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Religious Perfection;

OR,

A THIRD PART

OF THE

ENQUIRY

//

AFTER

HAPPINESS.

BY RICHARD LUCAS, D. D.

Late Prebendary of *Westminster*.

VOLUME II.

HEB. vi. 1.

*Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of CHRIST,
let us go on to perfection.*

THE TENTH EDITION.

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T O

Whitelocke Bulstrode,

O F T H E

INNER TEMPLE, Esquire.



Here present you, my dear Friend, with a discourse wherein I labour to advance the great and true ends of life, the glory of God, and the perfection and happiness of man. I cannot, I confess, pretend to have come up to the dignity of my subject; yet I have done what I could, and have attempted it with my utmost force. I know you too well to imagine you fond of an ad-

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The Epistle Dedicatory.

dress of this publick nature: you love the real and solid satisfactions, not the pomp and shew, those splendid incumbrances of life: your rational and virtuous pleasures burn like a gentle and cheerful flame, without noise or blaze. However, I cannot but be confident, that you'll pardon the liberty which I here take, when I have told you, that the making the best acknowledgment I could to one, who has given me so many proofs of a generous and passionate friendship, was a pleasure too great to be resisted. I am,

Dear Sir,

Unfeignedly Yours,

R. LUCAS.



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T H E

INTRODUCTION.



Y what steps I am advanced thus far in *my Enquiry after Happiness*, and what connexion or coherence there is, between *this* and two *other* discourses already published on that subject, is very obvious. In the *first*, I endeavour to remove those objections which represent all enquiries and attempts after true happiness in this life, either as fantastick or unnecessary; or, which is as bad, vain and to no purpose: and after I have asserted the *value* and *possibility* of happiness, I do in general point out the true reasons of our ill success and disappointment in pursuit of it. In the *second*, I state the true notion of *human life*, insist upon the several kinds of it, and shew what qualifications and virtues the *active* and *contemplative* life demand; and then consider how life may be prolonged and improved. In this *third*, I prosecute the same design, which I had in
the

The Introduction.

the two former; the promoting human happiness. For *life*, *perfection*, and *happiness* have a close and inseparable dependence on one another. For as *life*, which is the rational exercise and employment of our powers and faculties, does naturally advance on, and terminate in *Perfection*; so *Perfection*, which is nothing else but the maturity of human virtues, does naturally end in that rest and peace, that tranquillity, serenity, and joy of mind, which we call *Happiness*. Now *Perfection*, in an abstracted and metaphysical notion of it, is a state that admits neither of accession nor diminution. But talking of it practically, and in a manner accommodated to the nature of things, the *Perfection* of man consists in such endowments and attainments as man is generally capable of in this life. And because man may be considered either in relation to *this*, or to *another* world, therefore *human Perfection* may, I think, naturally enough be divided into *religious* and *secular*. By *secular*, I mean that which regards our interests in this life: by *religious*, that which secures it in eternity. The one more directly and immediately aims at the favour of man; the other at the favour of God: the one pursues that happiness, whatever it be, that is to be found in outward and worldly advantages; the

the other, that which flows from virtue and a good conscience. 'Tis easy now to discern, which of these two kinds of *Perfection* is the more desirable; the one purifies and exalts our nature, the other polishes and varnishes it; the one makes a compleat gentleman, the other a true Christian; the success of the one is precarious, that of the other certain, having no dependance on time or chance, the humour or fancy of man; the pleasure of the one, is short and superficial; that of the other, great and lasting; the *world* admires the one, and *God* approves the other. To be thoroughly persuaded of this, is a good step towards true wisdom, as being that which will enable man to steer the whole course of life aright. But while I prefer the one, I do not prescribe the neglect or contempt of the other; so far am I from it, that I am of opinion, that secular *Perfection* has very often some influence upon our spiritual state, as well as its use and advantage in reference to our temporal one: that the most admired accomplishments of a secular life, are so far from being inconsistent with religion, that they naturally spring from it, and thrive and flourish most when they are influenced and cultivated by it; and judging that it might be of some service to the world to inform and convince them of *this*, I had it
sometimes

sometimes in my thoughts to have treated here as well of secular as religious Perfection : but doubting how well this might suit with my function, and how far the best observations I could make on this subject might fall short of answering the expectation of men of worldly parts and experience, I laid aside the design. Here, then, I confine my meditations wholly to *Religious Perfection* ; I examine the nature of it both in general, and in particular ; not only stating the true notion of it, but also descending to the several branches and parts of it ; I free it from those mistakes and disputes that perplex and encumber it ; I lay down the motives to it, and prescribe the ways of obtaining it.

After this short account of my design, the next thing I am to do, is to prevent, if I can, those prejudices which may either wholly frustrate, or at least very much hinder and diminish the success and influence of it. Some are apt to startle at the very mention of Perfection ; they have entertained such humble thoughts, not only of human nature, but, as it seems, of divine grace too, and evangelical righteousness, that all talk of Perfection seems to them like the preaching a new gospel, and an obtruding upon the world a fantastick scheme of proud and pretending morality. But this fear will soon vanish, when I tell such,

such, that I discourse of the *Perfection* of *men* and *angels*: and that I treat *this*, not like a *monk*, or a sublime and subtle *schoolman*, but like one, who has been daily conversant with the doubts and scruples, with the fears and frailties of human nature, and departing souls. I do not pretend to bless the world with the discovery of *new* truths. If at any time I place *old* ones in a better light; if I wipe off the dust, which dispute and time, and the corruption of manners, has here and there scattered upon them, 'tis the utmost I aim at.

But how numerous, will some say, are the controversies that have in every age perplexed this subject? *Grace* and *nature*, *perfection* and *sin*, *merit*, *supererogation*, &c. these are themes that have exercised and embroiled the Church of Christ, almost through all the several ages of it down to this day: and with how little advantage to the honour of Christianity, and the interest of virtue, have the brightest parts, and the deepest learning been here employed? To *this*, all I have to say, is, I write practically, and consult the interest of souls, not *parties*. I cannot but see, and that with trouble and regret, how much Christianity has in almost all times suffered by those nice and subtle, by those obstinate and passionate disputes with which
writers

writers have even oppressed and stifled the most *practical* subjects; and do most earnestly desire to see the spirit of *Polemical* divinity cast out of the Church of Christ, and *that* of a *practical* and *experimental* one established in the room of it. Though, therefore, I have considered those controversies which concern my subject, it was with no other design, than to guard and fortify my reader against the ill influence of several errors, with which they abound. I decline all useless speculations, and labour wholly to restore religion to its native strength and beauty; so that I think this objection will not touch me, who do not propose to write a *learned*, but a *useful* book.

If any man be apprehensive, that 'tis impossible to assert the doctrine of *Perfection*, without looking a little too favourably towards *Pelagianism* or *Enthusiasm*, or something of this kind; I do here assure such a one, that I advance no *Perfection* that raises men above the use or need of *means*, or invites them to neglect the *word*, *prayer*, or *Sacraments*, or is raised on any other foundation than the *gospel* of *Christ*. I revive not *Pelagianism*, nor clash with *St. Austin*; I need not those concessions which he makes *Cælestius* in the close of his book *de Perfectione Justitiæ*. I am persuaded that the strength of *nature* is too slight a
 5 foundation

foundation to build *Perfection* on: I contend for *freedom* from no other sin than *actual, voluntary, and deliberate*: and let concupiscence, or any unavoidable distemper, or disorder of our nature, be what it will, all that I aim at here is, the *reducing*, not *extirpating* it. And finally, how earnestly soever I exhort *Perfection*, I can very well content my self with St. *Austin's* notion of it, namely, that it is nothing else but a *daily progress towards that pure and unspotted holiness, which we shall attain to in another life.*

Thus, I think, I have sufficiently guarded this following discourse against the misapprehensions and jealousies of all, who have any serious concern for religion, how much soever they may be swayed by some particular opinions. But after all, I do not expect that it should meet with a very obliging reception from a great part of the world. Many there are, who will ever openly rally and ridicule all attempts of this kind: and there are others, who will secretly slight and inwardly despise them, as the vain and fond projects of well-meaning indeed, but very weak and unexperienced mortals. But this moves me little; these men are generally too much strangers to *sincerity*, to be competent judges of *Perfection*: nor do I wonder, if the corrupt and vicious part of mankind
be

be infected with as much malice and envy against extraordinary goodness, as some are against power and greatness. The consciousness of much baseness and corruption in one's self, is apt to make one strive to bring down all men to the same level, and to believe that there is nothing of *Perfection* in the world, but only a groundless or hypocritical pretension to it. This is an opinion that ill men greedily embrace, because it gives them some kind of peace, security, and confidence; whereas the contrary opinion, as it would be apt to make them ashamed of their *present* state, so would it make them fearful and apprehensive of their *future* one. I write not therefore to such as these, nor can be much concerned what censure they pass on a design, against which they have an inveterate and obstinate aversion.

