect: it might intangle us further in carnal affections, and we should be ready to indulge our selves in a very liberal fore-taste of those pleasures wherein we had placed our everlasting felicity. But when we come once to conceive aright of those pure and spiritual pleasures, when the happiness we propose to our selves is from the sight and love and enjoyment of God, and our minds are filled with the hopes and forethoughts of that blessed estate, O how mean and contemptible will all things here below appear in our eyes? with what disdain shall we reject the gross and muddy pleasures, that would deprive us of those celestial enjoyments, or any way unfit and indispose us for them.



Humility  
ariseeth  
from the  
considera-  
tion of our  
failings.

The last branch of Religion is *Humility*, and sure we can never want matter of consideration for begetting it: all our wickednesses and imperfections, all our follies and our sins may help to pull down that fond and overweening conceit which we are apt to entertain of our selves. That which makes any body esteem us, is their knowledge or apprehension of some little good, and their ignorance of a great deal of evil that may be in us: were they thoroughly acquainted with us, they would quickly change their opinion. The thoughts that pass in our heart in the best and most serious day of our life being exposed unto publick view, would render us either hateful or ridiculous: and now however we conceal our failings from one another, yet sure we are conscious of them our selves, and some serious reflections upon them, would much qualifie and allay the vanity of our spirits. Thus holy men have come really to think worse of themselves, than of any other person in the world: not but that they knew that gross and scandalous vices are in their nature more heinous than the surprisals of temptations and infirmity; but because they

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were much more intent on their own miscarriages, than on those of their neighbours, and did consider all the aggravations of the one, and every thing that might be supposed to diminish and alleviate the other.

But it is well observed by a pious writer, that the deepest and most pure humility doth not so much arise from the consideration of our own faults and defects, as from a calm and quiet contemplation of the divine purity and goodness. Our spots never appear so clearly, as when we place them before this infinite light; and we never seem less in our own eyes, than when we look down upon our selves from on high. O how little, how nothing do all those shadows of perfection then appear, for which we are wont to value our selves! That humility which cometh from a view of our own sinfulness and misery, is more turbulent and boisterous; but the other layeth us full as low, and wanteth nothing but that anguish and vexation wherewith our Souls are apt to boil when they are the nearest object of our thoughts.

Thoughts  
of God,  
give us  
the lowest  
thoughts  
of our  
selves.

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Prayer another instrument of Religion.

There remains yet another means for begetting a holy and religious disposition in the Soul; and that is fervent and hearty prayer. Holiness is the gift of God; indeed the greatest gift he doth bestow, or we are capable to receive, and he hath promised his holy Spirit to those that ask it of him: in prayer we make the nearest approaches unto God, and lie open to the influences of Heaven: Then it is that the sun of Righteousness doth visit us with his directest rays, and dissipateth our darkness, and imprinteth his image on our Souls. I cannot now insist on the advantages of this exercise, or the dispositions wherewith it ought to be performed; and there is no need I should, there being so many books that treat on this subject: I shall only tell you, that as there is one sort of prayer wherein we make use of the voice which is necessary in publick, and may sometimes have its own advantages in private; and another wherein though we utter no sound, yet we conceive the expressions and form the words, as it were, in our minds; so there is a third and more sublime kind of prayer, wherein the Soul takes a higher flight, and having collected

The advantages of mental prayer.

all its forces by long and serious meditation, it darteth it self (if I may so speak) towards God in sighs and groans and thoughts too big for expression. As when after a deep contemplation of the divine perfections appearing in all his works of wonder, it addresseth it self unto him in the profoundest adoration of his Majesty and Glory: or when after sad reflections on its vileness and miscarriages, it prostrates it self before him with the greatest confusion and sorrow, not daring to lift up its eyes, or utter one word in his presence: or when having well considered the beauty of holiness, and the unspeakable felicity of those that are truly good, it panteth after God, and sendeth up such vigorous and ardent desires, as no words can sufficiently express, continuing and repeating each of these acts as long as it finds it self upheld by the force and impulse of the previous meditation.

This mental prayer is of all other the most effectual to purifie the Soul, and dispose it unto a holy and religious temper; and may be termed the great secret of devotion, and one of the most powerful instruments of the divine life: and it may  
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be the Apostle hath a peculiar respect unto it when he saith, that *the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, making intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered, or, as the original may bear, that cannot be worded.* Yet I do not so recommend this sort of prayer, as to supersede the use of the other; for we have so many several things to pray for, and every petition of this nature, requireth so much time, and so great an intention of spirit, that it were not easie therein to overtake them all: to say nothing that the deep sighs and heavings of the heart which are wont to accompany it, are something oppressive to nature, and make it hard to continue long in them. But certainly a few of these inward aspirations will do more than a great many fluent and melting expressions.

Religion is  
to be ad-  
vanced by  
the same  
means by  
which it is  
begun.

Thus (my dear friend) I have briefly proposed the method which I judge proper for moulding the Soul into a holy frame; and the same means which serve to beget this divine temper, must still be practised for strengthening and advancing it: and therefore I shall recommend but one more for that purpose, and 'tis the  
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frequent and conscientious use of that holy Sacrament, which is peculiarly appointed to nourish and increase the spiritual life, when once it is begotten in the Soul. All the instruments of Religion do meet together in this ordinance; and while we address our selves unto it, we are put to practise all the rules which were mentioned before. Then it is that we make the severest survey of our actions, and lay the strictest obligations on our selves; then are our minds raised to the highest contempt of the world, and every grace doth exercise it self with the greatest activity and vigour: all the subjects of contemplation do there present themselves unto us with the greatest advantage; and then, if ever, doth the Soul make its most powerful sallies towards Heaven, and assault it with a holy and acceptable force. And certainly the neglect or careless performance of this duty, is one of the chief causes that be-dwarfs our Religion, and makes us continue of so low a size.

But it is time I should put a close to this letter, which is grown to a far greater bulk than at first I intended: If these  
poor

poor papers can do you the smallest service, I shall think my self very happy in this undertaking; at least I am hopeful you will kindly accept the sincere endeavours of a person who would fain acquit himself of some part of that which he owes you.



## A Prayer.

AND now, O most gracious God;  
 ' Father and fountain of mercy and  
 ' goodness, who hast blessed us with the  
 ' knowledge of our happiness, and the  
 ' way that leadeth unto it, excite in our  
 ' Souls such ardent desires after the one,  
 ' as may put us forth to the diligent pro-  
 ' secution of the other. Let us neither  
 ' presume on our own strength, nor distrust  
 ' thy divine assistance; but while we are  
 ' doing our utmost endeavours, teach us  
 ' still to depend on thee for success. Open  
 ' our eyes, O God, and teach us out of  
 ' thy law. Bless us with an exact and  
 ' tender sense of our duty, and a know-  
 ' ledge to discern perverse things. O  
 ' that

‘ that our ways were directed to keep thy  
‘ statutes, then shall we not be ashamed  
‘ when we have respect unto all thy com-  
‘ mandments. Possess our hearts with a  
‘ generous and holy disdain of all those  
‘ poor enjoyments which this world hold-  
‘ eth out to allure us, that they may  
‘ never be able to inveigle our affections,  
‘ or betray us to any sin: Turn away our  
‘ eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken  
‘ thou us in thy law. Fill our Souls with  
‘ such a deep sense and full persuasion of  
‘ those great truths which thou hast re-  
‘ veal’d in the Gospel, as may influence  
‘ and regulate our whole conversation,  
‘ and that the life which we henceforth  
‘ live in the flesh, we may live through  
‘ faith in the Son of God. O that the  
‘ infinite perfections of thy blessed nature,  
‘ and the astonishing expressions of thy  
‘ goodness and love, may conquer and  
‘ over-power our hearts, that they may  
‘ be constantly rising towards thee in  
‘ flames of devoutest affection, and enlarg-  
‘ ing themselves in sincere and cordial  
‘ love towards all the world for thy sake:  
‘ and that we may cleanse our selves from  
‘ all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfect-



ing holiness in thy fear, without which  
we can never hope to behold and enjoy  
thee. Finally, O God, grant that the  
consideration of what thou art, and  
what we our selves are, may both hum-  
ble and lay us low before thee, and also  
stir up in us the strongest and most ar-  
dent aspirations towards thee. We de-  
sire to resign and give up our selves to  
the conduct of thy holy Spirit, lead us  
in thy truth and teach us, for thou art  
the God of our salvation, guide us with  
thy counsel, and afterwards receive us  
unto glory, for the merits and inter-  
cession of thy blessed Son our Saviour.

*Amen.*





T H E  
 Superiour Excellency  
 O F T H E  
**RELIGIOUS.**

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P R O V. XII. 26.

*The Righteous is more excellent  
 than his Neighbour.*

**H**E who considereth the excellency and advantage of *Piety* and *Religion*, how conformable it is to the best principle of our nature, and how profitable to our interests, may justly wonder and be surprized at the bad entertainment it receives in the world: and easily conclude, that this must needs flow from some gross mistakes about it, and prejudices against it, since it is so natural to us to love that which is good, and delight in that which is amiable, when things are not misrepresented.

Certainly all who are enemies to *Holiness* have taken up false measures, and disadvantageous notions of it. The sensual person hateth it as harsh and unplea-

I 2 fant,

fant, doing violence to his carnal appetites, and looks on *Religion* as a contrivance to deprive and rob him of the pleasures of this world, by proposing those of another. The politick wit flights it as foolish and imprudent; and tho' he acknowledge it a necessary instrument of government, a good device to over-awe a multitude, yet he counts it a great weaknes to be further concerned in it than may be consistent with, and subservient to secular designs. Again the *Gallants* of our age despise it as a base and ignoble temper, unworthy of a high birth and gentile education, incident to meaner Souls, proceeding from cowardly and superstitious fear, depressing the mind, and rendring it incapable of high and aspiring thoughts. Hence they make it their business to pour contempt upon *Piety*, and advance the reputation of those vicious courses which themselves have embraced: and because there are yet some left, who by practising and recommending *Vertue*, do oppose and condemn their lewd practices, they study to avenge themselves on them by the persecution of their tongues, and all the scoffs and reproaches they can invent and utter: which hath proved a mean most unhappily successful

cessful to deter many weak minds from goodness, making them choose to be wicked, that they may not be laugh'd at.

It is to discover the grossness of this mistake, and expose the absurdities and unreasonableness of these principles and practices; to vindicate the excellency of *Piety*, and to recommend it to all truly generous Souls, that we have made choice of this text; which tells us in short and plain terms, that, *The Righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour.*

None can be so little acquainted with the *Scripture-dialect*, as not to know that tho' *Righteousness* in its truest acceptation importeth only the observation of those duties we owe our neighbour; yet it is usually taken more largely for *Piety* and *Vertue* in general; and good reason too, since there is no part of our duty but we owe it as a debt unto God; no exercise of *Religion* but it is an act of justice; whence the clear importance of the text is, that whatever excellency other persons may pretend to, the pious and religious men are the truly noble and generous persons in the world, as the Psalmist expresseth it, *The Saints are excellent ones in the earth.*



Now we shall not trouble you with any further explication of the words, which are so clear, or with any division of a proposition so simple, but shall illustrate and confirm the assertion by producing such undoubted evidences of nobleness and excellency as are proper to *Godliness*, and to those who practise it; where we may have occasion to hint at such characters of a pious man, as, besides the general design, may perhaps serve to put us in mind of some parts of our duty which we are not so careful to observe; and which therefore may be useful even to those who have already embraced the practice of *Religion*.

Being to speak of the nobleness and excellency of *Religion*, it may be expected we should say something of its origin and extract, that being the whole of nobility which some understand and others pretend to: We might take occasion to discover the folly of glorying in the antiquity of an illustrious house, or the famed vertue of worthy ancestors, who perhaps were they alive would disown their degenerate progeny; but I shall not insist upon this, it is a vanity which hath been chastised sufficiently even by *Heathen Pens*. Nay,  
we

we shall so far comply with the common sentiments of the world, as to acknowledge that high birth and liberal education may contribute much to elevate the minds of men, and accustom them to great thoughts. But sure whatever advantages any may pretend to by their birth, there are none to be preferred to the children of God, the blood-royal of Heaven, the brethren of Christ, of whom we say, *that as he is so are they, each one resembling the Son of a King.*

If we trace the lines of earthly extraction, we shall find them all meet in one point, all terminate in dust and earth; but in the heraldry of Heaven, we shall find a two-fold pedigree. Sin is the off-spring of Hell, and *wicked men are of their father the Devil*, whose work they perform: on the other hand, *Holiness* is the seed of God, and the Saints have obtained to be called *the Sons of the most High*: and think not these are empty titles, and big words, to amuse the world; no, they are equally just and important: Pious men are really *partakers of the divine nature*, and shall obtain an interest in the inheritance which is entailed on that relation. Never were

the qualities of a parent more really derived unto their children, than the image and similitude of the divine excellencies are stamped upon these heaven-born Souls; some beams of that eternal light are darted in upon them, and make them shine with an eminent splendour; and they are always aspiring to a nearer conformity with him, still breathing after a further communication of his holy Spirit, and daily finding the power thereof correcting the ruder deformities of their natures, and super-inducing the beautiful delineations of God's image upon them, that any who observe them may perceive their relation to God by the excellency of their deportment in the world, as will clearly appear in the sequel of our discourse.

Having spoken of the righteous or godly man's excellency in regard of his birth and extraction, we proceed to consider his qualities and endowments, and shall begin with those of his understanding, his knowledge and wisdom. The *wise man* tells us, that, *A man of understanding is of an excellent Spirit.* And sure if any man in the world is to be accounted of for knowledge, it is the pious man; his knowledge

is conversant about the noblest objects, he contemplates that infinite Being whose perfections can never enough be admired, but still afford new matter to astonish and delight him, to ravish his affections, to raise his wonder. He studies the law of God, *which maketh him wiser than all his teachers.* As the Reverend Dr. Tillotson hath it: “It is deservedly accounted an  
“ excellent piece of knowledge to under-  
“ stand the laws of the land, the customs  
“ of the country we live in; how much  
“ more to know the statutes of Heaven,  
“ the eternal laws of righteousness, the  
“ will of the universal *Monarch*, and the  
“ customs of that country where we hope  
“ to live for ever? And if we have a  
mind to the studies of nature and humane science; he is best disposed for it; having his faculties cleared and his understanding heightned by divine contemplations.

But his knowledge doth not rest in speculations, but directeth his practice, and determineth his choice. And he is the most prudent as well as the most knowing person. He knows how to secure his greatest interest, to provide for the longest life, to prefer solid treasures to gilded trifles,  
the



the soul to the body, eternity to a moment: he knoweth the temper of his own spirit, he can moderate his passions, and over-rule his carnal appetites, which certainly is a far more important piece of wisdom, than to understand the intrigues of a state, to fathom the counsels of princes, to know the pulse of a people, or ballance the interests of kingdoms. Yea, *Piety* doth heighten and advance even moral prudence it self; both obliging and directing a man to *order his affairs with discretion*, it *maketh the simple wise*; and what was said by holy *David*, and twice repeated by his wise son, will hold good in every man's experience, that, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*. And thus much of the knowledge and wisdom wherein the righteous man excelleth his neighbour.