The method I observe in this treatise is: in the *first section*, I consider *Perfection* more generally; in the *second*, the several parts of it; and in the *last*, the *obstacles* and *impediments* of our attaining it. In the two first sections, I always first fix and explain the *notion* of that state of virtue which I discourse of. Next I proceed to the *fruits* or *advantages* of it; and in the last place prescribe the *method* by which it may be attained.



S E C T. I.

Of Religious Perfection in general.

C H A P. I.

Perfection a confirmed habit of holiness. This notion conformable to reason and scripture. The nature of an habit considered, according to four properties of it.



MOST disputes and controversies arise from false and mistaken notions of the matter under debate; and so I could shew it has happened here. Therefore, to prevent mistakes, and cut off all occasions of *contention* (which serves only to defeat the influence and success of practical discourses) I think it necessary to begin here with a plain account, *what* it is I mean by *Religious Perfection*.

Religion is nothing else, but the purifying and refining nature by grace, the raising and exalting our faculties and capacities by

Religious Perfection explained.

wisdom and virtue. *Religious Perfection*, therefore, is nothing else but the moral accomplishment of human nature, such a maturity of virtue as man in this life is capable of; *Conversion* begins, *Perfection* consummates the habit of righteousness: in the one religion is, as it were, in its infancy; in the other, in its strength and manhood; so that *Perfection*, in short, is nothing else, but a ripe and settled habit of true holiness. According to this notion of religious *Perfection*, he is a *perfect* man, whose *mind* is pure and vigorous, and his *body* tame and obsequious; whose *faith* is firm and steady, his *love* ardent and exalted, and his *hope* full of assurance; whose *religion* has in it that ardour and constancy, and his *soul* that tranquillity and pleasure, which bespeaks him a child of the *light*, and of the *day*, a *partaker of the Divine Nature*, and raised above the corruption which is in the world through *lust*.

This account of religious *Perfection* is so natural and easy, that I fancy no man will demand a *proof* of it; nor should I go about one, were it not to serve some *further* ends than the mere confirmation of it. It has manifestly the countenance both of *reason* and *scripture*; and how contradictory soever some ancient and latter schemes of *Perfection* seem to be, or really are, to one another; yet do they all agree in effect

in what I have laid down. If we appeal to *Reason*, no man can doubt, but that an *habit* of virtue has much more of excellence and merit in it, than single accidental *acts*, or uncertain fits and passions; since an *habit* is not only the source and spring of the noblest actions, and the most elevated passions, but it renders us more regular and steady, more uniform and constant in every thing that is good. As to good natural *dispositions*, they have little of strength, little of perfection in them, till they be raised and improved into *habits*; and for our *natural faculties*, they are nothing else, but the *capacities* of good or evil; they are undetermined to the one or other, till they are fixed and influenced by *moral principles*. It remains then, that religious *Perfection* must consist in an *habit* of righteousness. And to prevent all impertinent scruples and cavils, I add a *confirmed* and well established one.

That this is the scripture notion of *Perfection*, is manifest; First, From the use of this word in scripture. *Secondly*, From the characters and descriptions of the best and highest state which any ever actually attained, or to which we are invited and exhorted.

1. From the use of the word: wherever we find any mention of *Perfection* in *scripture*, if we examine the place well,

Religious Perfection explained.

we shall find nothing more intended, than *uprightness* and *integrity*, an unblameable and unproveable life, a state well *advanced* in knowledge and virtue. Thus *upright* and *perfect* are used as terms equivalent, *Job* i. *And that man was perfect and upright, fearing God and eschewing evil: and Psalm xxxvii. 37. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright man, for the end of that man is peace.* Thus again, when God exhorts *Abraham* to *Perfection*, *Gen. xvii. 1. I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect*, all that he exhorts him to, is a steady *obedience* to all his commandments, proceeding from a lively fear of, and faith in him; and this is the general use of this word *Perfect* throughout the *Old Testament*, namely to signify a sincere and just man, that feareth God, and escheweth evil, and is well fixed and established in his duty. In the *New Testament*, *Perfection* signifies the same thing which it does in the *Old*; that is, universal righteousness, and strength, and growth in it. Thus the *perfect* man, *2 Tim. iii. 17.* is one who is *thoroughly furnished to every good work.* Thus *St. Paul* tells us, *Col. iv. 12.* that *Epaphras* laboured fervently in prayers for the *Colossians*, that they might stand *perfect and compleat in all the will of God.* In *James* i. 4. the *perfect* man is one, *who is entire, lacking nothing*, i. e. one who is advanced

to a *maturity* of virtue through patience and experience, and is fortified and established in faith, love, and hope. In *this* sense of the word *Perfēct* St. Peter prays for those to whom he writes his epistle, 1 *Pet.* v. 10. *But the God of all grace who called us into his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.* When St. Paul exhorts the *Hebrews* to go on to *Perfection*, *Heb.* vi. he means nothing by it, but that state of manhood which consists in a well settled *habit* of wisdom and goodness. This is plain, *first*, from *ver.* 11, 12. of this *chapter*, where he himself more fully explains his own meaning; *and we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promise.* Next, from the latter end of the 5th *chapter*, where we discern *what* gave occasion to this exhortation; *there* distinguishing *Christians* into two classes, *babes* and *strong men*, i. e. *perfect* and *imperfect*, he describes *both* at large thus: *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat; for every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe; but*

Religious Perfection explained.

strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. And though here the apostle seems more immediately to regard the *perfection of knowledge*; yet the *perfection of righteousness* must never, in the language of the *scripture*, be separated from it. Much the same remark must I add concerning the *integrity* of righteousness, and the Christians progress or advance in it. Though the *scripture*, when it speaks of *Perfection*, doth sometimes more directly refer to the one, and sometimes to the other, yet we must ever suppose that they do mutually imply and include *one another*; since otherwise the notion of *Perfection* would be extremely maimed and incompleat. I will insist therefore no longer on the use of the words *Perfect* and *Perfection* in *scripture*: but as a further proof that my notion of *Perfection* is truly *scriptural*, I will shew,

2. That the utmost *height* to which the *scripture* exhorts us, is nothing more than a steady *habit* of holiness; that the brightest *characters* it gives of the *perfect man*, the loveliest *descriptions* it makes us of the *perfectest state*, are all made up of the *natural* and confessed properties of a ripe *habit*. There is no controversy that I know of about the *nature* of a *habit*, every man's expe-

experience instructs him in the whole philosophy of it; we are all agreed, that it is a kind of *second nature*, that it makes us exert ourselves with desire and earnestness, with satisfaction and pleasure; that it renders us fixed in our choice, and constant in our actions, and almost as averse to those things which are repugnant to it, as we are to those which are distasteful and disagreeable to our nature; and that, in a word, it so entirely and absolutely possesses the man, that the power of it is not to be resisted, nor the empire of it to be shaken off; nor can it be removed and extirpated without the greatest labour and difficulty imaginable. All this is a confessed and almost palpable truth in *habits of sin*: and there is no reason why we should not ascribe the same force and efficacy to *habits of virtue*; especially if we consider that the strength, easiness and pleasure which belong *naturally* to *these habits*, receive no small *accession* from the *supernatural energy* and vigour of the *Holy Spirit*. I will therefore in a few words shew how that *state of righteousness* which the *scripture* invites us to, as our *Perfection*, directly answers this account I have given of an *habit*.