We proceed to another of his endowments, the greatness of his mind, and his contempt of the world: We can never take better measures of a man's spirit, than from the things he delighteth in, and sets his heart upon, *Qualis amor, talis animus*. To be taken up with trifles, and concerned in little things, is an evidence

dence of a weak and naughty mind ; and so are all wicked and irreligious persons, their thoughts are confined to low and mean things, designs of scraping together money, or spending it in luxury, or of satisfying a passion, or pleasing a lust, of obtaining the favour of great ones, or the applause of the vulgar. The greatest happiness they aim at is to be a master of the country where they live, to dwell in stately houses, and to be backed with a train of attendants, to lye softly and fare deliciously, and such like attainments which a wise man would think himself unhappy if he could not despise.

But the pious person hath his thoughts far above these painted vanities, his felicity is not patched up of so mean shreds, it is simple, and comprised in one chief good, his Soul advanceth it self by rational passions towards the auther of its Being, the fountain of goodness and pleasure, *he hath none in Heaven but him, and there is none upon earth whom he desires beside him.*

The knowledge of nature hath been reputed a good mean to enlarge the Soul, and breed in it a contempt of earthly enjoyments :

joyments; he that hath accustomed himself to consider the vastness of the universe, and the small proportion which the point we live in bears to the rest of the world; may perhaps come to think less of the possessions of some acres, or of that fame which can at most spread it self through a small corner of this earth. Whatever be in this, sure I am, that the knowledge of God, and the frequent thoughts of Heaven, must needs prove far more effectual to elevate and aggrandize the mind. When once the Soul by contemplation is raised to any right apprehension of the divine perfections, and the foretastes of celestial blifs, how will this world and all that is in it vanish and disappear before his eyes? With what holy disdain will he look down upon things, which are the highest objects of other mens ambitious desires? All the splendor of courts, all the pageantry of greatness will no more dazzle his eyes, than the faint lustre of a *Glow-worm* will trouble the *Eagle* after it hath been beholding the Sun. He is little concerned who obtained this dignity, or that fortune, who sits highest at table, or goes first out of the door; his thoughts are

are taken up with greater matters, how he shall please his Maker, and obtain an interest in that land of promise, some of the fruits whereof he hath already tasted. And from thence ariseth that constant and equal frame of spirit, which the pious man's mind maintains in all the changes and vicissitudes of things, while he who hath not his Spirit ballanced with religious principles, is lift up and cast down like a ship on the sea with every variation of fortune, and partakes perhaps of all the motions of this inferiour world, whereunto his heart and affections are fastned. And certainly he must be far more happy and generous both, who sitteth loose to the world, and can with the greatest calmness and tranquillity possess his own Soul, while all things without are in hurry and confusion. Private disasters cannot discompose him, nor publick calamities reach him; he looks upon the troubles and combustions of the world, as men do on the ruin and desolation of cities wherein themselves have little interest, with no other concernment than that of pity, to see men trouble themselves and others to so little purpose: *Si fractus illabatur orbis.* If the  
world



world should shake, and the foundations of the earth be removed, yet would he rest secure in a full acquiescence to the will of God, and confident dependence on his providence. *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, and his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.*

And this by the affinity will lead us to another endowment, wherein the excellency of the righteous man doth appear; and that is that heroick magnanimity and courage wherewith he is inspired, and which makes him confidently atchieve the most difficult actions, and resolutely undergo the hardest sufferings that he is called to. For this see the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, Chap. 11. v. 33. *Through faith some have subdued kingdoms, &c.* this was their active courage, v. 35. *Others again were tortured, &c.* this was their passive courage, which in christians is most eminent and useful. True valour doth more appear by suffering than by doing, and doubtless this is the hardest trial of the two. Were it not for suffering hardships; the greatest coward in the world would be man enough for the highest enterprises. It is not so much the difficulty of great actions

actions as the danger that attends them, which makes men fear to undertake them; so that to suffer chearfully must be the greatest proof of courage. And sure we may appeal to the world to produce such eminent instances of fortitude and resolution, as Christian Martyrs have shewn under those torments which cannot be mentioned without horror: How often hath their constancy amazed their bloody persecutors, and outwearied the cruelties of their tormentors? Nor was this patience per-force, they might have saved themselves that trouble by throwing a little incense into the fire, or speaking a few blasphemous words; but well had they learn'd *not to fear those who can kill the body, &c.* Nor were they borne out by an obstinate humour and perverse stoical wilfulness: They were neither stupid and insensible, nor proud and self-conceited, but their sufferings were undertaken with calmness, and sustained with moderation.

Let *Heathen Rome* boast of a *Regulus*; a *Decius*, or some two or three more stimulated by a desire of glory, and perhaps animated by some secret hopes of future reward,

reward, who have devoted their life to the service of their country; but alas! what is this to an infinite number, not only of men, but even of women and children who have died for the profession of their faith, neither seeking or expecting any praise from men? and tell me who among the heathen did willingly endure the loss of reputation? nay, that was their idol, and they could not part with it; and certainly it is a great meanness of spirit to be over-awed with the fear of disgrace, and depend upon the thoughts of the people; true courage doth equally fortifie the mind against all those evils, and will make a man hazard his honour, as well as other things, when occasion calls for it.

Now if the celebrated actions of the Heathens come short of true courage, what shall we say of the furious boldness of the Hectors of our age, who pretend to prowess and gallantry by far less reasonable methods? When blinded with passion, and animated with wine, they are ready enough on half a quarrel to hazard their own and their neighbour's life and Soul too in a duel: yea, they will not stand to brave

Hea-

Heaven it self, and to provoke the Almighty by their horrid Oaths and Blasphemies; and one should think that these must needs be the hardiest and most valiant people in the world; if they are not afraid of the Almighty, sure nothing else should fright them. And yet you shall find these very persons when cast on a bed by sickness, or brought to the scaffold by justice, to betray a miserable faintness and pusillanimity, they are forced now to think on the terrors of death, and the more terrible consequences of it; and their counterfeit courage being destitute of those props which formerly sustained it, doth now discover its weakness. Nor is it any wonder; for what should make a man willingly leave this world unless he expected a more happy condition in another? Certainly there is nothing can fortifie the Soul with a true and manly courage, but a confidence in God; and hopes of future blessedness. *The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous is bold as a lion, and from that accounted more excellent than his neighbour:*

From courage and magnanimity we pass to that which is the genuine issue and or-



dinary consequent of it, the *liberty* and *freedom* of the righteous person. Liberty is a privilege so highly rated by all men, that many run the greatest hazards for the very name of it, but there are few that enjoy it. I shall not speak of those fetters of ceremony and chains of state, wherewith great men are tied; which makes their actions constrained, and their converse uneasy, this is more to be pitied than blamed. But wicked and irreligious persons are under a far more shameful bondage; they are slaves to their own lusts, and suffer the violence and tyranny of their irregular appetites. This is frequently talk'd of, but seldom considered or believed; and therefore it will not be amiss to bring an instance or two for the illustration of it. Observe a passionate man, and you shall find him frequently transported and over-powered by his anger, and carried to those extremities, of which a little time makes him ashamed; and he becomes as much displeas'd with himself as formerly he was with his adversary: and yet on the next occasion he will obey that same passion which he hath condemn'd. What a drudge is a covetous man to his riches,  
which

which take up his thoughts all the day long, and break his sleep in the night! How must the ambitious man fawn and flatter and cross his very humour with hopes to satisfy it; stoop to the ground that he may aspire, courting and caressing those whom he hates; which doubtless is done with a great violence and constraint. The drunkard when he awakes and hath slept out his cups and his frolick humour, and finds his head aking, his stomach qualmish, and perhaps his purse empty; and reflects on the folly and unhandfome expressions or actions he may have fallen into in his drink, how will he condemn himself for that excess! What harangues shall we have from him in the praise of temperance! What promises and resolutions of future sobriety! and yet on the next occasion the poor slave shall be dragged away to the tavern by those whom he must call his friends; and thank them who put that abuse upon him, which a wise and sober person will rather die than suffer. Further, the luxurious would fain preserve or recover his health; and to this end finds it requisite to keep a temperate and sober diet; no, but he must not, he is

present at a feast, and his superiour appetite calls for a large measure of delicious fare, and his palate must be pleased, tho' the whole body should suffer for it; or he hath met with a lewd woman, and tho' his whole bones should rot, *and a dart strike through his liver*, yet must he obey the commands of his lusts; *he goeth after her straightway, as the ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.* Now there can be no greater evidence of slavery and bondage, than thus to do what themselves know to be prejudicial. It were easy to illustrate this bondage and thralldom of the Soul, in all the other instances of vice and impiety, and certainly what St. *Peter* saith of some false teachers, may be well applied to all wicked persons, *While they promise freedom they themselves are the servants of corruption, for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.*

But the holy and religious person hath broken these fetters, cast off the yoke of sin, and become the freeman of the Lord. It is religion that restores freedom to the Soul, which philosophy did pretend to; it is that which doth sway and moderate  
all

all those blind passions and impetuous affections which else would hinder a man from the possession and enjoyment of himself, and makes him master of his own thoughts, motions, and desires, that he may do with freedom what he judgeth most honest and convenient. And thus *the Righteous excelleth his neighbour*, as much as a freeman doth the basest slave.

Another particular wherein the nobleness and excellency of Religion does appear, is in a charitable and benign temper. There is no greater evidence of a base and narrow Soul, than for a man to have all his thoughts taken up about private and selfish interest; and so if they be well, not to care what becometh of the rest of the world: on the other hand, an extensive charity and kindness, as it is the one half of our Religion, so 'tis an eminent point of generosity. *The Righteous is gracious and full of compassion, he sheweth favour and lendeth*: and makes it his work to serve mankind as much as he is able. His bounty is not confined to his kindred and relations, to those of his own party and mode of Religion, this were but a disguised kind of self-love; it is enough to



him that they are Christians, or if they were not, yet are they men, and therefore deserve our pity; but not our hatred or neglect, because of their errors. It is true, he carries a special kindness for those in whom he discovers a principle of goodness and virtue, in those excellent ones is all his delight. But then he doth not take his measure so much from their judgment and opinions, as from the integrity of their life and exactness of their practices.

His charity doth not express it self in one particular instance, as that of giving of alms, but is vented as many ways as the variety of occasions do call for and his power can reach to. He assisteth the poor with his money, the ignorant with his counsel, the afflicted with comfort, the sick with the best of his skill; all with his blessings and prayers. If he cannot build hospitals, yet he will study to persuade those who can; if he hath no money to redeem captives, yet will he imploy his interest in the court of Heaven for their deliverance: tho' he cannot recover a dying child to the afflicted parents, yet will he endeavour to persuade them to submission and resignation, which will render  
them

them more happy; and will go hard but he will find some way either to benefit or oblige every man with whom he converseth. Let no man upbraid us with the contrary practices of many high pretenders to Religion, who are notedly selfish and churlish persons; we are not to defend the actions of all who would be thought godly; nor must you take your measures of piety, from what you observe in them; but look through the Gospel, and you shall find charity and bounty so passionately recommended, so frequently inculcated, and so indispensibly required, that you may easily conclude there are no Christians in earnest, but those who practise it. Yea so peculiar is this liberal and benign temper to holy and religious persons, that nothing but a faint resemblance and false imitation is to be found elsewhere in the world; other mens seeming bounty is always marred by the base principle it proceeds from, and selfish end it tends to. The Apostle hath told us, *that a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet want charity*, and all these expences shall profit him nothing. Impotunity may perhaps wring something out

of his pocket, as if he were to be deliver'd from the trouble of a miserable spectacle, but vanity and desire of applause have usually the greatest interest in his distributions. This made the hypocrites of old proclaim their alms with trumpets, and this makes their successors, in our times delight to have their good works of this kind recorded to the greatest advantage, that posterity may read them on walls and publick registers.

To the same principle must we refer what in the world passeth for a very considerable instance of generosity, the keeping of a great house, and well furnished table, which nevertheless is more ordinarily the effect of pride and vain-glory than of humility or hospitality. It is a part of their splendour and state, and they deck their tables for the same end, that they put on fine cloaths, to be talk'd of and admired in the world. You may guess it by the persons whom they entertain, who are usually such as need least of their charity, and for whom they have many times as little kindness or concernment, as an inn-keeper for his guests; nor are they less mercenary than he; the one sells

his

his meat for money, the other for praise. Far more generous is the practice of the pious man, who as he chooseth most to benefit those who can make him no recompence, so he doth not trouble the world with the noise of his charity; yea *his left hand knoweth not what his right hand bestoweth*, and that which doth most endear his bounty is the love and affection whence it proceeds.

We shall name but one instance more wherein *the Righteous man excelleth his neighbour*; and that is his venerable temperance and purity. He hath risen above the vaporous sphere of sensual pleasure, which darkneth and debaseth the mind, which sullies its lustre, and abates its native vigour, while prophane persons wallowing in impure lusts do sink themselves below the condition of men. Can there be any spark of generosity, any degree of excellency in him who makes his belly his God, or places his felicity in the embraces of a strumpet? we spoke before of the slavery, we speak now of the deformity of these sins; and shall add, that one of the most shameful and miserable spectacles in the world, is to see a man born to the  
use,



use of reason, and perhaps to an eminent fortune, drink away his religion, his reason, his sense; and so expose himself to the pity of wise men, the contempt of his own servants, the derision of his children and fools; to every danger and to every snare: and that this must pass in the eyes of many for a piece of gallantry, and necessary accomplishment of a gentleman. Good God! how are the minds of men poisoned with perverse notions, what unreasonable measures do they take of things? we may expect next they shall commend theft, and make harangues to the praise of parricide; for they are daily advancing in the boldness of their impieties, and with confidence avowing them. Other ages have practised wickedness, but to ours is reserved the impudence to glory in them. But would men but open their own eyes, and give way to the sentiments of their own minds, they would soon alter their maxims, and discover the miserable deformity of vice, and the amiable beauty and majesty of Religion; that it doth at once adorn and advance the humane nature, and hath in it every thing generous and noble, cheerful and spiritual, free  
and

and ingenuous, in a word, that *the Righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.*

Before we proceed further, it will be necessary to take off some prejudices and objections that arise against the nobleness and excellency of Religion. And the first is, that it enjoyneth lowliness and humility, which men ordinarily look upon as an abject and base disposition. What? will they say, can ever that man aspire to any thing that is excellent, whose principles oblige him to lye low and grovel on the ground; who thinks nothing of himself, and is content that all the world think nothing of him? Is this a disposition fit for any but those whose cross fortune obliges them to suffer miseries and affronts? Such are mens thoughts of humility, which God loves so much, that we may say he sent his own Son from Heaven to teach and recommend it. But if we ponder the matter, we shall find that arrogancy and pride are the issues of base and silly minds, a giddiness incident to those who are raised suddenly unto unaccustomed height; nor is there any vice doth more palpably defeat its own design, depriving a man of that honour and reputation, which it makes him aim at.

On the other hand, we shall find humility no silly and sneaking quality, but the greatest height and sublimity of the mind, and the only way to true honour, *before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility*; Lowliness is the endowment of high-born and well educated Souls, who are acquainted with the knowledge of excellent things, and therefore do not dote upon trifles, or admire little things meerly because they are their own. They have no such high opinion of riches, beauty, strength, or other the like advantages, as to value themselves for them, or to despise those who want them; but they study to surmount themselves and all the little attainment they have hitherto reached, and are still aspiring to higher and more noble things. And it's worth our notice, “ that the most deep  
 “ and pure humility doth not so much  
 “ arise from the consideration of our  
 “ faults and defects (tho' that also may  
 “ have its own place) as from a calm con-  
 “ templation of the divine perfections.  
 “ By reflecting on our selves, we may dis-  
 “ cover something of our own sinfulness  
 “ and misery, and thereby be filled with  
 “ a

“ a kind of boisterous and turbulent grief  
“ and indignation; but by fixing our eyes  
“ on the infinite greatness and holiness of  
“ God, we are most fully convinced of  
“ our own meanness: this will sink us to  
“ the very bottom of our beings, and  
“ make us appear as nothing in our own  
“ sight, when beheld from so great a  
“ height. And this is really the greatest  
elevation of the Soul, and there is nothing  
in the world so noble and excellent as the  
sublimity of humble minds.

Another objection against the excellency  
of a religious temper is, that the love of  
enemies and pardon of injuries which it  
includeth, is utterly inconsistent with the  
principles of honour. Now tho' it be  
highly unreasonable to examine the laws  
of our Saviour by such rules as this, yet  
we shall consider the matter a little. Nor  
shall we seek to elude or qualify this pre-  
cept, as some men do, by such glosses and  
evasions, as may suit with their own pra-  
ctices; nay, we shall freely profess that  
there is no salvation without the observa-  
tion of it: a man had even as well aban-  
don christianity, and renounce his baptism,  
as obstinately refuse to obey it. But if  
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we have any value for the judgment of the wisest man and a great king, he will tell us, that *it is the honour of a man to cease from strife, and he that is slow to wrath is of great understanding.* The meek and holy person liveth above the reach of petty injuries: and blunts the edge of the greatest by his patience and constancy; and hath compassion towards those who offend him: being more sorry for the prejudice they do themselves; than for that which they intended him. And let all the world judge, whether it be more generous to pity and love even those who hate us, and to pardon the greatest offences, than peevishly to quarrel on every petty occasion; and make men fear our passion, hate our humour, and abandon our society. So that what is here brought as an objection against Religion, might with reason enough have been brought as an instance of its nobleness.

Having thus illustrated and confirmed what is asserted in the text, *that the Righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,* let us improve it in a check to that prophane and atheistical spirit of drollery and scoffing at Religion, which hath got  
abroad

abroad in the world. Alas! do men consider what it is which they make the butt of their scoffs and reproaches? Have they nothing else to exercise their wit and vent their jests upon, but that which is the most noble and excellent thing in the world? What design can they propose unto themselves by this kind of impiety? Would they have Religion banished from the face of the earth, and forced to retire for shame? What a goodly world should we then have of it; what a fine harmony and order of things! Certainly the earth would then become a kind of hell with tumults and seditions, rapines and murders, secret malice and open frauds, by every vice and every calamity. 'Tis only some little remainders of piety and vertue in the world that keep it in any tolerable condition, or make it possible to be inhabited. And must not those be wretched persons, and woful enemies to mankind, who do what they can to reduce the world to such a miserable condition! But let them do what they will, they but kick against the pricks; Religion hath so much native lustre and beauty, that notwithstanding all the dirt they study to cast  
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upon it, all the melancholy and deformed shapes they dress it in, it will still attract the eyes and admiration of all sober and ingenuous persons; and while these men study to make it ridiculous, they shall but make themselves so. And O! that they would consider how dear they are to pay for those dull and insipid jests wherewith they persecute Religion, and those who practise it or recommend it! what thoughts they are like to have of them when sickness shall arrest, and death threaten them; when the physicians have forsaken them; and the poor despised Minister is called in, and they expecting comfort from him they were wont to mock; and perhaps 'tis little he can afford them. *O that they were wise, and understood this; that they would consider their latter end!*

There are others who have not yet arrived to this height of prophaneness, to laugh at all Religion, but do vent their malice at those who are more conscientious and severe than themselves, under presumption that they are hypocrites and dissemblers. But besides that, in this they may be guilty of a great deal of uncharitableness, 'tis to be suspected that they  
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bear some secret dislike to piety it self, and hate hypocrisie more for its resemblance of that, than for its own viciousness: otherwise whence comes it that they do not express the same animosity against other vices?

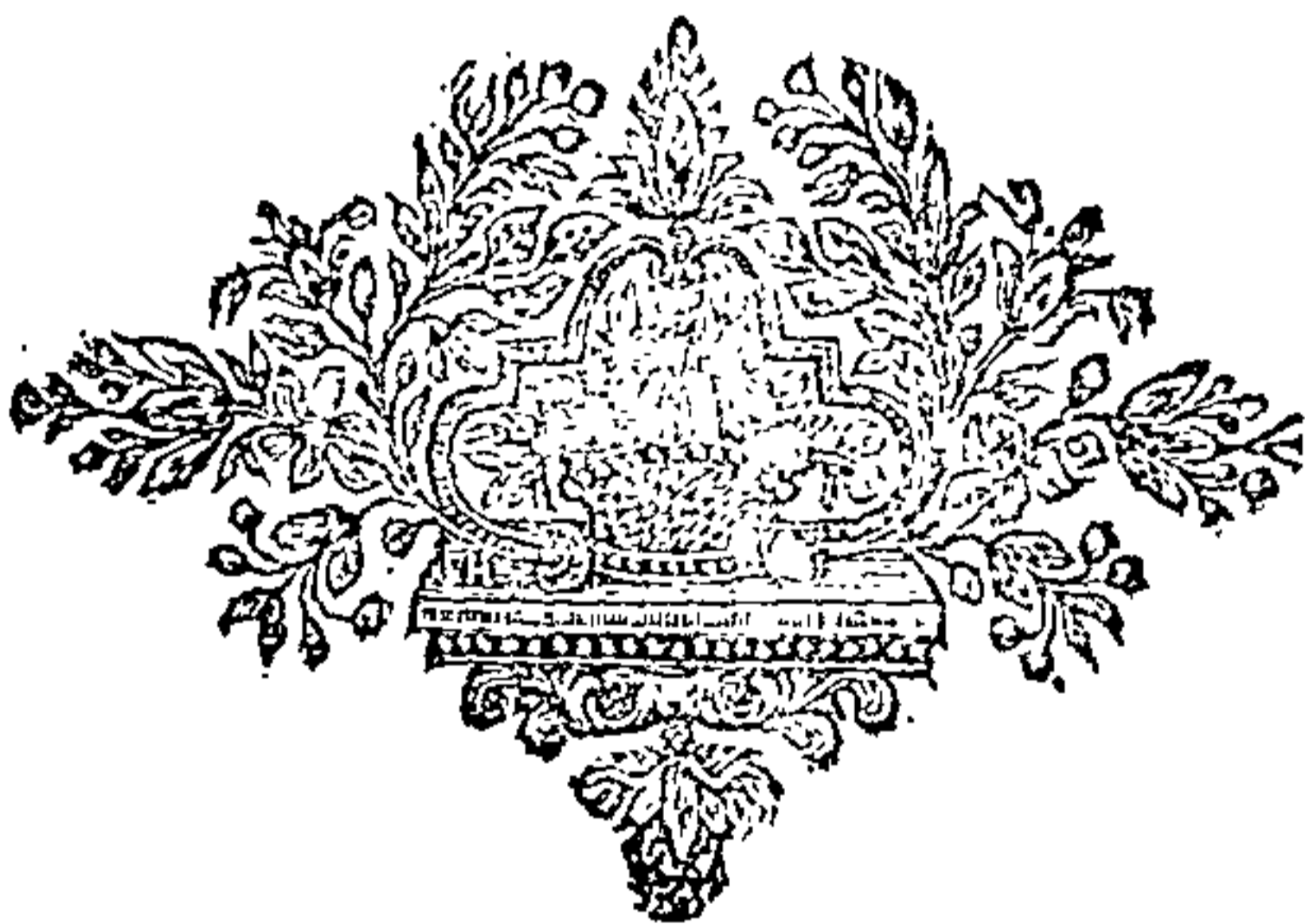
Hither also may we refer those expressions which sometimes drop from persons not so utterly debauched, but which yet are blasphemous and prophane; that this man is too holy, and that man too religious; as if it were possible to exceed in these things. What, can a man approach too near to God? Can he be too like his Maker? Is it possible to be over-perfect, or over-happy? I confess a man may over-act some parts of his Religion, and be too much in some particular exercises of it, neglecting other as necessary duties. But this is not an excess of piety, but a defect of discretion: and reason would teach us rather to pardon men's infirmities for their pious inclinations, than to blame piety for their infirmities.

Let me therefore intreat you all, especially those whose birth and fortunes render them more conspicuous in the world, to countenance holiness which you see is



fo excellent ; and beware that you do not contribute to that deluge of wickedness that overfloweth the earth, by scoffing at the most serious things in the world : and if I obtain this, I shall make bold to beg one thing more, but 'tis in your own favours ; that you would also abandon every kind of impiety in your own practice, since in it every vile *Ruffian* may vie and contend with you. In other cases you forsake modes and customs when they become common. Wickedness is now the most vulgar and ordinary thing in the world ; shift, I beseech you, the fashion, and embrace piety and virtue, wherein none but excellent persons shall rival you : Learn to adore your Maker ; and think it not below you to stand in awe of him who can rend the Heavens, and make the foundations of the earth shake, who needs but to withdraw his mercies to make you miserable, or his assistance to reduce you to nothing. Study to enoble your Souls with solid knowledge and true wisdom ; with an eminent greatness of mind and contempt of the world ; a great liberty and freedom of spirit ; an undaunted magnanimity and courage ; an extensive charity

rity and goodness; a venerable temperance and purity; an amiable meekness and humility: So shall you render your selves honourable *and more excellent than your neighbours in this world*; and be partakers of immortal honour and glory in the world to come. *Amen.*



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T H E  
 Indispensible Duty  
 O F  
 Loving our Enemies.

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LUKE VI. 27.

*But I say unto you which hear,  
 love your enemies.*



WHILE we travail through the wilderness of this world, much of the comfort of our pilgrimage depends on the good correspondence and mutual services and endearments of our fellow-travellers: therefore our blessed Saviour, whose precepts are all intended for our perfection and felicity, fitted to procure to us both the good things of this world, and that which is to come, has taken especial care to joyn and unite the minds of men in the strictest bonds

bonds of friendship and love : He hath been at great pains by his precepts and by his example, by earnest perswasions and powerful motives to smooth our rugged humours, and calm our passions, and take off the roughness and asperity from our natures, which hinders us from joyning and cementing together. Now were we to converse with none but such as are Christians in earnest, we should find it no hard matter to live in concord and love, we should meet with no occasion of quarrel and contention, and should only be obliged to love our *friends*, because all men would be such. But well did our Saviour know, that his part was to be but small in the world, that many would oppose the profession, and many more would neglect the practice of that Religion which he taught ; and that his followers, besides common injuries incident to others, were to meet with much enmity and hatred for their Master's sake : and therefore, that amidst all these storms they might maintain that constant serene tranquillity, that amiable sweetness and benignity of spirit, without which they could neither be like him, nor happy in



themselves; he was pleased to enjoyn such an ardent affection and charity towards all men, as no neglect can cool, no injury can extinguish. To love those who have obliged us is that which nature might teach, and wicked men practise; to favour those who have never wrong'd us, is but a piece of common humanity: But our Religion requires us to extend our kindness even to those who have injured and abused us, and who continue to do and wish us mischief, and that we never design any other revenge against our most bitter and inveterate enemies, than to wish them well, and do them all the good we can whether they will or not; for unto *those that bear him*, our Saviour saith, *love your enemies.*

But alas! how little is this minded by the greater part of those who call themselves Christians; other precepts are broken and slighted, but this industriously baffled and discredited by us. In other cases we acknowledge our fault, but study to qualify and excuse it by the frailty of our nature, or violence of a temptation, (we are all sinners, it is a fault indeed, but who can help it.) Now tho' these

excuses, God knows, are very frivolous, and will be of no force in the great day of our accounts, yet they imply something of modesty and ingenuous acknowledgment, and men may repent and forsake what they already condemn: but in the instance of loving enemies and pardoning offences, many are so bold and impudent, that instead of obeying, they quarrel with the law as impossible or unjust, passing sentence upon that, by which themselves must be judged. How unreasonable is it (say they) that we should love those that hate us? What congruity between that act and these objects? Can cold snow produce heat, or enmity beget affection? Must we be insensible of the injuries we meet with? Or reward him that offers them? Must we dissolve the principles of our nature, and cease to be *Men*, that we may become *Christians*? These and such like are either the expressions or thoughts of too many among us, and either Christ must come down in his offers, and remit somewhat of the rigour of his laws, or else all the promises of the Gospel, all the pleasures of the other world shall not engage them to his obedience. They will

rather choofe to burn in eternal flames of fury and difcord, than live at peace with thofe that have wrong'd them.

It can therefore never be unfeafonable to prefs a duty fo very neceffary, yet fo much neglected : the text I have chofen for this purpofe is very plain and clear, *love your enemies* ; but becaufe many do ftain the precept to fome fuch fense as may fuit with their own practice, we fhall firft fearch into the importance of it, and then perfwade you to perform it. The full meaning and importance of the precept will appear, if we confider, 1<sup>ft</sup>, who they are whom we are commanded to love : and 2<sup>dly</sup>, wherein the love we owe them does confift.

The perfons whom we are commanded to love are called our *enemies* ; and leaft we fhould miftake them, they are clearly defcribed in the following words, the fountain of their enmity is within ; they are thofe *who hate us*, who envy our happinefs, who wifh our mifery, and abhor our perfons and fociety. But were this fire kept within their breaft, it might well fcorch themfelves, it could not prejudice us : but *out of the abundance of the heart*

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*the mouth speaketh*: Their malice does sharpen their tongues; they are farther described as those that *curse us*, they vent their wrath in oaths and imprecations, secret calumnies, and open reproaches: nor are their hands always bound up, they *use us despitefully*, and procure us mischief. Now if our love must be extended to all these, we shall hardly find any whom we dare safely exclude. Of our private enemies there can be no question, but what shall be said of the enemies of our country, and of our Religion? First for the enemies of our country, I see no warrant to exclude them from our charity; we may indeed lawfully oppose their violent invasion, and defend our rights with the sword, under the banner of the publick magistrate, to whom such authority is committed; but all this may be done with as little malice and hatred, as a judge may punish a malefactor: The general may be as void of passion as a lord chief justice, and the foldier as the executioner. But charity will oblige a prince never to have recourse to the sword, till all other remedies fail, to blunt the edge of war by sparing



sparing as much as may be the shedding of innocent blood, with all other barbarities that use to accompany it, and to accept of any reasonable capitulation.

We come next to the enemies of our Religion, and indeed there are many who are so far from thinking them to be among the number of those whom they are oblig'd to love, that they look upon it as a part of their duty to hate and malign them : their zeal is continually venting it self in fierce invectives against Anti-christ, and every thing they are pleas'd to call Anti-christian. And they are ready to apply all the prophecies and imprecations of the Old Testament in their very prayers against those that differ from them ; and ordinarily the animosities are greatest where the differences are least, and one party of a reformed Church shall be more incens'd against another , than either against the superstition and tyranny of *Rome*, or the carnality of the mahometan faith : yea perhaps you may find some who agree in opinion, and only differ in several ways of expressing the same thing, and yet can scarce look on one another with-

without displeasure and aversion. But alas! how much do these men disparage that Religion for which they appear so zealous! How much do they mistake the spirit of Christianity? Are the persons whom they hate, greater enemies to Religion, than those who persecuted the Apostles and Martyrs for professing it? And yet these were the persons whom our Saviour commanded his disciples to love, and himself did pray for those that crucified him: and severely check'd the disciples, when by a precedent brought from the Old Testament, they would have called for fire from Heaven on those who would not receive them; telling them *they knew not what spirit they were of*, i. e. they did not consider by what spirit they were prompted to such cruel inclinations: or, as others explain it, they did not yet sufficiently understand the temper and genius of Christianity, which is *pure and peaceable, gentle and meek, full of sweetness, and full of love*. If men would impartially examine their hatred and animosities against the enemies of their Religion, I fear they would find them proceed from a principle which themselves would not willingly own,

own. Pride and self-conceit will make a man disdain those of a different persuasion, and think it a disparagement to his judgment, that any should differ from it. Meer nature and self-love will make a man hate those who oppose the interest and advancement of that party, which himself has espoused. Hence men are many times more displeas'd at some small mistakes in judgment, than the greatest immoralities in practice: yea perhaps they will find a secret pleasure and wicked satisfaction, in hearing or reporting the faults or scandals of their adversaries. Certainly the power of Religion rightly prevailing in the Soul, would mould us into another temper: It would teach us to love and pity, and pray for the person, as well as hate and condemn the errors they are suppos'd to espouse: It would make us wish their conversion, rather than their confusion, and be more desirous that God would fit them for another world, than that he would take them out of this. We may indeed wish the disappointment of their wicked purposes; for this is charity to them, to keep them from being the unhappy instruments of mischief in the world;

world; but he that can wish plagues and ruin to their persons, and delights in their sins, or in their misery, hath more of the Devil than the Christian.