Is *habit*, in general, a *second nature*? This state of righteousness is in scripture called *the New Man*, Eph. iv. 24. *the new creature*, 2 Cor. v. 17. *the Divine Nature*, 2 Pet. i. iv.

Religious Perfection explained.

Does it consequently *rule* and *govern* man? Hear how *St. Paul* expresses this power of the *habit* of holiness in himself, *Gal. ii. 20.* *I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* This is a constant effect of *habits*, and is equally discernable in those of *vice* and *virtue*, that they *sway* and *govern* the man they possess. *Rom. vi. 16.* *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants, to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

Shall I go on to a more distinct and particular consideration of the properties of an habit? The *first* is, a great *aversion* for those things which are *contrary* to it, or obstruct us in the exercise of it. And this is directly the disposition of the *perfect* man towards *temptations* and *sins*; he is now ashamed of those things which before he gloried in; he is filled with an holy indignation against those things, which before he took pleasure in; and what before he courted with fondness and passion, he now shuns with fear and vigilance. In brief, the *scripture* describes such an one as possessed with an utter hatred and abhorrence of every evil way, and as an irreconcilable enemy to every thing that is an enemy to his

his virtue and his God. Thus Psal. cxix. 163. *I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love; and verse 128. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way.* And this is a genuine and natural effect of integrity or uprightness of heart; whence 'tis the observation of our *Saviour*, Matt. vi. 24. *No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.* And indeed every where a hatred, a perfect hatred of evil, is accounted as a necessary consequence of the love of God; *Psalms xxxvii. 10. Ye that love the Lord, hate evil:* and therefore the *Psalmist* resolves to practise himself what he prescribes to others; *Psal. ci. 2, 3. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart: I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me,* And how can this be otherwise? the love of God must necessarily imply an abhorrence of evil; and that *habit*, which confirms and increases the one, must confirm and increase the other too.

2. The next property of an *habit*, is that the *actions* which flow from it are (if we meet not with violent opposition) performed with *ease* and *pleasure*: what is *natural*, is
pleasant

Religious Perfection explained.

pleasant and easy, and *habit* is a *second nature*. When the love of virtue, and the hatred of vice, have once rooted themselves in the soul, what can be more natural than to follow after the one, and shun the other? since this is no more than embracing and enjoying what we love, and turning our backs on what we detest. This therefore is one constant character of *Perfection* in *scripture*: *delight* and *pleasure* are every-where said to accompany the practice of virtue, when it is once grown up to strength and maturity: *The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*, Prov. iii. 17. *Perfect love casteth out fear*, 1 Joh. iv. 18. And to him that loves, *the commandments of God are not grievous*, 1 Joh. v. 3. Hence it is, that *the good man's delight is in the law of the Lord*, and that *he meditates therein day and night*, Psal. i. 2. Nor does he delight less in *action* than *meditation*, but grows in *grace* as much as *knowledge*; and abounds daily more and more in *good works*, as he increases in the *comfort* of the *Holy Ghost*. Consonant to *this* property of *Perfection* it is, that in *Psalms* xix. and cxix. and elsewhere frequently, we hear the *Psalmist* expressing a kind of inconceivable joy and transport in the meditation and practice of the commands of God. So the first Christians, who spent their lives in devotion, faith,
and

and charity, are said, *Acts* ii. 46. to have eaten their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. And 'tis a delightful description we have of the apostles, *2 Cor.* vi. 10. *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things.*

3. *Vigour and activity, or much earnestness and application of mind, is a third property of an habit.* 'Tis impossible not to be intent upon those things for which we have even an *habitual* passion, if this *expression* may be allowed me; an inclination, which has gathered strength and authority from custom, will exert itself with some warmth and briskness. Now certainly there is nothing more frequently required of, or attributed to the *perfect* man in *scripture* than *zeal* and *fervency* of spirit in the ways of God; and no wonder; for when actions flow at once from principles and custom; when they spring from love, and are attended by pleasure, and are incited and quickened by faith and hope too; how can it be, but that we should repeat them with some eagerness, and feel an holy impatience as often as we are hindered or disappointed? and as the nature of the thing shews, that thus it *ought* to be, so are there innumerable instances in the *Old Testament* and the *New*, which make it evident that thus it *was*. Shall I mention the example of our *Lord*,
who

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who went about doing good, Acts x. 38? shall I propose the labours and travels of St. Paul? these patterns it may be will be judged by some too bright and dazling a light for us to look on, or at least too perfect for us to copy after; and yet St. John tells us, that *he, who says he abides in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*, 1 John ii. 6. And we are exhorted to be followers of the apostles, as they were of Christ. But if the fervency of Christ and St. Paul seemed to have soared out of the reach of our imitation, we have inferior instances enough to prove the zeal and fruitfulness of habitual goodness. Thus David says of himself, *Psal. cxix. 10. With my whole heart have I sought thee.* And Josiah, 2 Kings xxiii. 25. is said to have turned to the Lord with all his soul, and with all his might. How fervent was Anna, who departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day, Luke ii. 37. how charitable Tabitha, who was full of good works and alms deeds which she did, Acts ix. 36! Where shall I place Cornelius? with what words shall I set out his virtues? with what but those of the Holy Ghost, Acts x. 2. *He was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.* But peradventure some may imagine, that there is something singular

gular and extraordinary in these eminent persons, which we must never hope to equal; but must be content to follow them at a vast distance. Well, let this be so; what have we to say to whole *churches* animated by the same spirit of zeal? what are we to think of the *churches* of *Macedonia*, whose *charity* St. Paul thus magnifies, 2 Cor. viii. 2, 3. *In a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality. For to their power I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves.* And St. Paul declares himself persuaded of the Romans, that they were full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, Rom. xv. 14. And of the Corinthians he testifies, that they were enriched in every thing, and came behind in no gift. 1 Cor. i. 5, 6. *That they did abound in all things, in faith, in diligence, &c.* 2 Corinth. viii. 7. I will stop here; 'tis in vain to heap up more instances; I have said enough to shew, that *vigour* and *fervency* in the service of God, is no miraculous gift, no extraordinary prerogative of some peculiar favourite of heaven, but the natural and inseparable *property* of a well-confirmed *habit* of holiness.

Lastly; Is *constancy* and *steadiness* the property of an *habit*? it is an undoubted property of *perfection* too. In *scripture*, good men are every-where represented as
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standing fast in the faith; stedfast and unmoveable in the works of God; holding fast their integrity: in one word, as constantly following after righteousness, and maintaining a good conscience towards God and man. And so natural is this to one habitually good, that St. John affirms of such a one, that he cannot sin; 1 John iii. 9. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. Accordingly, Job is said to have feared God and eschewed evil; which must be understood of the constant course of his life. Zachary and Elizabeth are said to be righteous, walking in all the commandments of God blameless, Luke i. 6. Enoch, Noah, David, and other excellent persons, who are pronounced by God righteous and just, and perfect, are said in scripture, to walk with God, to serve him with a perfect heart, with a full purpose of heart to cleave to him, and the like. And this is that constancy which Christians are often exhorted to; watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. And of which the first followers of our Lord left us such remarkable examples. The disciples are said to have been continually in the temple blessing and praising God, Luke xxiv. And the first Christians are said to have continued stedfastly in the apostles

apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer, Acts ii. 42.

Thus I think I have sufficiently cleared my notion of *Perfection* from *scripture*: nor need I multiply more texts, to prove what I think no man can doubt of, unless he mistake the main design and end of the *gospel*; which is to raise and exalt us to a steady *habit* of holiness: *The end of the commandment, saith St. Paul, 1 Tim. i. 5. is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.* This is the utmost *Perfection* man is capable of, to have his mind enlightened, and his heart purified; and to be informed, acted, and influenced by faith and love, as by a vital principle: and all this is essential to *habitual* goodness.