Thus you have seen who those enemies are to whom our charity must be extended. It follows to be considered what is the nature of the love we owe them. I shall not now spend your time in any nice or curious speculations about the nature of this master-passion. It is the prime affection of the Soul, which gives measures and sets bounds to all the rest, every man's hatred, grief, and joy depending upon, and flowing from his love. I shall now only observe to you, that there is a sensible kind of love, a certain tenderneſs and melting affection implanted in us by nature towards our nearest relations, on purpose to engage us to those peculiar services we owe them; and there is an intimacy and delightful union betwixt friends, arising from some especial sympathy of humours, and referring to the maintenance of such correspondencies; these are not always at our command, nor are we obliged to love either strangers or enemies at this rate. It is not to be expected,



pected, that at first sight of a person, who hath nothing singularly taking, we should find such a special kindness and tenderness arising for him in our hearts; much less can fondness and passionate affection proceed from the sense of any harm received from him. The command in the text does not amount to this, (tho' there be a great advantage in a tender and affectionate disposition, both to secure and facilitate our duty) but we are certainly obliged to such a sincere and cordial good will to all men, as will incline us to perform all the good offices we can even to those who have offended us. But the nature and measures of this love will more fully appear, if we consider what it does exclude, and what it does imply.

First then it excludes all harsh thoughts and groundless suspicions: The 'Apostle telleth us, *that charity thinketh no evil, that it hopeth all things; believeth all things.* To entertain with pleasure every bad report of those who have offended us, and to put the worst construction on their doubtful actions, is both a clear evidence of our hatred, and an unhappy method to continue it. Were once the love we re-commend

commend seated in the Soul, it would soon cast out those restless jealousies, sour suspicions, harsh surmises, and imbitter'd thoughts; and display it self in a more candid and gentle disposition, in fair glosses, and friendly censures, in a favourable extenuation of greater faults, and covering of lesser: It would make a man interpret all things in the best meaning they are capable of, and choose rather to be mistaken to his own prejudice by a too favourable opinion, than to his neighbour's by a groundless jealousy; and even in this sense it may be, that *charity covereth a multitude of sins.*

Again, the love which we owe to enemies, excludes all causeless and immoderate anger: *it suffereth long, and is not easily provoked, endureth all things.* Our Saviour tells us, that *whoso is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment,* and if his anger exceed the cause he is equally guilty. All anger is not vicious, we may be angry and not sin. This passion, as all others implanted in us by God, is innocent when kept within its due bounds, it has its proper office in the mind, as the spleen in  
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the body, but its excess and distemper swells into a disease. To make it allowable, it must not exceed the value of the cause, nor the proportion of the circumstances; it must be govern'd by discretion, and kept within the bounds of reason, that it break not forth into indecent expressions, or violent and blameable actions: and further it must not be too permanent and lasting, we must not let the sun set upon our anger. *Plutarch* tells us, that the *Pythagoreans* were careful to observe the very letter of this precept, for if anger had boiled up to the height of an injury or reproach, before sun-set they would salute each other, and renew their friendship; they were ashamed that the same anger which had disturbed the counsels of the day, should also trouble the quiet and repose of the night, lest mingling with their rest and dreams, it should become prevalent and habitual in them. And sure we owe an infinitely greater deference to the precepts of our blessed Saviour, and his holy Apostles, than they did to their master's reasonings and advices. And tho' we should not take this precept in its strictest and literal signification,

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tion, yet this we must know, that the same passion and resentment, which was innocent and rational in its first rise, may become vicious and criminal by its continuance. *Anger* may kindle in the breast of a wise man, but *rests* only *in the bosom of a fool*; and this will lead us to a 3<sup>d</sup> thing, which the precept in our text does condemn.

The love of enemies here commanded does exclude all rooted malice and rancour, proceeding from the memory and resentment of injuries, after the prejudice and harm sustain'd by them is over. Certainly there is nothing more contrary to charity, than a peevish ruminating, and poring on the offences we have met with; and their memories are very ill imploy'd, who seldom remember a courtesie, or forget a wrong. It is ordinary for some, who dare not profess intentions of revenge, to express their resentment in some such threatenning as this: That they will forgive the injury, but never forget it. I hope they do not mean they will pass it at this time, and revenge it afterward: this would but make the sin the greater by being more deliberate. Is it then, that

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they intend them no harm, but will cease to do them good? This is a lame and imperfect charity, expressly contradictory to the precept in the text, enjoyn<sup>g</sup> us *to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us.* Nor must we expect the blessing of God, if this be all we allow to others, *for with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again.* There is but one way we may lawfully remember an injury, and that is so as to be more cautious in trusting one who hath deceived us; or exposing our selves to the power of him who has wrong'd us: In this case Religion does allow and direct us to joyn the serpent's wisdom with the dove's innocency. But then, I am sure, it is neither necessary nor fit to threaten those who have wrong'd us with our resolutions to remember the injury: We may be as cautious as we please without it, and those threats do nothing but rankle and displease our adversary, which ought to be no part of a Christian's design. A meek and charitable person will be loath to have his memory infested, and his thoughts sower'd with resentment of wrongs, and  
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if they occur to his mind, he will make no other use of them, than to put himself on his guard; unless from thence he take occasion to benefit and oblige the person who has offended him, and as our text expressly directs, to *do him good, to bless and pray for him.*

Again, this precept does exclude and prohibit the taking or procuring any revenge; by *revenge*, we mean such a simple evil done to our adversary, as does bring no real benefit or reparation to our selves; for certainly it is not unlawful to seek the reparation of our own right by an authorized judge, nor yet to provide for the publick security by the punishment of offenders, unless some special circumstance makes it so. This may many times be done without prejudice or hatred, yea with great kindness and compassion towards the person of the offender. But if we have any charity or love to our adversaries, we shall be really afflicted with the evil that befalls them, and therefore will never willingly procure our selves that trouble by inflicting it on them. It is an evidence of a wicked and malicious humour, to please our selves in the misery of

another, or delight in an evil that brings us no good. Whatever latitude the *Jews* either had or pretended to, it is not lawful for us to desire *eye for eye*, or *tooth for tooth*, unless we could say, that his eye would serve our head, or his hand fit our arm, or his pain allay our torment, which he had procured to us.

From hence we may judge what is to be thought of those, who are ready to revenge the smallest injury, even an uncivil expression, with the death of the offender; never being satisfied till they have ventured two lives, and as many Souls in the combat: a thing which should not be named among Christians, but with the same detestation we have against the vilest actions; for whatever colours of bravery or gallantry it may be painted with, it is really nothing else than a more specious and formal kind of murder. Nor does it differ from the basest assassination, save only in this, with the wickedness of attempting another's life, it joyns the rashness and folly of exposing our own.

Lastly, The love which we owe our enemies, does exclude all supercilious and scornful contempt and neglect of them; whic

which I mark the rather, because some think they have sufficiently obey'd the precept, if they overlook an injury, as thinking the person below their revenge. Mean while their corrupt nature relishes as much pleasure in the scorn and disdain of their enemies, as it could in the revenge of the injury; their wicked humours are not starv'd, but only change their diet. Of this nature was the answer of the philosopher, to some who incited and provoked him to revenge, *if an ass kick me, shall I kick him again?* This is but a lame and mishapen charity; it hath more of pride than goodness: We should learn of the *holy Jesus*, who was not only *meeke*, but *lowly*: we should contemn the injury, and pity the weakness, but should not disdain or despise the persons of our enemies. *Charity vaunteth not her self, is not puffed up, doth not behave her self unseemly.*

Having thus discover'd those things which are inconsistent with charity, and excluded by the *love of enemies*, it remains that we shew what it does import and require.

First then, it imports an inward kindness and affection, which if it does not



amount to that passionate tenderness which we have for our near relations and intimate friends, yet it implies a good will towards them, and friendly concernment in their interest; if we love an enemy, we shall wish his welfare, and rejoice in it, and be unfeignedly sorry for any disaster that befalls him, so far shall we be from rejoicing in his misfortunes. And certainly had we a right sense of things, we should be more troubled for the harm which our enemy does to his own Soul by wronging us, than for the prejudice we sustain by him. Our compassion towards him would diminish, if not altogether swallow up the resentment of what we suffer from him.

But our kindness and good will towards our enemies must not rest in empty wishes, but express it self in kind words and friendly actions. When we speak to our enemy, it must be in such smooth, discreet, and obliging terms, as are most like to mollifie and gain him; that by *soft answers* we may *turn away his wrath*; and shun all *grievous words, which stir up anger*. When we speak of him, it should be as advantageously as we can with truth,

concealing or qualifying his faults, and praising whatever is good in him; and sure he must be singularly bad, in whom we can find nothing to commend.

Again, we must perform for them all those good offices, which their necessities call for, and our power can reach. *Do good to them that hate you; if our enemy hunger, we must feed him; if he thirst, we must give him drink; so shall we heap coals of fire upon his head,* to mollify his obdurate temper, and overcome his evil by our good; but not to aggravate his guilt and punishment, as some mistake the words; for tho' that be many times the issue, yet ought it not to be any part of our design.

Lastly, because all that we can do for the good of enemies signifies little, we must employ our interest in the court of Heaven in their behalf, begging of God that he would turn their hearts to himself and to us, and bless them with the pardon of all their sins, particularly the wrongs they have done to our selves, and with all things necessary for their present welfare, or future happiness. *Pray for them that despitefully use you;* and this is the surest evidence of our charity to them:

Mild words may be design'd as a snare to entrap them, and courtesie may be done them to serve our vanity, or a generous kind of pride, which may make us delight to have our enemy indebted to us, as knowing that it is more glorious in the eyes of the world to raise a fallen adversary, than to trample on him. But it must be only obedience to God's commands, and sincere love to our enemy, which can make us take him into our closet, and into our heart, to share our prayers with him, and make him partake of the fruits of our devotion, and to have that same concernment for his interests, as for our own, at once recommending them both to our heavenly father.

By this time I hope you understand the importance of this precept of our Saviour, *love your enemies*; it remains that we exhort you to the performance. And I shall begin with an argument, which may be of force to give the first assault to our rebellious inclinations, and make way for further and more mild persuasions; and it shall be the indispensable necessity of the duty. We must not look upon this as a matter which we may do or omit at pleasure,

sure, nor yet as a counsel of perfection highly commendable, but not absolutely necessary to salvation: it is as indispensibly requir'd as any other duty of our Religion, and he who resolves not to obey in this instance, may renounce his baptism and abandon Christianity. None can escape the obligation of the precept, unless he be so rarely happy as to have no enemies; nor must any think to redeem themselves from this by some other performance. Let our opinions be never so orthodox, and our zeal in maintaining them never so fervent; let our prayers be never so frequent, and all our discourses ravishing; let our other attainments be never so great, and our confidence of our salvation never so strong; yet if we refuse to obey this precept, we are none of Christ's disciples; or in the words of the Apostle we may say, *tho' I speak with the tongues of men and angels, tho' I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and tho' I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, yea tho' I give my body to be burned, and have not this charity and love, even to mine enemies,*



mies, *it profiteth me nothing.* And our Saviour himself tells us in exprefs terms, that *unless we forgive others their trespasses, neither will God forgive us ours.* Yea he hath taught us to pray for pardon in such terms, as imports a dreadful curse upon our selves, if we are malicious and revengeful, while we beg that God would pardon us, in the same manner that we pardon those who sin against us; subscribing as it were with our own hands, and confirming out of our own mouths, that sentence which shall be pronounced against us; for even so will *God forgive us,* i. e. he will take vengeance on us, if we have dealt so with others. And as those who do not love their enemies, do beg their own condemnation in prayer; so also *they eat and drink* it in the holy Sacrament, and men are commonly so far convinced of this, that many choose to keep back from the table of the Lord, that they may more freely entertain their animosities: but alas! what a folly and madness this is? Think they to excuse a sin by the neglect of a duty? Or can they put off death, as they do the participation of the sacrament?

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Or can they hope to be admitted into the eternal enjoyment of God, if they should die in that malice, which renders them unfit to approach unto him in that holy ordinance? Do not deceive your selves, never shall any enter into those blessed mansions, those regions of peace and love, whose heart is not first inspired with charity, and softned into a compliance with this very precept: and it were as absurd to think, that a man may be malicious and revengeful all his days, and yet go to Heaven, there to learn meekness and charity, as to think that a man may be luxurious and dishonest in this world, and become temperate and honest and happy in the other. In a word, whatever shifts we may make to deceive our selves, the command is clear and express, the sanction severe and peremptory, we have but our choice of these two, *love of enemies,* or *damnation.*

Nor can this seem unreasonable to any who considers that God is the author of our natures, the creator of all our faculties, and therefore may justly rule our inclinations, and dispose of our love and affection;

affection; and yet he is content (if I may so speak) to bargain with us, and to buy off our natural or rather wicked resentments, offering us his own mercy and favour, freedom from hell, and everlasting happiness, on this amongst other conditions, that we *love our enemies*.

Nay farther, the duty is in it self so reasonable, that the more sober of the Heathens, who had nothing above reason to teach them, have acknowledg'd it, if not as necessary, yet as highly becoming, and an eminent instance of a virtuous and generous mind. *Plato* could say, that *injury is by no means to be done, nor to be repay'd to him that has done it*. And when a malicious person said to *Zeno*, *let me perish, if I don't do you a mischief*: His answer was, *let me perish, if I don't reconcile thee to me*. *Antoninus* tells us frequently, that *all reasonable creatures are born for one another, and that it is the part of justice to bear with others*. That it is through ignorance they offend us, as not knowing the right way to their own happiness, and therefore we should rather instruct them better, than hate them: That the best kind of revenge is not to become like them

*them in wickedness and malice: And many other excellent arguments does that royal philosopher bring to the same purpose: And Plutarch gives this as one of the reasons why God is so slow in punishing wicked persons, that we may learn meekness and patience by his example; adding that excellent observation, that our greatest happiness and perfection consists in the imitation of our Maker.*

But to leave the testimonies of heathens; the obligation of this precept of loving our enemies may be deduced from another, which every man will acknowledge to be highly reasonable; the *doing to others what we would have done to our selves.* Every one of us desires to be loved and cherished by others, to have our faults pardoned, our failings overlooked, and our necessities supply'd: Or if any be so haughty and stubborn, that they disdain a courtesie from an enemy; yet I hope there is none so mad, but he desires the favour of God, whose hatred he deserves infinitely more than his most bitter enemy can deserve his; how then can we think it unreasonable to allow that to others, which our selves expect  
and



and desire? Can we look that our master should *forgive us ten thousand talents*; if we take *our fellow-servant by the throat*, and *hale him into prison for one hundred pence*? Or with what confidence can we say, *pardon our sins*, unless we be willing to add, that *we pardon those who sin against us*. Certainly if it is reasonable to seek pardon, it is just and equitable to give it; and nothing but blind selfishness and extravagant partiality, can teach us to make so unreasonable a difference betwixt our selves and others.

Again, the reasonableness of this duty will farther appear, if we compare it with that malice and revenge which it does oppose. Can there be any thing more against natural reason, than to delight in an evil which can bring no benefit to us? Yet this is the very nature and essence of revenge; for if the damage we sustain can be repair'd, it is no revenge to seek it: and if it cannot, it does no way alleviate the evil of the accident, that we draw him that caus'd it into as great a misery: nay unless we are unnatural, and without bowels, it will augment our trouble to see any evil befall him. And he is a miser-

able

able person indeed whose delight is in mischief, whose good is the evil of his neighbour: yea, I may say, that he who returns an injury, is many times more unreasonable, than he who offer'd it: for he who first wrongs another, hath commonly some temptation of advantage by it, which revenge cannot pretend to; but if he has done it out of meer malice, yet he is not worse than the other who returns it; there being as much fantastick pleasure in spite as in revenge, both are alike miserable and extravagant.

And who are they against whom we bend our malice and revenge? Are they not men, partakers of the same nature, descended from the same stock with ourselves, fellow-citizens with us in this world, and with whom we should hope to live for ever in a better? And should we not bear much with those who are so nearly related to us? Nay more, they are the workmanship of God's hands, and for any thing we know, either are, or may become his children and friends: and dare we pretend any love to God, if we do not spare them for *his* sake? And lastly, if they have done us any real wrong, they  
are

are in so far foolish and destitute of reason, and who would quarrel with a madman? Certainly an injurious person knows not what he is doing, for he can never wound his neighbour but through his own sides, nor prejudice another in a trifling interest, without hazarding his own eternal concernment, and therefore he deserves our pity rather than our hatred.

Much more might be brought to demonstrate the reasonableness of what our Saviour calls for in the text, but I hope what has been already said may suffice to stop the mouths of malicious and revengeful men, who are ready to quarrel with it: and if this or any other duty seem absurd or unreasonable to us, we may

§ Cor. 2. 14. learn the cause from the Apostle, *The carnal man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.* It is the carnality of our heart that makes it seem so, and therefore instead of disputing the duty, let us endeavour to purify our Souls, and open the eyes of our mind, and we shall find it to be true, which wisdom saith of her doctrines, *they are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.*

But

But in the third place, the love of enemies is not only necessary and reasonable, but also amiable and delightful: It hath a great deal of pleasure and sweetness in it. Of this I confess the greatest evidence must be had from the experience and practice of it; the nature even of earthly pleasures being such, that only the enjoyment can make a man know them: but tho' the full knowledge hereof require a nearer acquaintance, yet even those who look at a distance may perceive something of amiableness in it, especially comparing it with the trouble and uneasiness of that vice it would deliver us from: Malice and revenge are the most restless and tormenting passions that can possess the mind, they keep it in continual hurry and disorder, they gnaw a man's heart with anguish and vexation, and imbitter all his enjoyments; they marr the pleasures of the day, and interrupt the repose of the night: *Solomon* describes these men, *they sleep not except* Prov. 4: 6 *they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away except they cause some to fall.*

On the other hand, the meek and peaceable man, whose mind is brought to a compliance with this precept, is above the



malice of his enemies : It is not in their power to vex him, amidst all the assaults of injuries and affronts : He is firm as a rock, which no winds can shake, no waves remove. He is happy in the calmness and serenity of his spirit, and is sure either to convert or shame his adversary by his patience and friendly behaviour. And then the consciousness of performing his duty, and assurance of future reward, afford him infinitely more pure and solid pleasure and delight, than any can expect by indulging and gratifying their revengeful humour.

The advantages of this duty will more clearly appear, when we take a view of those prejudices, which commonly are entertained against it ; which shall be our next work.

First then, some cry out upon this precept as enjoyning impossibilities, doing violence to the very constitution of nature, and obliging men to a debt that no man is able to pay. They will tell you, that it is as easie to hate our selves, as to love our enemies ; to love pain, as to bear an injury meekly. Flesh and blood can't endure it. What arrogance and presumption is this, thus to impeach the divine laws ?

laws? It is impossible, therefore, God should not have commanded it, such is their reasoning. Were it not far more rational to argue thus: It is indispensibly commanded, therefore it must needs be possible: And so it has been to all good men that ever lived, and so it will be by God's assistance to all that make it their study. *Flesh and blood cannot do it.* True enough; but then take this into the account, *Flesh and blood shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven.* It is indeed against the propension of our corrupt nature; but it is the work of christians to mortifie their corruptions: And if we think it impossible at the command of God, and for the purchase of Heaven, to love an enemy and pardon an injury; how would we bear those hard trials which christians have suffer'd by the cruelty of persecutors? Whether is it easier to suffer a wrong, or to *give our body to be burned?* Certainly when we have obey'd this precept, we have not yet *resisted unto blood*, and therefore that obedience can never be impossible, since harder things may be expected from us. Therefore seriously set about the work, and endeavour to bring your minds

to a compliance with it, and then your own experience shall confute these idle pretences, and evince the possibility of the performance.

Another prejudice against this precept is, that it seems to encourage injuries, by hopes of impunity and reward, giving the delinquent occasion to expect kindness and love, instead of the punishment which he deserves, and so we should draw upon our selves a second injury by not requiting the first.

But we have already told you, that this precept does not forbid the exercise of justice by those to whom the sword is committed, when the publick security calls for it; as a parent may at once love and correct his child, so may a judge be in charity with the person he does punish: and tho' it should be granted, that by pardoning injuries, we do expose ourselves to new ones; yet would this amount to no more, but that we may suffer hardships by our obedience to God, which I hope is not enough to dispense with our duty. But truly the matter goes not commonly thus, for if we consult either our own observation, or the experience of others, we shall

shall find, that meek and charitable persons are most seldom exposed to injuries, or engaged in troubles. He must needs be a desperately wicked person, who will offer a second injury to one who hath requited the first with kindness and love: such a sweet disposition will mollifie the hardest hearts, and charm the most forward humours, especially if we carry ourselves with such prudence and discretion, as may testify that we are acted by a noble and generous charity, and not by a stupid insensibility. How often *does a soft answer turn away wrath?* and the overlooking of an injury prevent farther trouble, throwing water upon the spark, before it break forth into a flame? Hence if we look upon meek and quiet persons, we shall ordinarily find them happy in the peace of their families, and favour and kindness of all their neighbours: Whereas the angry, quarrelsome, and malicious person is an eye-sore to all about him, his neighbours shun him, his servants dread him, and all abhor and avoid him. And therefore the observation of this precept of our Lord, is so far from exposing us to new injuries, that by the mercy of God it will



prove the best means to secure our tranquillity. Peace shall be the reward of a peaceable temper.

But lastly, some will tell us, that the love of enemies, and pardoning injuries, is inconsistent with the *principles of honour*, and will expose us to contempt and derision. But alas! to what a sad pass are we come, if neither reason nor religion may prescribe the rules of honour; if our notions of it must be taken from the language of the sons of *Belial*, of strife and violence. If to imitate the Deity in his most glorious attribute of mercy and forgiveness, and become *perfect as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect*, be accounted a base and dishonourable thing; and if for this vain imaginary fantastick shadow of reputation, we will violate all laws humane and divine, and forfeit eternal happiness. But who are they that will think the worse of you for your patience? Some vain empty fools, some profane atheistical wretches, whose judgments are not valuable, nor their praise worth the having. Or what can they say of you, but that you are *mèek and lowly*, imitators of that blessed master, whom we profess to serve?

And

And why do we own the name of christians, if we be ashamed of the spirit and life of christianity? Why do we not call our selves after the name of *Cain, Nimrod*, or some other angry and revengeful destroyer, if we esteem those qualities more glorious and excellent? But if we have any deference for so wise a man, and great a king as *Solomon*, he will tell us, *that it is the honour of a man to cease from strife, and that he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he who ruleth his spirit, better than he who taketh a city.*

Thus you see how unreasonable those prejudices are which keep men from the practice of this necessary duty, it remains now, that we hint at some helps for the performance of it.

The heathens were pretty ingenuous in devising motives of patience, they would tell us, *that if we were newly offended, it was too soon to resent it; if long time since, it was too late. If the offender be too strong for us, it were folly to contend: if he were too weak, it were a shame: Are we offended by a friend, let us remember our old friendship; if by an enemy, let us do him a kindness, and he will do so no more.* But

christianity will direct us to better means for composing the Soul into the meekness and charity which it does require.

The first I shall recommend is *humility*. Let us learn to have low thoughts of our selves, and then we both shall have fewer enemies, and be more inclined to love them. Pride and self-conceit makes us over-rate every petty injury, and inclines us to revenge; but if we consider what poor contemptible things we are in our selves, and what we have deserv'd, if not from men, yet from God, whose instruments they are for our correction, we shall be little concern'd at what the world calls affronts, and easily reconcil'd to those who have wrong'd us.

Secondly, Let us learn to have a low esteem of the present world, and all things therein; and this will cut off the occasions of our hatred and animosities; men may wrong us in our fortune or reputation, but they cannot rob us of piety and virtue, of the favour of God, and eternal happiness. And therefore if our minds be once rais'd above those transitory vanities, we cannot meet with injuries worth the resenting; If we aim at Heaven and the  
glory

glory of another world, we shall not stand to quarrel and contend about any trifling interest in our way thither.

Thirdly, The frequent and serious thoughts of death, would conduce much to allay our hatred, and dispose us to meekness and charity. Naturalists tell us, that when swarms of bees fight in the air, they are dispersed by throwing dust among them. Did we in our thoughts often reflect upon that dust whereunto we must all shortly return, we should more easily lay down our quarrels and animosities: while we contend about small things, little do we consider that death is coming on apace, and will swallow up the victor and the vanquished, him that is in the right, and him that is in the wrong. Look back upon the private contentions, or publick commotions, which infested the world an hundred years ago: where are they who manag'd them? they are all gone down into the dark and silent grave. Death hath decided their controversies, and within a few days it will do so with ours, and send us all to plead our cause before our great judge, and it will go ill with us, if we appear there in malice:

There.



Therefore why should our hatred be long; since our life is so short? one would think we should find better employment for the short time we have to spend here.

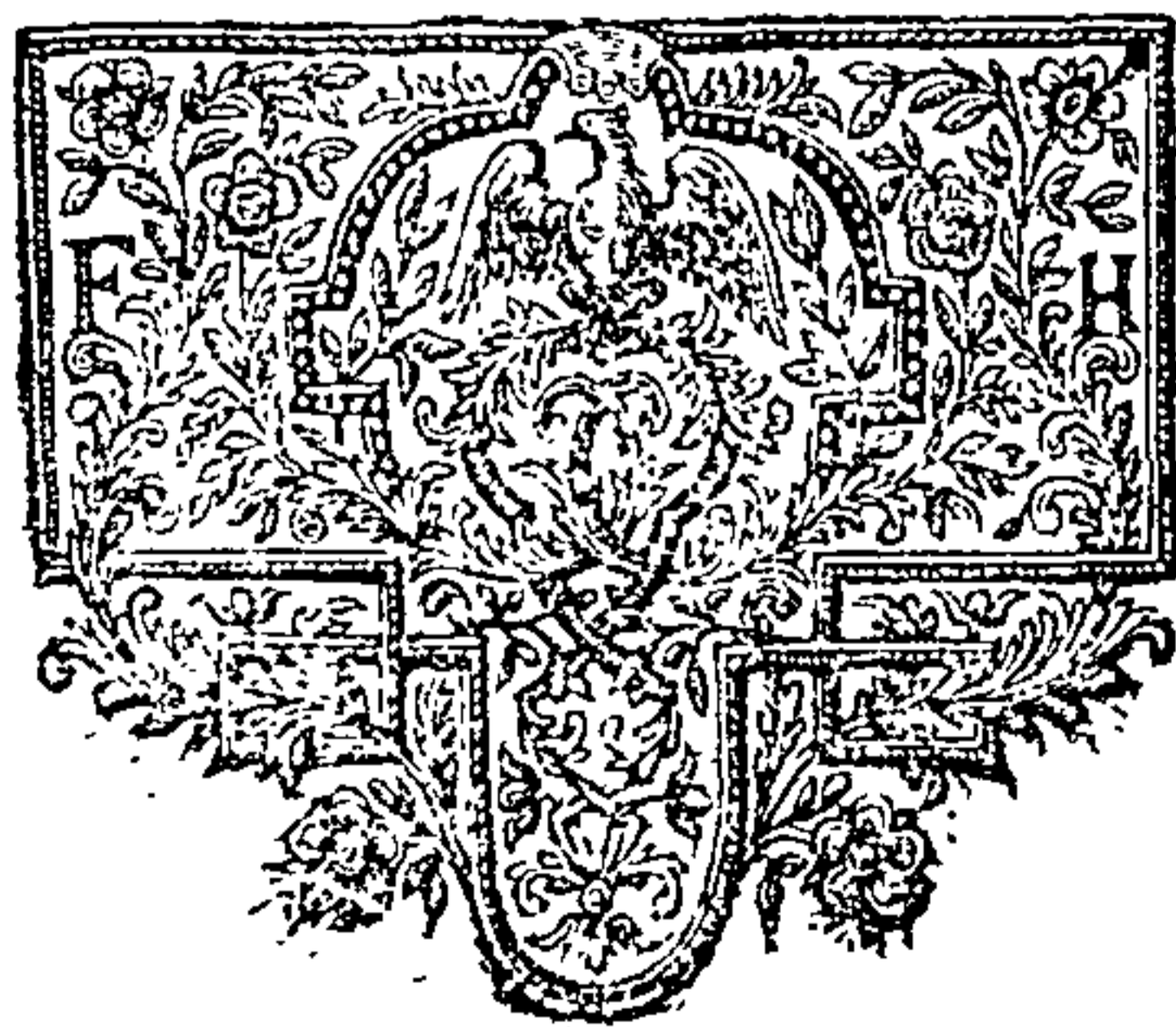
But lastly and above all, let us propose to our selves the blessed example of the holy *Jesus*, *who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffer'd, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

Let us frequently remember what great things he hath done and suffer'd for us poor sinful wretches, even while *we were enemies and rebels to him*, how that in all the passages of his life, and all the bloody scene of his sufferings, he was acted by that same *charity and love to his enemies*, which he calls for at our hands. It was this which mov'd him to descend from Heaven, and cloath himself with the frailties of our nature, and endure the troubles of a calamitous life, and the pains of a bitter death, to deliver us from that eternal misery whereinto we had plung'd our selves. And may not his goodness and mercy to us mollifie our hearts, and overpower the corruption of our revengeful nature, and inspire us with earnest  
desires

desires and resolutions to imitate his blessed example? After all that he hath done and suffer'd for us, can we be guilty of such a shameful ingratitude, as to deny him this poor satisfaction and acknowledgment, to pardon an enemy for his sake? Has *he died for us* when we were *his enemies*, and shall we refuse to live at peace with ours? Remember with what patience he endured *the contradiction of sinners against himself*, with what humility he did condescend to wash the feet of that wicked miscreant, who was at the same time resolv'd to betray him? With what mildness he did bear the supine negligence and stupidity of his disciples, who slept in the time of his agony? What charity and meekness did he evidence toward those who sought his life? He could have called for legions of angels to destroy them, or made the earth to open her mouth and swallow them up: But he would not imploy his miraculous power, save only for their good, restoring a servant's ear, and reproving the preposterous zeal of him who cut it off. Yea, while he hung upon the cross, and was approaching to the gates of death, all the cruel

pains

pains of body, and far more intolerable pressure of spirit which he then sustained, did not lessen his wonderful tenderness and affection for his bloody murderers : *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Let us be frequent and serious in the meditation of these things, and if we have any veneration for the example of our Saviour, and any sense of his infinite mercy, this will dispose us to the practice of his precepts, and the obedience of his laws, and particularly the observation of this necessary, this reasonable, and delightful duty, that we *love our enemies.*





T H E

Necessity and Advantage

O F

Early Afflictions.