If any one desire *further* light or satisfaction in this matter, let him read the eighth *chapter* to the *Romans*, and he will soon acknowledge, that he there finds the substance of what I have hitherto advanced. *There, though the word itself be not found, the thing called Perfection is described in all the strength and beauty, in all the pleasure and advantages of it: there the disciple of Jesus is represented as one, who walks not after the flesh, but after the spirit; as one, whom the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set free from the law of sin and death; one, who οὐ φρονεῖ, does not mind or relish*

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relish the things of the flesh, but the things of the spirit; one, in whom the spirit of Christ dwells: he does not stand at the door and knock; he does not make a transient visit; but here he reigns, and rules, and inhabits: one finally, in whom the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. And the result of all this is the joy and confidence, the security and transport that becomes the child of God. Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. And now 'tis no wonder, if the perfect man long for the revelation of the glory of the sons of God; if he cry out in rapture, If God be for me, who can be against me? who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? who shall separate me from the love of Christ? and so on. If any one would see the perfect man described in fewer words, he needs but cast his eye on Rom. vi. 22. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

C H A P. II.

This notion of Perfection countenanced by all parties, however different in their expressions. Some short reflections upon what the Pelagians, the Papists, the Quakers, and the mystical writers, have said concerning Perfection.

AFTER I have shewed that this notion of *Perfection* is warranted by *reason* and *scripture*; I see not why I should be very solicitous whether it do or do not clash with the *opinions* of men. But the truth is, if we examine not so much the *expressions* and *words*, as the *sense* and *meaning* of all *parties*, about this matter, we shall find them well enough *agreed* in it at the bottom. And 'tis no wonder, if (notwithstanding several incidental *disputes*) they should yet agree in the *main*: since the experience of mankind does easily teach us *what* sort of *Perfection* human nature is capable of; and what can, or cannot, actually be attained by *man*. The *Pelagians* did not contend for an *angelical Perfection*, nor *St. Austin* deny *such* a one as was truly *suitable to man*: the *one* could not be so far a stranger to *human nature*, as to exempt it in reality from those errors and defects which the best of men complain of,

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and labour against. Nor was St. *Austin* so little acquainted with the *power of the gospel*, and of the *spirit*, as not to be well enough assured that man might be *habitually good*, and that such were influenced and acted by a firm faith, and a fervent love, and well-grounded hope. The *dispute* between them then, concerning *Perfection*, did not consist in *this*, whether men might be *habitually good*? This was in reality *acknowledged* on *both* sides: nor, whether the best men were subject to defects? For *this* too *both* sides could not but be sensible of: but in these *two things* especially; *First*, What was to be attributed to *grace*, what to *nature*? and this relates not to the *definition* or *essence* of *Perfection*, but to the *source* and *origin* of it. *Secondly*, Whether those *irregular* motions, defects, and errors, to which the best men were subject, were to be accounted *sins* or not? Neither the one side nor the other then, as far as I can discern, did in truth mistake the nature of *human Perfection*: each placed it in *habitual* righteousness; the one contended for no *more*, nor did the other contend for *less*, in the *perfect* man. And when the *one* asserted him free from *sin*, he did not assert him free from *defects*: And while the *other* would not allow the best man to be without *sin*, they did not by *sin* understand
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any thing else, but such *disorders, oppositions* to, or *deviations* from the law of God, as the *Pelagian* himself must needs own to be in the *perfect* man. The dispute then was not, *what* man might or might not attain to? for both sides agreed him capable of the same *habitual* righteousness; both sides allowed him subject to the same *frailties*: but *one* side would have these *frailties* accounted *sins*, and the *other* would *not*.

Numerous indeed have been the controversies between the *popish* and *reformed churches*, about *precept* and *counsel*, *mortal* and *venial* sin, the *possibility* of fulfilling the law of God, the *merit* of good works, and such like. But after all, if we enquire what that *height* of *virtue* is to which the best of men may arrive; what those *frailties* and *infirmities* are, to which they are subject; 'twere, I think, easy to shew that the wise and good are on all hands *agreed* about this. Nor does it much concern my present purpose, in what sense, or on what account, *Papists* think some sins venial, and *Protestants* deny them to be so; since neither the one nor the other exempt the *perfect* man from *infirmities*, nor assert any other *height* of *Perfection*, than what consists in a consummate and well-established *habit* of virtue. Some men may, and do talk very extravagantly; but it is very hard to
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imagine that sober and pious men should run in with them. *Such*, when they talk of *fulfilling* the law of *God*, and keeping his commandments, must surely understand this of the law of *God* in a *gracious* and *equitable* sense: And this is no more than what the *scripture* asserts of every sincere *Christian*. When they talk of I know not what transcendent *Perfection* in *monkery*, they must surely mean nothing more, than that poverty, chastity, and obedience, are *heroick* instances of faith and love, of poverty of spirit, and purity of heart; and that an *Ascetick* discipline is the most compendious and effectual way to a consummate *habit* of righteousness. *Finally*, By the distinction of *precept* and *counsel*, such can never intend surely more than this, that we are obliged to *some* things under pain of damnation; to *others*, by the hopes of greater degrees of glory: for 'tis not easy for me to comprehend, that any man, whose judgment is not enslaved to the dictates of his *party*, should deny *either* of these *two* truths.

1. That whatever is neither forbidden nor commanded by any law of *God*, is *indifferent*. 2. That no man can do more than love the *Lord* his *God*, with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, and his neighbour as himself. I say, there is no degree or instance of *obedience*, that

is not compriz'd within the *latitude* and *perfection* of these words. But whatever some of the *Church of Rome*, or it may be the greater part of it may think; this, 'tis plain, was the sense of the *ancients*. St.

Austin (a) could never understand any merit or excellence in those things that were matter of counsel, not precept, unless they flowed from, and had regard to the love of God and our neighbour. And *Cassian's* (b) excellent monks resolved all the value of such things to consist in their tendency to promote apostolical purity and charity. And *Gregory Nazianzen* (c) thought it very extravagant, to pretend to be *perfecter* than the *rule*, and *exacter* than the *law*.

The *Quakers* have made much noise and stir about the doctrine of *Perfection*, and have reflected very severely on others, as subverting the great design of our redemption (which is deliverance from sin) and upholding the kingdom of darkness: but with what *justice*, will easily appear when I have represented their *sense*, which I will do very *impartially*, and in as few and plain

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tum est, ut puta nuptias, agriculturam, divitias, solitudinis remotionem, &c. Cassian. Colla. Patr. *Talem igitur definitionem supra Jejunii, &c. Nec in ipsa spei nostræ terminum defigamus, sed ut per ipsum ad puritatem cordis & apostolicam charitatem pervenire possimus; ibid.*

(c) Μηδὲ τῆ νόμος νομιμώτερον, μηδὲ λαμπρότερον τῆ Φιότητος, μηδὲ τῆ κενότος εὐθύτερος, μηδὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς ὑψηλότερος. Greg. Nazian.

(d) A key
opening,
&c.

plain words as I can. Mr. W. P. (d) tells us, *That they are so far infallible and perfect, as they are led by the Spirit.* This is indeed true, but 'tis mere trifling: for *this is an infallibility and perfection which no man denies, who believes in the Holy Ghost; since whoever follows his guidance must be in the right, unless the Holy Ghost himself be in the wrong.* He urges, 'tis true, a great number of *scriptures to shew (they are his own words) that a state of Perfection from sin (though not in fulness of wisdom and glory) is attainable in this life; but this is too dark and short a hint to infer the sense of his party from it.* Mr. Edward Burroughs (e) is more full; *We believe (saith he) that the saints upon earth may receive forgiveness of sins, and may be perfectly freed from the body of sin and death, and in Christ may be perfect and without sin, and may have victory over all temptations, by faith in Jesus Christ. And we believe every saint, that is called of God, ought to press after Perfection, and to overcome the devil and all his temptations upon earth: and we believe, they that faithfully wait for it, shall obtain it, and shall be presented without sin in the image of the father; and such walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and are in covenant with God, and their sins are blotted out, and remembered no more; for they cease*

(e) Prin-
ciples of
Truth,
&c.

to commit sin, being born of the seed of God. If by sin here, he means, as he seems to do, deliberate or presumptuous sin; I do not think any established Church, whether Protestant, or Popish, teaches otherwise. Mr. Barclay (f) goes very methodically to work, and first sets down the state of the question; then confutes those that differ from him; answers their objections out of scripture; and, lastly, establishes his own doctrine. As to the Perfection which he asserts, he lets us know, that it is to be derived from the Spirit of Christ; that it consists not in an impossibility of sinning, but a possibility of not sinning; and that this perfect man is capable of daily growth and improvement. When to this I have added, that he speaks all along of that which we call wilful sin, as appears from his description of it; for he calls it iniquity, wickedness, impurity, the service of Satan, and attributes such effects to it as belong not at all to what we call sins of infirmity; when, I say, this is added to render the sense clear, I can readily subscribe to him: for, I know no such doctrines in our Church as those which he there opposes; namely, that the regenerate are to live in sin, and that their good works are impure and sinful. But then, he either mistakes the main point in debate, or prudently declines: for the question is not,

whether good men may live in *mortal* or *wilful sin*, but whether good men are not subject to *frailties* and *infirmities*, which are indeed *sins*, though not *imputable* under the covenant of *grace*? Whether the *Quakers* are not in this point *Pelagians*, I do not now enquire; because if they be, they are already considered. Two things there are in Mr. *Barclay's* state of the question, which I cannot so well approve of; the *one* is that he expresses himself so injudiciously about the growth and improvement of his *perfect* man, that he seems to forget the difference the *scriptures* make between *babes* and full-grown men in *Christ*, and to place Perfection so low, in reference to *positive* righteousness or virtue, as if it consisted in *negative* only, or ceasing from sin. The *other* is, that though he does not peremptorily *affirm* a state of *impeccability* attainable in this life; yet he seems inclinable to *believe* it, and imagines it countenanced by 1 *John* iii. 9. But he ought to have considered, that whatever *impeccability* may be inferred from that *text*, it is attributed, not to some extraordinary persons, but to all, whosoever they be, that are born of *God*; but this is out of my way. All that I am to observe upon the whole is, that these men place *Perfection* especially in refraining from *sin*: I advance *higher*, and place it in a well-settled *habit* of righteousness. And I believe

believe they will be as little dissatisfied with me for this, as I am with them, for asserting the perfect man freed from sin. For, as Mr. *Barclay* expresses himself, I think he has in reality no adversaries but *Antinomians* and *Ranters*.

As to that Perfection which is magnified by *mystical* writers, some of them have only darkened and obscured the plain sense of the *gospel*, by figurative and unintelligible terms. *Those* of them, which write with more life and heat than other men ordinarily do, recommend nothing but that *holiness* which begins in the *fear*, and is consummate in the *love* of *God*; which enlightens the mind, purifies the heart, and fixes and unites man to his sovereign good, that is, *God*: and I am sure I shall not differ with *these*.

There are, I confess, almost innumerable sayings of the *fathers*, which sufficiently testify how little friends they were to *Perfection*, in such a notion of it as is too generally embraced in the Church of *Rome*. The *primitive* spirit breathed nothing but *humility*: it was a professed enemy to all self-confidence and arrogance, to supererogation and merit; and it invited men earnestly to reflect upon the *sins* and *slips* of life, and on that *opposition* which the law of the *body* maintains against the law of
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the *mind*, in some degree or other, in the *best* men. This consideration forced the *bishop* of *Condomé* to that plain and honest confession; *Itaque Justitia nostra, licet per charitatis infusionem sit vera, &c.* Though our righteousness, because of that love, which the spirit sheds abroad in our heart, be sincere and real; yet it is not absolute and consummate, because of the opposition of concupiscence: so that it is an indispensable duty of Christianity, to be perpetually bewailing the errors of life: Wherefore we are obliged humbly to confess with *St. Austin*, that our righteousness in this life consists rather in the pardon of our sins than in the perfection of our virtues. All this is undoubtedly true, but concerns not me: I never dream of any man's passing the course of life *without sin*: nor do I contend for such a *Perfection*, as *St. Austin* calls *absolute*, which will admit of no increase, and is exempt from defects and errors. Though on the *other* hand, I confess, I cannot but think, some carry this matter too far; and while they labour to abate the *pride* and *confidence* of man, give too much encouragement to *negligence* and *presumption*. I cannot see how frequent relapses into *deliberate* acts of wickedness can consist with a well-settled and established habit of goodness. The heat of dispute in some, and a sort of *implicit* faith
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for their *authority* in others, has produced many *unwary expressions*, and I doubt very *unsound* and *pernicious notions* about this matter.

C H A P. III.

Several inferences deduced from the true notion of Perfection. With a plain method how persons may judge of their present state. The difference between the extraordinary primitive conversions, and those which may be expected in our days, with a remark about infused habits.

HAVING in the *two former* chapters fixed the notion of religious *Perfection*, and proved it consonant to *reason* and *scripture*; and not so only, but also made it appear, that it is countenanced by the unanimous *consent* of *all*, who have ever handled this subject: I have nothing now to do, but by way of *inference*, to represent the *advantages* we may reap from it.

1. It is from hence plain, that *Perfection* must not be placed in fantastick speculations or voluntary observances, but in the solid and useful *virtues* of the *gospel*; in the works of faith, the labour of love, and
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the patience of hope ; in the purity and humility of a child of light ; in the constancy and magnanimity which becomes one who has brought the body into subjection, and has set his affections on things above. *This state of Perfection is well enough described by the rule of St. Bennet. Ergo his omnibus humilitatis gradibus ascensis, monachus mox ad charitatem, &c. The monk having passed through these several stages of humility, or mortification, will arrive at that love of God which casteth out fear, by which he will be enabled to perform all things with ease and pleasure, and, as it were, naturally, which before he performed with reluctancy and dread ; being now moved and acted, not by the terrors of hell, but by a delight in goodness, and the force of an excellent habit : both which, Christ by his Spirit vouchsafes to increase and exalt in his servants now cleansed and purged from all sin and vice.*

2. This notion of *Perfection* proves all men to lie under an *obligation* to it : for as all are *capable* of an *habit* of holiness, so is it the duty of all to *endeavour* after it. *If Perfection* were indeed an *angelical state* ; if it did consist in an exemption from all defects and infirmities, and in such an elevation of virtue, to which nothing can be added ; then, I confess, all *discourses* of it, and much more all *attempts* after it, would be

be vain and insolent too. If again, it did consist in some *heroick* pitch of virtue, which should appear to have something so *singular* in it, as should make it look more like a *miracle* than a *duty*, it were *then* to be expected but once in an *age* from some *extraordinary* person, called to it by peculiar *inspiration* and *extraordinary gifts*. But if *Christian Perfection* be, as I have proved, only a well-confirmed *habit* in goodness; if it differ from *sincerity* only, when *sincerity* is in its *weakness* and *infancy*, not when grown up; then 'tis plain, that *every Christian* lies under an *obligation* to it. Accordingly the *scripture* exhorts all to *perfect holiness in the fear of God, to go on to Perfection*, Heb. vi. and it assigns this as one great end of the institution of a standing *ministry* in the *churches of Christ*, namely, *the perfecting the saints, the edifying the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, Ephes. iv. 12, 13. And hence it is, that we find the *apostles* pursuing this great end, by their *prayers* and *labours*, earnestly contending and endeavouring to present all Christians *perfect* before God, 1 Thess. iii. 10. *Night and day praying exceedingly, that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith,*

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faith, Colof. i. 28. *When we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*, see 1 Pet. v. 10. Colof. iv. 13. Nay further, the *scripture* frequently puts us in mind that they are in a state of *danger*, who do not *proceed* and *grow* in grace, and press on towards *Perfection*. Now all this is very easily accountable, taking *Perfection* for a well-settled *habit* of holiness; but on no *other* notion of it.