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L A M. III. 27, 28.

*It is good for a man that he bear  
the yoke in his youth, he sitteth  
alone and keepeth silence, be-  
cause he hath born it upon him.*



THE great difference and con-  
trariety betwixt the maxims of  
the world, and those which  
Religion doth propose, is in  
nothing more observable than in taking  
the measures of happiness and felicity.  
The world accounteth him a happy man,  
who enjoyeth a perpetual calm and sun-  
shine of prosperity, whose pleasant and  
joyful



joyful days are never overcast with any cloud, nor his tranquillity interrupted by any disastrous accident, and who was never acquainted with any other change, but that which brought him the new and fresh relish of still succeeding pleasures and enjoyments. But Religion hath taught us to look upon this as a condition full of danger much more to be pitied, than envied, to be feared than to be desired. It hath taught us to consider afflictions as instances of the divine goodness, as tokens and pledges of his love (for *whom the Lord loveth he chasteth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*) and that these severe dispensations are very necessary, and may prove useful and advantageous; *Ps. 94. 12. blessed is the man (saith the psalmist) whom thou chastest, O Lord, &c. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn thy statutes.* And the prophet in the text, *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.* He was at this time loaded with the heaviest weight of trouble and sorrow, what for the publick calamities of his nation, and what for his own particular sufferings: *His eyes were running down with rivers of water for the de-*

*destructions of the daughter of his people, they trickled down and ceased not. Fudab was gone into captivity because of affliction; she dwelt among the heathen, and found no rest, all her persecutors overtook her in the straits: the ways of Zion did mourn, because none came to the solemn feasts; the young and the old were lying on the ground in the streets, the virgins and young men were fallen by the sword, and the few that remained were starving for hunger. The people did sigh and seek bread, they gave their pleasant things for meat to relieve their Soul; the children and sucklings did swoon in the streets, their Soul was poured out into their mother's bosom; the women did eat their fruit, their children of a span long; and the prophet had a large share in these calamities, both by his own interest and his compassion towards his neighbour. *I am the man, saith he, that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath, surely against me he is turned, he turned his hand against me all the day.**

But after he had thus bemoaned himself, and given some vent to his passion and sorrow, he puts a stop to the current  
that

that was grown too impetuous, and turns his thoughts another way; he acknowledgeth the justice of God's dispensations, and that it was a favour that they suffer'd no more: *this I recal into my mind, therefore have I hope: It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not, they are new every morning; nay, when he had further pondered the matter, he finds himself indebted to the goodness of God, even for the afflictions he endured. It is good for a man, &c.*

The bearing of the yoke is an easy and obvious metaphor, importing the restraint of liberty, when our desires are denied and we have not our wills, cannot ramble up and down as we please; and also the pressure of afflictions which gaul and torment us, under which we smart and groan. Such is the yoke which the prophet tells us, *it is good for a man that he bear.* A strange doctrine indeed to flesh and blood, and O how few do believe it! we judge of things by their outward appearance, and as they affect us at present, *now no affliction or chastning seemeth for the present to be joyous but grievous; and we cannot persuade our selves that there is any*  
good

Heb. 12.

13.

good in that which we feel to be troublesome and unpleasant. But if we consult our reason and our faith, they will soon bring us to the acknowledgment of this truth, that *affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.* The crosses we meet with are not the effects of blind chance, but the results of a wise and unerring Providence, which knoweth what is fittest for us, and loveth us better than we can do our selves: there is no malice or envy lodged in the bosom of that blessed Being, whose name and nature is *love*. He taketh no delight in the troubles and miseries of his creatures, *he doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men.* It were infinitely unworthy of his wisdom and goodness, to please himself in seeing such poor creatures as we are tossed up and down in the world, to behold our anguish, and to hear our groans: It is our happiness and welfare which he designs in all his dispensations, and he maketh choice of the most proper and effectual means for that end. He seeth us wandring out of the way, ready to ruin and undo our selves, and first he essayeth to reduce us



by milder and more gentle methods, he trieth our gratitude and ingenuity by all the endearments of mercy and goodness, he draweth us with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man. But if we break all these bands afunder, and cast away these cords from us; if we abuse his goodness, and turn his grace into wantonness, then not only his justice, but his love to us, not only his hatred to sin, but his affection unto us will oblige him to alter his method, and take the rod in his hand, and try what severity can do. God's design in afflicting us, is excellently expressed by the author to the *Hebrews*, ch. 12. v. 10. *He chasteneth us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.* Holiness is the highest perfection and greatest happiness we are capable of; it is a real participation of the divine nature, the image of God drawn on the Soul: and all the chastisements we meet with are designed to reduce us to this blessed temper, to make us like unto himself, and thereby capable to be happy with him to all eternity. This will more clearly appear, if we reflect on the natural temper of our minds; and the influence  
which

which prosperous or adverse fortune is wont to have upon them.

And first we are naturally proud and self-conceited, we have an high esteem of our selves, and would have every body else to value and esteem us. This disease is very deeply rooted in our corrupt nature; it is ordinarily the first sin that betrays it self in the little actions and passions of children, and many times the last which Religion enables us to overcome: and such is the malignity of its nature, that it renders us odious and vile both in the sight of God and man. It cannot but be infinitely displeasing to that great and glorious Majesty, to see such silly creatures whom he hath brought forth out of nothing, and who are every moment ready to return into it again, and have nothing of their own but folly, misery, and sin, to see such creatures, I say, either so blind as to value themselves, or so unreasonable as to desire others to value them. Good men must needs hate us for it, because God doth so; and evil men hate us for it, because they are proud themselves, and so are jealous of the attempts of others to exalt themselves, as

of that which tendeth to depress and diminish them. Pride alone is the source and fountain of almost all the disorders in the world, of all our troubles, and of all our sins, and we shall never be truly happy, or truly good, till we come to think nothing of our selves, and be content that all the world think nothing of us. Now there is nothing hath a more natural tendency to foment and heighten this natural corruption, than constant prosperity and success. The psalmist speaking of the prosperity of the wicked, who are not in trouble as others, neither are they plagued like other men, presently subjoin-

Ps. 73. 6. *eth the effect, therefore pride compasseth them about like a chain.* Sanctified afflictions contribute to abate and mortifie the pride of our hearts, to prick the swelling imposthume, to make us sensible of our weakness, and convince us of our sins:

Job 33. 16, 17. *Thus doth God open the ears of men, and seal their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride*

Job 36. 8, 9. *from men. And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction, then he sheweth them their work, and their transgression wherein they have exceeded.*

Afflictions

Afflictions do both put us on the search to find out the offences wherewith we have provoked God, and make us more sensible of the heinousness and malignity of their nature. *I have surely heard Ephraim be-  
moaning himself thus, thou hast chastised* Jer. 31.  
18, 19. *me, and I was chastised as a bullock un-  
accustomed to the yoke; turn thou me and  
I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord  
my God; surely after I was chastised I  
repented, and after I was instructed I  
smote on my thigh, I was ashamed, yea even  
confounded, because I did bear the reproach  
of my youth.*

Another distemper of our minds is our too great affection to the world and worldly things. We are all too apt to set our hearts wholly upon them, to take up our rest and seek our happiness and satisfaction in them; but God knows that these may well divert and amuse a while, they can never satisfy or make us happy; that the souls which he made for himself, can never rest, till they return unto him, and therefore he many times findeth it necessary either to remove our comforts, or im-  
bitter them unto us; to put *aloes* and *wormwood* on the breasts of the world,



that thereby we may wean our hearts from it, and carry them to the end of their being, the fountain of their blessedness and felicity. The few and little comforts of this life, (saith a person of great quality and worth) notwithstanding all the troubles and crosses with which they are interlarded, are apt to keep the hearts even of good men, in too great love of this world; what would become of us if our whole life should be altogether prosperous and contenting, without any intermixture of crosses and afflictions? It is too probable we should never look any farther, but conclude with *Peter* on the mount of transfiguration, *Lord it is good to be here.* As Almighty God hath a very great affection to us, so he is very desirous of our love; not that it bringeth any advantage to him, but because it is our greatest happiness and perfection, he bestoweth his mercies to gain our hearts; but when we begin to doat on the gifts, and forget the giver, he becomes jealous, and takes them away, that he may not have any rival in our affection. And certainly it is no small advantage, to have our hearts in any measure loosen'd from  
the

the world, disentangled from every thing here below, *quocumque pretio bene emitur*, he makes a good purchase who obtains it, let it cost him never so dear.

Another bad effect which prosperity is wont to produce in our corrupt natures is, that it makes us forgetful of God, and unthankful for his mercies. When second causes answer our expectations and desires, we are seldom wont to look beyond them, we never regard the fountain till the cisterns begin to fail; this it was that made *Agur* to pray against a plentiful fortune, *lest I be full and deny thee, and say who is the Lord!* when the weather is fair, and the sails are filled with a prosperous gale, the rough and stubborn mariners are seldom at their devotion; but when the storm is risen, and the sea begins to swell, and every wave threatneth to devour them, *then they cry to the Lord in their trouble*, as on him who can alone deliver them out of their distress. The psalmist speaking of their stiff-necked and rebellious predecessors, tells us, that *when* ps. 78. 34.  
*God slew them, then they sought him,* and 35.  
*they returned and enquired early after him,*  
*and they remembered that God was their*  
O 4
rock,

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*rock, and the high God their redeemer.*

*Hof 5. 15. In their afflictions (saith the Lord by the prophet) they will seek me early.* I doubt not a great many devout persons will acknowledge, that it was some affliction or other that first taught them to pray. And as afflictions contribute to make us remember our dependance on God, and then excite us to seek unto him, so also they render us more sensible of our obligations unto him, and more thankful for the mercies he hath bestowed on us. We are so dull and insensible, that we seldom value any of the divine mercies, till we find what it is to want them: we put very little value on our food and raiment, and the ordinary means of our subsistence, unless we have been some times pinched with want; we consider not how much we are indebted to God for preserving our friends, till some of them be removed from us. How little do we commonly prize our health, if we have never had experience of sickness or pain? Where is the man who doth seriously bless God for his nightly quiet and repose? And yet if sickness or trouble deprive us of it, we then find it to have been a great and invaluable

valuable mercy, and that *it is God who giveth his beloved sleep.*

Once more, prosperity rendreth us insensible of the miseries and calamities of others: *those who were at ease in Zion did not grieve for the afflictions of Joseph.* But afflictions do soften the heart, and make it more tender and kindly, and we are always most ready to compassionate those griefs which our selves have sometime endured; the sufferings of others make the deepest impressions upon us, when they put us in mind of our own. It is mentioned as a powerful motive to engage the children of *Israel* to be kind and merciful to strangers, that *they knew very well the heart of a stranger, having been strangers themselves in Egypt.* Now this tender and compassionate temper doth well become a christian, whose duty it is *to weep with those that weep,* and to have as deep a sense and feeling of the griefs of others, as he is wont to have of his own.

These and many more advantages do sanctified and well improved afflictions bring to a christian, on the account of which *it is good for him that he hath borne the yoke.* But I hasten to that which was



mentioned in the text, only by the way (that I may not need to return) let me take notice of the season which is here mention'd as the fittest for a man to bear affliction. *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.*

We are all willing to put off the evil day, and if we must needs bear the yoke, we would choose to have it delayed till we grow old, we think it sad to have our morning overcast with clouds, to meet with a storm before we have well launched forth from the shoar; we are wont to indulge and applaud children and young folks in their frolicks and jovial humours, and tell them, they will have time enough for cares and troubles when they grow older; we turn that irony of *Solomon's* into a serious advice, *Rejoyce O young man in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine eyes.* But the divine wisdom which knoweth what is fit for us, doth many times make choice of our younger years, as the most proper to accustom us to the bearing of the yoke, and a little consideration will make us discover the advantages of this season for suffering afflictions; they being at that  
time

time most necessary, most tolerable, and most advantageous. First, I say, they are then most necessary ; for youth is the time of our life wherein we are in greatest danger to run into wild and extravagant courses, our blood is hot, and our spirits unstayed and giddy, we have too much pride to be govern'd by others, and too little wisdom to govern our selves. The yoke is then especially needful to tame our wildness, and reduce us to a due stay- edness and composure of mind. Then also it is most supportable, the body is strong and healthful, less apt to be affected with the troubles of the mind ; the spirit stout and vigorous, will not so easily break and sink under them. Old age is a burden, and will soon faint under any supervenient load ; the smallest trouble is enough *to bring down gray hairs with sorrow to the grave* ; and therefore since we must meet with afflictions, it is certainly a favourable circumstance to have them at the time of our life wherein we are most able to endure them. And lastly, the lessons which afflictions teach us are then most advantageous when we learn them betimes, that we may have the use of

of

of them in the conduct of our after lives. An early engagement into the ways of Religion is a great felicity, and the means whereby this is to be effected can never be too soon administered. Youth is more soft and pliable, and evil dispositions are more easily cured, before time and custom have hardened us in them. A tree needs little force to bend it when it is young, and there needeth the less of the rod, if the child be brought under discipline betimes. And thus on many accounts it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.

We proceed to that particular advantage of affliction, which is mention'd in the text, *he sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath born it upon him.* The words are capable of a two-fold interpretation, and both suit well with the purpose; for we may either understand them properly of *solitude and silence*, or metaphorically of *patience and quiet submission*; both of which are the good effects of sanctified and well improved afflictions; and accordingly we shall say something to both. Nature hath made us sociable creatures, but corruption hath carried this

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inclination unto excess ; so that most persons think it an intolerable burden to be any considerable time alone ; though they love themselves out of measure, yet they cannot endure their own conversation, they had rather be hearing and discour-  
sing of the most naughty and trivial things, then be sitting alone and holding their peace. Outward prosperity heightens this humour ; when the heart is dilated with joy, it seeketh to vent it self in every company : when a man is free of trouble and cares, he thinks of nothing but how to please himself with variety of diversions and conversations. Crosses on the other hand render a man pensive and solitary, they stop the mouth and bind up the tongue, and incline the person to be much alone. Sadness makes his company disagreeable to others, and he findeth theirs as little agreeable to him, *he sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath born it upon him.* Thus the same prophet saith, *I sat not in the assembly of the mock-  
ers nor rejoyced, I sat alone because of thine  
band.* Jer. 15. 17.