3. This account of *Perfection* removes *those scruples* which are often started about the *degrees* of holiness and *measures* of duty, and are wont to disturb the peace, clog the vigour, and damp the alacrity of many well-meaning and good people. Nay, many of acute parts and good learning are often puzzled about this matter; some teaching that man is not bound to do his best; others on the quite contrary, that he is so far bound to it, that he is always obliged to *pursue* the most *perfect duty*, to chuse the most *perfect means*, and to exert the *utmost* of that *strength*, and act according to the *utmost* of that *capacity*, with which God has endowed him. Now all these things, when we come to apply these *general doctrines* to *particular instances*, and a vast variety of *circumstances*, have so much *latitude*, *ambiguity*, and *uncertainty* in them, that men of
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tender consciences, and *defective* understandings, reap nothing from such high-flown *indefinite* discourses, but *doubts* and *scruples*. It requires a strong and penetrating judgment to resolve what is the utmost *extent* of our power and capacity; *what* the *best* mean, and what the *most perfect* duty, when *many* present themselves to us, and all *variously* circumstantiated. But now, as I have stated matters, we are bound indeed to pursue and labour after *growth* and *improvement* in the love of God, and charity towards our neighbour, in purity, humility, and the like. And this we shall certainly do, if we be *sincere*; in other matters we are left to our *prudence*, and if the error of our *choice* proceed only from an error in *judgment*, and a *corruption* in our hearts, we are *safe enough*.

4. 'Tis very easy to *discern* now *where* we stand in reference to *Perfection*; how *remote* we are from it, or how *near* to it. For the *nature* of an *habit* being plain and intelligible, the *effects* and *properties* of it obvious to the meanest capacity, 'tis *easy* to determine, upon an impartial *examination*, whether we be *habitually* good or not, or what *approaches* we have made towards it. And because this is a matter of no small *importance*, and men are generally backward enough to advance too far into such *reflections*

flections and *applications*, as may breed any *disturbance* to their *peace*, or any *diminution* of their good *opinion* for *themselves*, though neither the one nor the other be too well grounded ; I shall not think my time mispent, if I here take this task upon me ; and endeavour, by several *particular* deductions, to lay every man's state as plainly open to his *view* as I can.

1. Then from the notion I have given of *Perfection*, it appears, that *if* a man's life be very *uneven*, unconstant, and contradictory to itself ; if he be to-day a *saint*, and to-morrow a *sinner* ; if he yield to-day to the motives of the *gospel* and impulses of the *spirit*, and to-morrow to the solicitations of the *flesh* and temptations of the *world*, he is far from being *perfect* ; so far, that there is not ground enough to conclude him a *sincere* or *real* tho' *imperfect* convert. The only certain proof of *regeneration* is *victory* ; *he that is born of God, overcometh the world*, 1 John v. 4. *Faith*, tho' it be *true*, is not presently *saving* and *justifying*, till it have subdued the *will* and captivated the heart, *i. e.* till we begin to *live by faith*, which is evident from *that* corn in the *parable*, which tho' it shot up, yet had it not *depth* of earth, nor *root* enough, and therefore was *withered* up, and brought forth *no* fruit. Regret and sorrow for sin is

an excellent passion ; but till it has subdued our corruptions, changed our affections, and purified our hearts, 'tis not that *saving* repentance in the apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 10. *Godly sorrow worketh repentance, not to be repented of.* We may have sudden heats and passions for virtue ; but if they be too short-liv'd to implant it in us, this is *not* that *charity* or *love* which animates and impregnates the new creature mentioned, Gal v. 6. *faith working by love.* Lastly, We may have good purposes, intentions, nay, resolutions ; but if these prove too weak to obtain a *conquest* over our *corruptions*, if they prove too weak to resist the *temptations* we are wont to fall by, 'tis plain that they are not such as can demonstrate us *righteous*, or intitle us to a *crown*, which is promised to him that *overcometh*. And here I cannot but remark, to how little purpose *controversies* have been multiplied about the *justification* of man. 'Tis *one* thing for God to *justify* us, *i. e.* to *pardon* our *sins*, and account us *righteous*, and *his* children ; and *another* for us to *know*, or be *assured*, that he does so. If we enquire after the *former*, 'tis plain to me, that no man can be *accounted* righteous by God, till he really *is* so : and when the man is *sanctified* throughout in spirit, soul, and body ; then is he certainly *justified*, and not

till then. And this I think is confessed by all, except *Antinomians*; and whatever *difference* there is amongst *Christians* in this matter, it lies in the forms and variety of *expression*. They, that contend earnestly for the necessity of *good works*, do not, I suppose, imagine, that the *works* are holy, before the *heart* is so; for, as is the *fountain*, such will be its *streams*; as is the *tree*, such will be its *fruits*. What absurdity then is there in admitting that men are justified before they bring forth good works; if they cannot bring forth good works, till they be sanctified and changed? On the other hand, they who contend so earnestly for *justification* by *faith* without *works*, do not only suppose that the man is thoroughly changed, by the *infusion* of *habitual grace*; but also that this grace, as soon as it has opportunity, will exert and express itself in *good works*: and they do readily acknowledge that the *faith* which does *not* work by *love*, is an *historical* unanimated *faith*. And if so, how natural is it to comprise in that holiness, which *justifies* not only the change of the *heart*, but of the *actions*? But here I think it is well worth the considering, whether that thorough *change* in the *nature* of a sinner, which is called *holiness*, be now effected, at *once* and in a *moment*, and not rather *gradually*, and in *time*? for this may give
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some light to the doctrine of *justification*, and draw us off from speculations and theories to more useful and practical thoughts and discourses about it. 'Tis true, in the *primitive* times, when the conviction of a sinner was wrought by a dazzling light, by surprizing miracles, by exuberant influxes of the *spirit*, and the concurrence of many extraordinary things, *sanctification* (as in the *gaoler* and his *family*, Acts xvi.) might be *begun* and *finished* in the *same* hour. But I doubt it is *rarely* so with us at this day; our vices are not so suddenly subdued, nor our virtues so suddenly implanted. *Our* convictions, in the beginning of conversion, are seldom so full and clear as *theirs*: and, if we may judge by the *effects*, 'tis but seldom that the principle of a new life is infused in the *same* plenty and power it appears to have been in *them*. And if so, then these things will follow; 1. Though in the first *plantation* of the *gospel* men being converted, as it were, in a *moment*, ingrafted by *baptism* into *Christ*, and receiving the *Holy Ghost*, the *earnest* of their *justification* or acceptance with *God*, and their future *glory*: we may very well say of them, that they were not only *justified*, but also *knew* themselves to be so, *before* they had brought forth any other *fruit* of righteousness, than what was implied in

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the *dedication* of themselves to *Christ* by that solemn rite of *baptism*: but at *this* day, when conversion is not effected in the same manner; when faith and good works do mutually cherish one another; when righteousness is not brought forth into victory, but by *long* labour and travail; I see not why *faith* and *good works* may not be pronounced *jointly* and *antecedently* necessary to our *justification*. 2. The doctrine of *infused habits* has been much ridiculed and exposed as absurd, by some men; and, I must confess, if it be *essential* to a *habit*, to be acquired by length of time and repetition of the same acts, then an *infused habit* is a very odd expression: but why *God* cannot produce in us those strong dispositions to virtue in a *moment*, which are *naturally* produced by time; or why *we* may not ascribe as much efficacy to *infused grace*, as philosophers are wont to do to *repeated acts*, I cannot see; nor can I see, why such *dispositions*, when *infused*, may not be called *habits*, if they have all the *properties* and *effects* of an habit. And that such excellent dispositions *were* on a sudden wrought in the minds of Christians in the beginning of Christianity, is too plain from the history of those times to need a proof. But whether such changes are ordinarily effected so suddenly at this day, we have much reason

to *doubt* ; nay, I think it appears from what I have said, there is sufficient reason to *deny* it. And, if so, the *infusion* of *habits* cannot be so properly insisted on *now* as *then* ; and *we* may be more subject to make *unwarrantable* inferences from the doctrine of *infused habits*, than *they* were in those bright and *miraculous* days. 3. As our *progress* to *sanctification* must be *slower* than formerly, as it must be *longer* before the grace that is infused, so far master our corruption, and dilate and diffuse itself through our whole nature, as that we may justly be denominated *holy* and *righteous* from the prevalence of this holy principle : so, by a necessary consequence, our *justification* must commence *later*. But, after all, I know not why we should be so inquisitive after the *time* of our *justification* by *God*. The *comfort* of a Christian does not result immediately from *God's justifying* him, but from *his knowing* that he does so. And if this be the thing we are now searching after, namely, what rational *assurance* we can have of our *justification*, and when, as indeed it is ; then, though I do not pretend to determine, that man *is* not, or *may* not be justified or accounted righteous by *God*, upon a thorough change of mind or soul, before this change *discovers* itself in a series of *victories* over those *temptations* by which he was led *captive* before ; yet I