Now he who considers on the one hand the guilt we are wont to contract, and  
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the prejudice which we sustain by too much conversation with others, and on the other hand the excellent improvement we may make of solitude and retirement, will account it a good effect of afflictions, that they incline and dispose us unto it. In considering the evils of frequent conversation, we are not to prosecute the grosser and more scandalous vices of the tongue; it might seem a poor commendation of *solitude* and *silence*, that a man is not swearing, or lying, or scolding, or talking profanely when he is alone; a man may converse enough, and keep himself free from these. We rather choose to mention such evils as are wont to be less noticed, and can be more hardly avoided.

And first, experience may teach us all that much conversation doth ordinarily beget a remissness and dissolution of spirit, that it slackneth and relaxeth the bent of our minds, and disposeth us to softness and easy compliances. We find it hard enough at any time to compose our spirits to that stayedness and severity which Religion doth require; but if we be too much in company with others, it is almost impossible to maintain it. That cheerfulness  
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and complaisance which is judged necessary to render conversation agreeable, doth easily degenerate into levity and sin; and we are very ready to displease our Maker, when we are too intent on pleasing our friends. This loose frame and dissipation of mind, which society doth occasion, made a good man complain, *ex hominum consortio semper venio minus homo*; that he always came out of company less a man.

Another prejudice we receive by society is, that it fills our minds with noxious images, and fortifies our corrupt notions and opinion of things. Our hearts are naturally too much addicted to the things of the world, we mind them too much, and put too high a value upon them; and the discourses we hear redouble the temptation, by bringing them continually into our thoughts, and setting them off to the greatest advantage. When we are alone in a sober temper, and take time to reflect and consider of things, we are sometimes perswaded of the vanity and worthlessness of all those glittering trifles whereunto the generality of mankind are so sadly bewitched: but when we come abroad  
and

and listen to the common talk, and hear people speak of greatness, and riches, and honour with concern and admiration, we quickly forget our more sober and deliberate thoughts, and suffer our selves to be carried away with the stream of the common opinion ; and though the effect be not so sudden and observable, yet these discourses are still making some secret and insensible impressions upon us.

Thus also is our judgment corrupted about the qualities and endowments of the mind. Courage and gallantry, wit and eloquence, and other accomplishments of this nature, are magnified and extolled beyond all measure, whereas humility and meekness, and devotion, and all those christian graces which render a Soul truly excellent and lovely, are spoken of as mean and contemptible things ; for tho' men have not the impudence formally to make the comparison and prefer the former, yet their very air and way of discoursing about these things sufficiently testifies their opinion. With what affection and concernment will they represent a gallant or learned man, but how faintly do they utter the character of a good man!

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And so in censuring mens failings, they exaggerate the smallest instances of weakness or imprudence, but speak lightly enough of the greatest crimes. Drunkenness and whoredom are mention'd in such terms, as express little sense of their heinous nature, and tend to lessen the horror we should have of them; ambition and revenge, and such other plausible vices, are rather allowed than condemned; and while we converse in the world, and are accusom'd to such representations of things, our judgments are thereby exceedingly corrupted, and we entertain false and pernicious maxims; and so hard it is to guard our selves against the contagion, that we had better sit alone and keep silence, than be continually expos'd to the temptation.

I shall mention but another of those evils wherewith our conversation is commonly attended. The most ordinary subject of our entertainments are the faults and follies of others: *itur in verba, sermo seritur, vita aliena describitur*. We meet and talk, and fall to describe the life and deportment of others; were this one theme of discourse discharged, we would



oft-times find but little to fay. I scarce know any fault whereof good persons are fo frequently guilty, and fo little fenfible; they know perhaps the things are true, and they have no malicious design in reporting them, they tell them only as they do the publick news, to divert themselves and gratifie their friends. But would we consult our own hearts, and apply the great rule of righteoufness of doing unto others as we would be done unto our selves, we should soon be convinced of a great deal more guilt and sinfulness in such discourses, than we are wont to apprehend. How ill do we take it to have our own failings thus exposed, and to hear that any person hath made as bold with us, as we are wont to make with others? Again, how loath would we be that the persons of whom we speak fo freely, should over-hear our discourse, or be informed of it? Now if the practice had nothing blameable in it, why should we be fo shy to avow it?

I have only hinted at these things, but he who shall seriously ponder them, will acknowledge there is no little prejudice even in those entertainments, which pass  
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for very innocent in the world, and that he shunneth much guilt and many snares, who *sitteth alone and keepeth silence*. But solitude and retirement do not only deliver us from these inconveniencies, but also afford very excellent opportunities for bettering our Souls: Those hours we mispend in needless visits and idle talk, if rightly improved, might set us a great way forward on our journey to Heaven; while we are too busy in making or entertaining acquaintance with men, we many times fall out of acquaintance both with God and our selves.

The most profane and irreligious persons will find some serious thoughts rise in their minds if they be much alone, and the more that any person is advanced in piety and goodness, the more will he delight in retirement, and receive the more benefit by it: then it is that the devout Soul takes its highest flight in divine contemplations, and maketh its nearest approaches to God. I find the *vulgar latin* rendreth the words of the text, *Sedebit solitarius & tacebit, quia levavit se super se*; *the solitary person will sit still and hold his peace, because he hath lifted up himself*

*above himself, raised his spirit above its ordinary pitch. In solitude (saith one of the fathers) aer purior cælum apertius, familiarior deus. In solitude we breathe as it were in a purer air, Heaven is more open unto us, and God is more familiar and frequent in his visits. To which purpose some have applied that of the prophet Hosea, Behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and there speak comfortably unto her; or as the original importeth, I will speak unto her heart. That rule which our Saviour giveth for our devotion, to enter into our closet, and shut the door behind us, is as necessary to preserve us from distraction, as from vanity and ostentation: when we have retired as much as we can from the world, we do still carry too much of it along with us; the images of things do sufficiently persecute and disturb us, though we be not exposed to the objects themselves. Our blessed Saviour thought not the mountains and deserts retired enough for his devotions, but would add the darkness and silence of the night. Little doth the world understand those secret and hidden pleasures, which devout Souls do feel,*

*when*

when having got out of the noise and hurry of the world, they sit alone and keep silence, contemplating the divine perfections, which shine so conspicuously in all his works of wonder, admiring his greatness, and wisdom, and love, and revolving his favours towards themselves; opening before him their griefs and their cares, and disburdening their Souls into his bosom; protesting their allegiance and subjection unto him, and telling him a thousand times that they love him; and then listening unto the voice of God within their hearts, that still and quiet voice, which is not wont to be heard in the streets, that they may hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints, and visit them with the expressions of his love. No wonder if those blessed Souls who have tasted the pleasures of holy retirement, and found themselves as it were in the suburbs of Heaven, grow weary of company and affairs, and long for the returning of those happy hours, as the hireling for the shades of the evening: no wonder they pity the foolish busy world, who



spend their days in vanity, and know not what it is indeed to live.

But here I would not be mistaken, as if I recommended a total and constant retirement, or perswaded men to forsake the world, and betake themselves into deserts: no certainly, we must not abandon the stations wherein God hath placed us, nor render our selves useles to mankind: Solitude hath its temptations, and we may be sometimes very bad company to our selves. It was not without reason that a wise person warn'd another, who profess'd to delight in conversing with himself, *vide ut cum homine probo*; have a care that you be keeping company with a good man. Abused solitude may whet mens passions, and irritate their lusts, and prompt them to things which company would restrain, and this made one say, that *he who is much alone, must either be a Saint or a Devil*. Melancholy, which inclines men most to retirement, is often too much nourished and fomented by it, and there is a peevish and sullen loneliness, which some people affect under their troubles, whereby they feed on discontented thoughts, and find a kind of perverse pleasure in

refusing to be comforted. But all this says no more, but that good things may be abused; and excess or disorder may turn the most wholesome food into poison. And therefore tho' I would not indifferently recommend much solitude unto all, yet sure I may say, it were good for the most part of men that they were less in company and more alone.

Thus much of the first and proper sense of *sitting alone and keeping silence*; we told you it might also import a quiet and patient submission to the will of God, the laying of our hand on our mouth, that no expression of murmur or discontent may escape us, *I was dumb*, said the psalmist, *I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.* And the prophet describeth our Saviour's patience, that *he was oppressed* and *was afflicted*, yet *he opened not his mouth, he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.* Indeed a modest and unaffected silence is a good way to express our submission to the hand of God under afflictions. The heathen moralists, who pretend much to patience, could never hold their peace,

but desired always to signalize themselves by some fetches of wit, and expressions of unusual courage; but certainly the mute and quiet christian behaveth himself much better, *loquacissimum illud silentium*, that eloquent and expressive silence saith more than all their vain and stoical boastings. We cannot now insist in any length on this christian duty of patience and submission to the will of God; we shall only say two things of it which the text importeth, first that this lesson is most commonly learned in the school of afflictions, *he sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath born it upon him*. In that forecited place of *Jeremiah*, 31. 18. *Ephraim bemoaning himself acknowledgeth that he had been as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*, which maketh the greater reluctancy against it. Children that are much indulged, are the more impatient if they come to be crossed, and there is too much of the child in us all. The apostle tells Rom. 5. 3. us, that *tribulation worketh patience*. Custom makes every thing more tolerable unto us, and if it please God to sanctifie the first stroak, the second is received with the greater submission. The other thing

thing I have to say on this duty is, that this advantage of afflictions is very great and desirable, that it is indeed *very good for a man to have born the yoke in his youth, if he hath thereby learned to sit alone and keep silence when the hand of the Lord is upon him.* There is nothing more acceptable unto God, no object more lovely and amiable in his eyes, than a Soul thus prostrate before him, thus entirely resign'd unto his holy will, thus quietly submitting to his severest dispensations; nor is it less advantageous unto our selves, but sweetneth the bitterest occurrences of our life, and makes us relish an inward and secret pleasure, notwithstanding all the smart of affliction; so that the yoke becomes supportable, the rod it self comforts us, and we find much more delight in suffering the will of God, than if he had granted us our own.

Now to this God who loveth us, and correcteth us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness, and thereby of his happiness, to God the Father, Son, and blessed Spirit, be all honour, praise and glory now and for ever. *Amen.*





That there are but a small  
Number saved.

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LUKE XIII. 23.

*Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved: and he said unto them, &c.*



THOSE who have so much charity and goodness as to be nearly touched with the interest of mankind, cannot but be more especially concern'd about their everlasting condition, and very anxious to know what shall become of poor mortals when this scene is over, and they cease to appear on the stage of the world, being called off to give an account of their deportment on it. And seeing we are assured that there are different and very opposite estates of departed Souls, some being admitted into happiness, and others doom'd

doom'd to misery, beyond any thing that we can conceive, this may put them upon farther enquiry, how mankind is like to be divided, whether Heaven or Hell shall have the greater share. Such a laudable curiosity as this it was, that put one of our blessed Saviour's followers to propose the question in the text, *Lord, are there few that be saved?* Our Saviour had been lately foretelling the great success the gospel should have, how like a little leaven, that quickly fermenteth the whole lump it is put into, christianity should soon propagate it self through the world, and many nations embrace the profession of it; this disciple it seems was desirous to know, whether the efficacy should be answerable to the extent, whether it should take as deep root in the hearts of those that own'd it, as it was to spread it self far and wide on the face of the earth; in a word, whether the greatest part of men were to be saved by it? I called this a laudable curiosity, and there is reason to think it so, since our Saviour himself, who best knew the occasion and importance of it, doth not check but satisfy the enquiry, which he was not wont to do  
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when the questions were useleſs or blamable. Thoſe who enquir'd into the time of the general judgment, received no other account but that it was *inter arcanum imperii*, among thoſe ſecrets which God reſerved for himſelf: and again when they asked *of the time that the kingdom ſhould be reſtored unto Iſrael*, he tells them roundly, it was not for them, it concern'd them not at all to know ſuch things as theſe. But here, as the queſtion ſeems to have proceeded from a zeal to the honour of God, and concernment in the happineſs of mankind, ſo the reſolution of it might be very uſeful; and accordingly it is improved by our Saviour: who at once reſolves the doubt, and preſſeth a very weighty exhortation in the following words, *ſtrive to enter in*, &c. We are not at this time to proſecute the whole importance of this latter verſe, for that we refer you to an excellent ſermon, entitled, *the way to happineſs*; we ſhall only conſider the answer which is imply'd in it to the foregoing queſtion; to wit, that the number of thoſe who are to be ſaved is really very ſmall.

It is on this point we design to fix our meditations at this time, and indeed there is scarce any doctrine that needeth to be more inculcated; for amongst all the stratagems whereby the great enemy of mankind doth plot and contrive their ruin, few are more unhappily successful, than the fond persuasion he hath filled them with, that heaven and everlasting happiness are easily attainable. What one saith of wisdom, *multi ad sapientiam pervenissent nisi putassent se pervenisse*, we may with a little alteration apply unto this purpose; that many might have reach'd Heaven if they had not been so confident of it. The doors of the christian church are now very wide, and men have access unto them upon easy terms; nay this privilege descends unto men by their birth, and they are reckoned among christians before they come well to know what it means. The ordinances and mysteries of our Religion are common to all, save those whom gross ignorance or notorious crimes do exclude; there are no marks on the foreheads of men whereby we can judge of their future condition, they die and are laid in their graves, and none

cometh



cometh back to tell us how it fareth with them, and we desire to think the best of every particular person. But whatever charity be in this, there is little prudence in the inference that many draw from it, who think they may live as their neighbours do, and die as happily as they; and since the greatest part of men are such as themselves, Heaven must be a very empty place if all of them be debarred. Thus perhaps you have seen a flock of sheep on a bridge, and the first leapeth over, and the rest not knowing what is become of those that went before, do each of them follow their companions into that hazard or ruin. Interest and self-love do so strongly blind the minds of men, that they can hardly be put from the belief of that which they would very fain have true. Hence it is that notwithstanding of all we are told to the contrary, the opinion of the broadness of the way that leads to Heaven, and the easy access unto it, is still the most epidemick, and I think the most dangerous heresie. Many of the commonality are so ignorant as to avow it, and the strange security of more knowing persons doth as loudly proclaim it. I know  
ho

he undertakes an unwelcome errand, who goes about to dispossess the minds of men of such a pleasant and flattering error: but what shall we do, shall we suffer them to sleep on and take their rest, till the everlasting flames awake them? Shall we draw their blood on our heads, and involve our selves in their ruin, by neglecting to advertise them of their hazard? No my friends, duty doth oblige us, and the holy Scriptures will warrant us to assure you, that there are very few that shall be saved, that *the whole world lieth in wickedness*; and that *they are a little flock to whom the father will give the kingdom.* Joh. 5. 19.  
Luke 12.  
32.

That this certain tho' lamentable truth may take the deeper impression on our minds, we shall first propose some considerations for the better understanding what great things are required in those who look for everlasting happiness, and then reflect on the actions and ways of men; that comparing the one with the other, we may see how little ground of hope there is for the greatest part to build on.

First then, Consider the nature of that divine Majesty, whose presence and enjoyment

ment it is that makes Heaven it self desirable; and think how inconsistent it is with his infinite holiness, to admit impure and impenitent sinners into the habitation of his glory. Certainly *he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.* He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him: *the foolish shall not stand in his sight.* It is strange what conceptions foolish men must entertain of Almighty God, who can imagine that those who have been all their days wallowing in sin, shall be admitted into an everlasting fellowship with him. Sooner shall light and darkness dwell together, and heat and cold in their greatest violence combine, and all the contrarieties of nature be reconciled; can two walk together except they be agreed? Can there be any converse betwixt those whose natures suit so ill together? Sure they who think to come so easily by happiness, must imagine God altogether such a one as themselves, else they could never hope that he would choose them, and cause them to approach unto him. But O how widely shall they find themselves mistaken, when he shall *reprove them, and*  
*set*

*set their sins in order before them, and they shall find to their confusion, that he is a consuming fire to all the workers of iniquity.* Men are wont to frame a notion of God according to their own wishing, as if he were all made up of mercy, and justice were but an empty name; and this is the common shelter against every convincing reproof. But this temerity shall at length sufficiently confute it self, and feel that justice which it will not believe: there is no strife among the attributes of God, that one of them should swallow up another, mercy is open to all that forsake their sins, but justice shall seize on those who continue in them. That compassion which made God to give his dearest Son for the redemption of mankind, will never prevail for the pardon and deliverance of any impenitent sinner: abused goodness will certainly turn into fury, and infinite mercy being despised, shall bring down upon sinners all the dreadful effects of an omnipotent vengeance.

Consider secondly, what that happiness is which every body doth so confidently promise to themselves, and see whether it be likely that it should be so easily at-

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tain'd.



tain'd. Glorious things are every where spoken of that *heavenly Jerusalem*, and all that is excellent or desirable in this world, is borrowed to shadow it forth in the holy scriptures. We are told of crowns, and kingdoms, and treasures, and rivers of pleasure, and fountains of living waters, and of an exceeding eternal weight of glory.

But all these do not suffice to convey into our minds any full apprehension of the happiness we expect, and after all that can be said, it doth not yet appear what we shall be. These metaphors and allegories serve but to assist our minds a little, and give us some confused apprehensions of the things *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him*; said that beloved disciple that lay in the bosom of our Saviour. Can we then expect that so glorious a prize shall be gain'd without any labour? Shall such a recompence be bestowed on those who never were at any pains about it? What toil and travel doth it cost a man, to gather together that white and yellow earth which they call money?

money? With what care and pains do others ascend to any degree of preferment? What industry and study do men employ to reach a little knowledge, and be reckoned amongst the learned? And shall Heaven and everlasting happiness slide into our arms when we are asleep? No certainly, God will never disparage the glories of that place, to bestow them on those who have not thought them worthy of their most serious endeavours. But as the greatness of that happiness may justly discourage all the lazy pretenders to it, so the nature of it leaves small ground of hope to the greatest part of the world. I wonder what most men do expect to meet with in Heaven, who dream of coming thither? Think they to feast and revel, and luxuriate there, and to spend eternity in foolish mirth and vain talk, in sport and drollery, and sensual pleasure; which are all the exercises they are capable of, or find any relish or satisfaction in? Away with all those *Turkish* notions, whereby we disparage the happiness we pretend to; the joys of that place are pure and spiritual, and no unclean thing shall enter there. The felicity of

blessed spirits standeth in beholding and admiring the divine perfections, and finding the image of them shining in themselves, in a perfect conformity to the will and nature of God, and an intimate and delightful society and communion with him: and shall such Souls be blessed in seeing and partaking of the divine likeness, who never loved it, and would choose any thing rather than to converse with him? A little reflection on the common temper of mens minds, may assure us that they are very far from that meetness Col. 1. 12. and aptitude *for the inheritance of the saints in light*, which the Apostle speaks of. The notion and nature of blessedness must sure be changed, or else the temper of their spirits: Either they must have new hearts, or a new Heaven created for them before they can be happy: It is a strange infatuation of self-love, that men in the gall of bitterness should think it is well with their Souls, and fancy themselves in a case good enough for the enjoyment of divine pleasures.

In the fourth place, let us reflect on the attempts and endeavours of those who have gone to Heaven before us, how they did

did fight and strive, wrestle and run for obtaining that glorious prize; and we shall see how improbable it is that the greatest part of men should come by it with so little pains. *Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David,* and all those ancient worthies recorded in holy writ, have either done or suffered so great things, as gave ground to expect that country they looked after, *accounting themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth;* as you may see in the 11<sup>th</sup> chap. of *Hebrews*: where after a large catalogue of their excellent performances, the author tells us of others, *who were tortured not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonments, they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheeps skins and goats skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy, they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth.* Such also was that holy violence, wherewith the christians of the first and golden ages did



force open the gates of Heaven, and took possession of it. The ardent affection wherewith these blessed Souls were inflamed towards their maker and redeemer, made them willingly give up their bodies to be burned in the fire, for the glory of God, and the propagation of the christian faith. Their constancy in their sufferings did amaze their bloody persecutors, and out-weary the cruelty of their tormentors, and they rejoyced in nothing more *than that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.* And what shall we say of their *universal charity and love*, which reached their very enemies? of their *humility and meekness, justice and temperance*, and all those other virtues which many of the heathens themselves did observe and admire? *Behold, saith one, how the christians love one another. These are the men, saith another, who speak as they think, and do as they speak.* Pliny, after an exact enquiry, writeth to Trajan the Emperor, *That he could never find any other guilt in the christians, but that they met together before day break, to sing a hymn to Christ as if he were God, and then to bind themselves with a sacrament or oath*

*not to do any mischief: but, on the contrary, that they shall not rob, steal, or commit adultery, or falsify their words, or deny their trust, &c.* This was the crime of christians in those first ages, to engage themselves not to commit any crime: and if it fell out that any of them were guilty of drunkenness, or uncleanness, or any other of those sins, which alas! are so lightly censured in our days, they were severely punished, nay, how bitterly did themselves lament it? They needed not in those days to be pursued by tedious processes, or dragged against their will to the profession of their repentance; they would sue for it with tears, and stand many years at the door of the church begging to be received: the censures of the church were then looked upon as very serious and dreadful things, and they who would encounter death in the most terrible form, would tremble if threatned with excommunication. Now tell me, I pray you, what you think of these men? Did they super-errogate and go beyond their duty, or were they fools in doing these things, when half the pains might have served the turn? Did Heaven and happi-

ness cost them so much labour, and think you to be carried fast asleep, or rather while you are bending your forces quite another way? If you cannot look so far back, or if you imagine these but romances, like the poetick accounts of the golden age, wherein all men were happy and good; I shall then desire you to take notice of a few persons, whom the divine goodness hath rescued from that deluge of wickedness which overfloweth the world. There are perhaps some two or three in a city, or in a country, who live very far beyond the common rate of men, and may be accounted angels upon earth if compared with them; they have escaped the pollution that is in the world, and have learned to despise all the vanities of it; their affections are above, and their greatest business is to please and serve their maker; their thoughts and affections are in a great measure holy and pure, their converse innocent and useful, and in their whole deportment they observe such strict rules of holiness and vertue, as others may think needless or superstitious: And yet these very persons are deeply sensible of their own imperfections, and afraid  
enough

enough to come short of Heaven. I speak not now of those scrupulous persons whom melancholy doth expose unto perpetual and unaccountable fears, much less of others who make a trade of complaining, and would be the better thought of for speaking evil of themselves, and would be very ill pleased if you should believe them. I speak of rational and sober men, whose fears arise from their due consideration and measures of things, from the right apprehensions they have of the holiness of God, and the meaning and importance of the gospel precepts. And certainly such holy jealousies over themselves ought not to be judged needless, since *St. Paul* himself, who had been rapt up into the third Heaven, and thereby received an earnest of eternal happiness, found it necessary to take care, *lest that by any means while he preached to others himself should be a cast-away.* I know it is ordinary for men to laugh at those who are more serious and conscientious than themselves, to wonder what they aim at, and to hope to be as sure of Heaven as they. But e're long they shall discover their mistake, and shall say with those spoken of  
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in the book of *Wisdom*: *This was he whom we had sometime in derision, and a proverb of reproach, we fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: how is he numbred among the children of God, and his lot is among the Saints? therefore have we erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness hath not shined unto us, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us.*

To come yet closer unto our present purpose, a serious consideration of the laws and precepts of the gospel, will fully convince us of *the straitness of the gate, and narrowness of that way that leads unto eternal life*; we cannot name them all, nor insist upon any at length: look thro' that excellent *sermon on the mount*, and see what our Saviour doth require of his followers. You will find him enjoyning such a profound *humility*, as shall make us think nothing of our selves, and be content that others think nothing of us; a *meekness* which no injuries can overcome, no affronts nor indignities can exasperate; a *chastity* which restraineth the sight of the eyes, and the wandring of the desires; such an *universal charity* as will make us  
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tender other men's welfare as our own, and never to take any revenge against our most bitter enemies, but to wish them well, and to do them all the good we can whether they will or not. Whatever corrupt glosses men are bold to put on our Saviour's words, the offering the other cheek to him who smote the one, and the giving our coat to him who hath taken our cloak, doth oblige us to suffer injuries, and part with something of our right, for avoiding strife and contention. The pulling out our right eye, and cutting off our right hand that offends, doth import the renouncing of the most gainful callings, or pleasant enjoyments, when they become a snare unto us, and the use of all those corporal austerities that are necessary for the restraint of our lust and corrupt affections. The hating of father and mother for the sake of Christ, doth at least imply the loving of him infinitely beyond our dearest relations, and the being ready to part with them when either our duty or his will doth call for it. And we must not look upon these things as only counsels of perfection, commendable in themselves, but which may yet be neglected  
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without any great hazard : No certainly, they are absolutely necessary ; and it is a folly to expect happiness without the conscientious and sincere performance of them all. *Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven*; that is, according to all interpreters, *he shall have no interest in it.* You see then by what strict rules he must square his actions, who can with any ground hope to be saved. But now I must tell you further, that he must not be put to the performance of his duty merely by the force and sanctions of these laws: true Religion is an inward, free, and self-moving principle ; and those who have made a progress in it are not acted only by external motives, are not merely driven by threatenings, nor bribed by promises, nor constrained by laws, but are powerfully inclined to that which is good. Though holy and religious persons do much eye the law of God, yet it is not so much the authority and sanction of it, as its reasonableness, and purity, and goodness, that doth prevail with them. They account it excellent and desirable in itself,  
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and that *in keeping of it there is great reward*; and that divine love wherewith they are acted, makes them become a law unto themselves. *Quis legem det amantibus? major est amor lex ipse sibi.* In a word, what our blessed Saviour said of himself, is in some measure applicable to his followers, that it is *their meat and drink to do their father's will*. And as the natural appetite is carried out towards food, though we should not reflect on the necessity of it for the preservation of our lives; so are they carried with a natural and unforced propension towards that which is good and commendable.

Hitherto we have been speaking of those qualifications which are necessary for obtaining an entrance into Heaven; it is high time we were casting our eyes upon the world, to see how the tempers and actions of men agree with them. And if first we look back upon the old world, we shall see how soon wickedness did overspread the face of the earth, and all flesh had corrupted his way: and of all the multitudes that were then in the world, only *Noah* and his family were found worthy to escape the general deluge; nay even



in it there was a cursed *Cham*, the father of a wicked generation. After that the church of God was confined unto a very narrow corner, and while darknes cover'd the face of the earth, only *Palestine* was enlightned with the knowledge of God; *Pfal.* 147. *he shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel, but he dealt not so with every nation.* As for his judgments they have not known them, they were given up to the lusts of their own hearts, and worshipped the works of their own hands: their devotions were performed unto devils, and their religious mysteries were full of the grossest impurities. I shall not now enter on the debate, whether ever any heathen might possibly have been saved, we are more concerned to secure our own salvation, then to dispute about theirs; and yet I must say, that amongst all the lives of celebrated heathens, I could never meet with the character of a truly good man; and tho' I love not to decry morality, yet that pride and self-conceit which mingled it self with their fairest actions, makes me look upon them as indeed *splendida peccata*, a more specious kind of sins. But suppose something could

could be said for *Socrates* and *Plato*, and two or three others, what is that to those huge multitudes, who without all peradventure, ran headlong into everlasting destruction. But let us leave these times, and look upon the present condition of the world: it is a sad account of it that is given by *Breerwood* in his enquiries; that dividing the whole world into thirty parts, nineteen are Pagan, six are Mahometan, and only five remain for Christians of all persuasions. I shall not warrant the exactness of his reckoning, but certainly the number of christians carries but a very small proportion to the rest of mankind; and of these again, how few are there orthodox in their Religion. I dare not condemn all those who live in the *Romish* communion, but sure they lie under very great disadvantages, and besides the common difficulty of christianity, their errors and superstitions are no small hindrances unto them.

But we may perhaps think our selves little concerned in them; let us consider those who live in communion with our selves, and see what is to be thought of the generality of them: and first we shall  
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find a very great number of them so grossly ignorant, that they *know not the way that leads to life*; and truly it is not so broad that people should keep it by guess; and however they imagine that their ignorance will not only be excusable in it self, but afford a cloak to their other wickedness, yet dreadful is that threatning of the prophet *Isaiab*, *It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour*. But besides those many thousands that perish for lack of knowledge, how great are the number of vicious and scandalous persons? Remove but our gluttons and drunkards, our thieves and deceivers, our oppressors and extortioners, our scolders and revilers, our fornicators and adulterers, and all that cursed crew that are guilty of such heinous crimes, and how thin should our churches be? To what a small number should we quickly be reduced? A little corner would hold us all. And think you these I have been speaking of, are fit to enter into the kingdom of Heaven? Perhaps you may think us rash to condemn so many of our neighbours, but  
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the Apostle hath done it to our hands: *Know you not that the unrighteous shall* 1 Cor 6.9. *not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* You see what a heavy sentence is pronounced, and O, how many are included under it! I shall name one other vice, which I fear will drive in no small number of those who are yet behind; and that is the hellish and unaccountable customary sin of swearing, whereby men do commonly throw away their Souls, without any temptation, pleasure, or advantage. How often do men baffle the sacred name of God, by calling him to witness to such trifles, as they might be ashamed to attest before any grave or sober person? This they account an ornament of speech, and their words would never sound big enough without it. I cannot stand to reckon up all the aggravations of this sin, it is certainly inconsistent with a religious temper; and this alone, if there were no more, would damn the greatest part of the



christian world. And what shall we say of all those other vices, which are so frequently practised, yea and defended too among us? for alas! we are arrived at that height of impiety, that vertue and vice seem to have shifted places, evil and good to have changed their names. It is counted a gallant thing to despise all divine and human laws, and a childish scrupulosity to forbear any thing that may gratifie our lusts: a strong faith is accounted an argument of weak judgment, dependance upon providence is judged want of foresight, and that there is no wit but in deceiving others: no man is reckoned generous, unless he be extreamly ambitious; and it is want of courage to forgive an injury. O Religion, whither art thou fled? In what corner of the world shall we find thee? Shall we search thee in courts and palaces of great men? Pride and luxury hath driven thee thence, and they are too much concerned in the business and pleasures of this world, to mind those of another. Shall we seek thee in the cottages of the poor? Envy and discontent lodgeth there, their outward want takes up all their thoughts, and they have  
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little regard for their Souls. Shall we go into the city? Cheating and extortion, and intemperance, are almost all we can meet with there: and if we retire into the country, we shall find as little innocence in it. *We may look for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.*

After all that we have hitherto said, some may think themselves safe enough, being conscious of none of those vices which we have nam'd: but alas! what is all this, they may still be far from the kingdom of Heaven. Religion stands not in negatives, and the being free from gross and scandalous vices, is a poor plea for Heaven: look how thy Soul is furnished with those divine graces, which ought to qualifie thee for it. I shall name but one, and it is the *love of God*, and every body pretendeth to it; but O how few are there in the world that understand what it means; that feel the power and efficacy of it on their own spirits: *Amor est pondus animi.* Love is that weight whereby a Soul is carried towards the object which it loves, and resteth in it as its proper center. Those who are acquainted with