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assert, *first*, that the true and solid proof of the *sanctification* of the *heart*, is *sanctity* of life. *Next*, when I talk of *victory*, I suppose man *engaged*, I suppose him *encountered* by *temptations* and *enemies*; and *then* I affirm, that the *faith*, which is not strong enough to *conquer*, is not strong enough to *justify*. If any man demand, may not that faith, which is foiled to *day*, conquer to *morrow*? I answer, I must leave this to *God*: I can pronounce nothing of the *sincerity* of the heart, but by the outward deportment and *success*. And if this be the proper way of judging of a man's sincerity, I am sure I may with much more confidence affirm, that nothing less than *victory* can be a clear argument of *Perfection*. My business therefore shall ever be to be *Holy*, and then I am *sure* I shall be *justified*. If *I be Holy*, *God*, who cannot err, will certainly *account* me so; and if *I cease to be so*, *God* must *cease* to account me so. And this is all which I design by this long paragraph: that is, to render men more careful and diligent in making their calling and election sure, and to prevent presumption and groundless confidence. And that nothing that I have here *said* may be perverted to a *contrary* purpose; that no man, from some passionate resolutions or sudden changes of his own mind, may be tempted to conclude too *hastily* of his

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his being *justified*, as if the change wrought in him were equal to that commonly effected in the *first* converts of *Christianity*; I think it not amiss to put such a one in mind, that even *these* were not justified, unless they did *profess Christ* with the *mouth*, as well as *believe* in him with the *heart*; and that this *public* profession of *Christianity* in *those* days was equivalent to *many* good works in *these*.

2dly, He, that feels in himself little or no fervency of spirit, little or no hunger and thirst after righteousness, has reason to suspect, that his *regularity* is little more than common *decency* and *civility*, and to doubt, lest his *religion* be nothing else but *custom* or common *prudence*. I see not *how* so much *indifference* and *sluggishness* can consist with a firm *belief* and *expectation* of a *crown*, with a sincere *love* of *God*, and *righteousness*. But if we may suppose such a one restrained from evil, and preserved in the way of duty, after a sort, by the *fear* of *God*, and a *desire* of *heaven*; yet certainly this can be but the *infancy* of the *new creature* at most: and the best advice, than can be given such a one, is surely that of *St. Peter*, that by *adding one degree of virtue to another*, he would use *all diligence* to make his *calling and election sure*, 2 Pet. i. 10.

3dly, If a man's religion produce very few good works, or such only as put him

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to little travail or expence, we may conclude that this man is not *perfect*; his charity is too weak, too narrow to be that of an *exalted* Christian: the best that we can think of such a one is, that he is yet taken up in the *discipline* of *mortification*, that he is *contending* with his *lusts* and *passions*, which are not yet so far reduced, so far subdued and brought under, as to leave him in a state of *liberty* and *peace*, and in a capacity of *extending* and *enlarging* his *charity*. This remark, that the *inconsiderableness* of our good works is reason enough to question, not only one's *Perfection* but *sincerity*, holds good in such cases only, where neither *opportunity* nor *capacity* of higher and nobler performances is wanting. I dare not pronounce that no man can be a *Christian*, unless he be fit to be a *martyr*: 'tis true, the *lowest* degree of *sincerity* must imply a purpose and *resolution* of universal *obedience*, in defiance of all temptations; but yet *that* grace, for ought I can prove to the contrary, may be sufficient to *save* a man, that is sufficient to master the difficulties *he* is to encounter with, altho' he should not be able to grapple with the distempers and tryals to which the body and the state of *another* man may be subject. Surely the wisdom and the faithfulness of God can be no further concerned, than to qualify any one for the discharge

discharge of *those* duties which he thinks fit to *call* him to : and if the discharge of such duties be not a sufficient proof of our sincerity, we can never have any, but must be always held in suspense and torture about our future state. I see no reason to question, but that the disciples of our Lord were in a state of *grace* before the *resurrection*, and the following *Pentecost* : and yet I think I have plain reason to believe, that they were not fit to be *martyrs* and *confessors* till then ; the *grace* they had *before* might, I doubt it not, have enabled them to live *virtuously* amidst *common* and *ordinary* temptations : but it was necessary that they should be endowed with *power* from on *high*, before they could be fit to encounter those *fiery trials*, to which the *preaching* of the *gospel* was to expose them. To this surely our Master refers, when he tells the *Pharisees*, *That the children of the bride-chamber were not to fast while the bridegroom was with them* : when he tells his disciples, *I have many things to say, but you cannot bear them yet* : when he asked the sons of *Zebedee*, *Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?* Matth. xx. 21. If this be true divinity, as I am (I had almost said) confident it is ; then I am confident, that which requires very *unaccountable* tests of a man's *sincerity*,

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sincerity, is very extravagant. For example, when men talk at this rate, that a sincere Christian should have such an *abhorrence* for *sin*, as to fear *guilt* more than its *punishment*: such a *love* of *God*, as rather than offend him to be content to precipitate and plunge himself into the jaws, not of *death*, like the martyrs, but of *hell* itself.

4thly, If the duties of religion be very *troublesome* and *uneasy* to a man, we may from hence conclude, that he is not *perfect*: for tho' the *beginning* of wisdom and virtue be generally *harsh* and *severe* to the *fool* and *sinner*, yet to him that has *conquered*, the yoke of Christ is *easy*, and his burthen *light*; to him that is filled with the love of God, his *commandments* are not *grievous*; hence is that observation of the son of *Sirach*, *Ecclus. iv. 17, 18.* For at the first she will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his soul, and try him by her laws; then will she return the straight way unto him, and comfort him, and shew him her secrets. The reason of this assertion is palpable; it is the nature of an habit to render *difficult* things *easy*, *harsh* things *pleasant*, to fix a *floating* and *uncertain* humour, to nurse and ripen a weak and tender *disposition* into *nature*. And 'tis as reasonable to expect these effects in *religious* as in any *other* sorts of *habits*.

Lastly,

Lastly, He who does not find *religion* full of *pleasure*, who does not *glory* in *God*, and *rejoice* in our *Lord Jesus*, he who is not filled with an humble *assurance* of the *divine favour*, and a joyful *expectation* of *immortality* and *glory*, does yet *want* something; he is yet *defective*, with respect either to the *brightness* of *illumination*, the *absoluteness* of *liberty*, or the *ardor* of *love*; he may be a *good* man, and have gone a *great* way in his *Christian race*; but there is something still behind to *complete* and *perfect* him: some *error* or other creates him groundless *scruples*; some *incumbrance* or *impediment* or other, whether an *infelicity* of *temper*, or the *incommodiousness* of his *circumstances*, or a little too warm an *application* towards something of the *world*, *retards* his *vigour*, and *abates* his *affections*.

I have now finished all that I can think necessary to form a general *idea* of *religious Perfection*: for I have not only given a plain *definition* or *description* of it, and *confirm'd* and *fortified* that description by *reason* and *scripture*, and the *concurrent sense* of *all sides* and *parties*; but have also by various *inferences*, deduced from the general notion of *Perfection*, precluded all groundless *pretensions* to it, and enabled men to see how *far* they are *removed* and *distant* from it, or how *near* they *approach* it. The next
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thing I am to do, according to the method I have proposed, is, to consider the *fruits* and *advantages* of *Perfection*. A consideration which will furnish us with many great, and, I hope, effectual *incitements* or *motives* to it; and demonstrate its *subserviency* to our *happiness*.

C H A P. IV.

A general account of the blessed fruits and advantages of Religious Perfection. Which is reduced to these four heads. 1. *As it advances the honour of the true and living God, and of his Son Jesus, in the world.* 2. *As it promotes the good of mankind. These two treated of in the chapter of zeal.* 3. *As it produces in the perfect man a full assurance of eternal happiness and glory.* 4. *As it puts him in possession of true happiness in this life. These two last, assurance and present happiness or pleasure, handled in this chapter. Where the pleasures of the sinner and of the perfect Christian are compared.*

OF the *two former* I shall say nothing *here*; designing to insist upon them more particularly in the *following* section, under the *head* of *zeal*, where I shall be obliged by my *method* to consider the *fruit* of
of

of it ; only I cannot *here* forbear *remark-
ing*, that *Perfection*, while it promotes the
honour of *God* and the good of *man*, does
at the same time promote our *own happi-
ness* too ; since it must on this account most
effectually recommend us to the love of the
one and the *other* ; *Them that honour me*, saith
God, *I will honour*, 1 Sam. ii. 30. And our
Saviour observes, that even *Publicans and
Sinners love those who love them*, Matth. v. 46.
Accordingly St. *Luke* tells us of Christ, *Luke*
ii. 52. *That Jesus increased in wisdom and sta-
ture, and in favour with God and man* ; and of
those eminently devout and charitable souls,
Acts ii. *that they had favour with all the
people* ; so resistless a charm is the beauty
and loveliness of perfect charity, even in
the most depraved and corrupt times. And
what a *blessing* now, what a *comfort*, and
what a *pleasure* is it, to be the favourite of
God and *man* !

The *third* and *fourth* I will now discourse
of, and that the more *largely*, because as to
assurance, it is the *foundation* of that *pleasure*
which is the richest *ingredient* of human
happiness in *this* life. And, as to our *present
happiness*, which is the *fourth* fruit of *Per-
fection*, it is the very *thing* for the sake of
which I have *engaged* in my *present* subject.
And therefore it is very fit that I should ren-
der

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der the tendency of *Perfection* to procure our *present Happiness* very conspicuous. Beginning therefore with *assurance*, I will assert the *possibility* of attaining it in *this* life; not by embroiling myself in the brakes of several nice and subtle *speculations* with which this subject is overgrown; but by laying down in a *practical* manner, the *grounds* on which *assurance* depends; by which we shall be able at once to discern the truth of the *doctrine* of *assurance*, and its *dependance* upon *Perfection*.

Now *assurance* may relate to the time *present*, or to *come*: for the resolution of *two* questions, gives the mind a perfect *ease* about this matter. The *first* is, am I *assured* that I am at *present* in a state of grace? The *second*, am I *assured* that I shall *continue* so to my life's *end*? To begin with the *first*: the answer of this enquiry depends on *three* grounds.

First, A divine *revelation*, which declares in general, *who* shall be *saved*; namely, they *who* *believe* and *repent*. Nor does any *sect* doubt, but that *repentance* towards *God*, and *faith* in our *Lord Jesus Christ*, as *St. Paul* speaks, are the indispensable *conditions* of *life*. 'Tis true, the notion of *repentance* is miserably *perverted* by *some*, and that of *faith* by *others*: but what remedy is there against the lusts and passions of men? The

Scripture does not only require repentance and faith; but it *explains* and *describes* the nature of *both*, by such conspicuous and infallible *characters*, that no man can be mistaken in these *two* points, but his error must be owing to some criminal *prejudices* or *inclinations* that bias and pervert him. *Good men* have ever been agreed in these matters: and catholic *tradition* is nowhere more *uncontroulable* than here; the general doctrine of all ages hath been, and in *this* still is, that by *repentance* we are to understand a *new nature* and *new life*: and by *faith* when distinguished from *repentance* (as it sometimes is in *scripture*) a *reliance* upon the *mercy* of *God* through the *merits* and *intercession* of *Jesus*, and *atonement* of *his blood*. *Heaven* lies open to all that perform these *conditions*; every page of the *gospel* attests this; *this* is the substance of *Christ's* commission to his *apostles*, that they should preach *repentance* and *remission* of sins through his name amongst *all nations*. And this is one blessed advantage, which *revealed religion* has above *natural*; that it contains an express *declaration* of the *Divine Will*, concerning the *pardon* of all sins whatsoever upon these *terms*. *Natural religion* indeed teaches us, that *God* is *merciful*; but it teaches us, that he is *just* too; and it can never *assure* us, what *bounds* *God* will

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set to the exercise of the *one* or the *other*; and *when* justice, and *when* mercy shall take place; *what* sins are, and *what* are not capable of the benefit of sacrifice and repentance. And this *uncertainty*, considering the sins of the best life, was ever naturally apt to beget despondencies, melancholy, and sometimes a superstitious dread of God.

The *second* ground of assurance, as it relates to our present state, is an *application* of the conditions of life laid down in the gospel to a man's own *particular* case, thus; *they that believe and repent, shall be saved; I believe and repent, therefore I shall be saved.* Now that a man upon an *examination* of himself, may be thoroughly *assured*, that he *does* believe and repent, is evident from *scripture*, which does not only *exhort* us to enter upon this *examination*, but also asserts, that *assurance, joy, and peace,* are the natural *fruits* of it: but *let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, 1 Cor. xi. 28. Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? 2 Cor. xiii. 5. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope*

hope that is in you, with meekness and fear, 1 Pet. iii. 13. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments, 1 John ii. 3. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, 1 John iii. 2. 'Tis true, men do often deceive themselves, and entertain a more favourable opinion of their state than they ought. But whence proceeds this? Even from too *partial* or *superficial* reflections on themselves, or *none* at all. And therefore the apostle teaches us plainly, that the only way to correct this error, is a *sincere* and *diligent search* into ourselves: for if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself: but let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another, Gal. vi. 34. But it is *objected* against all this, that the heart of man is so *deceitful*, that it is a very difficult matter to make a thorough *discovery* of it. We often *think* ourselves *sincere*, when the success of the next *temptation* gives us just reason to call this *sincerity* into *question*; such is the *contradictious composition* of our nature, that we often act contrary to our inward *convictions*, and frequently fail in the *execution* of those *designs*, in the *performance* of those *resolutions*, which we have *thought* very well grounded; and this being not to be charged upon the insufficiency of God's *grace*, but

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the levity or insincerity of our own hearts, how can we *safely* frame any *right* opinion of our *selves* from those *affections* and *purposes*, which are so little to be *relied* upon? To this I *answer*: *First*, We are not to conclude any thing concerning our *progress* or *perfection* too *hastily*; we are not to determine of the final *issue* of a *war* by the *success* of *one* or *two* engagements; but our *hopes* and *assurances* are to advance slowly and gradually in *proportion* to the *abatement* of the *enemy's* force, and the *increase* of our *own*; so that we may have *time* enough to *examine* and *prove* our own hearts. *Secondly*, A *sincere* Christian, but especially one of a *mature* virtue, may easily *discern* his spiritual state, by the inward *movings* and *actings* of the soul, if he *attend* to them: for it is impossible that such a one should be *ignorant*, what *impressions* divine truths make upon him. Is it possible he should be *ignorant*, whether his *faith* stands firm against the shock of all *carnal objections*; whether he earnestly desire to please *God*, as loving him above all things; whether he thirst after the consolation and joy of the *Spirit*, more than after that of *sensible* things? Is it possible the soul should *be-wail* its *heaviness* and *driness*, which the best are liable to at some season or other? Is it possible that the soul should be *carried* upwards frequently on the wings of *faith* and

and *love*, that it should maintain a familiar and constant *conversation* with *heaven*, that it should *long* to be *delivered* from this *world* of trouble, and this *body* of *death*, and to *enter* into the *regions* of peace, of life, and righteousness? Is it possible, I say, that *these* should be the *affections*, the *longings* and *yearnings* of the soul; and yet that the *good* man, the *perfect* man, who often *enters* into his *closet*, and *communes* with his own *heart*, should be *ignorant* of them? It *cannot* be. In a *word*, can the *reluctances* of the *body*, and the *allurements* of the *world*, be *disarmed*, *weakened*, and *reduced*? Can the *hunger* and *thirst* after *righteousness* be very *eager*, the *relish* of *spiritual* pleasure *brisk* and *delightful*, and the *contempt* of *worldly* things be *really* and *thoroughly* settled, and yet the man be *insensible* of all this? It *cannot* be. But if we feel *these* affections in us, we may *safely* conclude, that we are *partakers* of the *Divine Nature*; that we have *escaped* the *corruption* that is in the *world* through *lust*; and that the *new creature* is at least *growing* up into a *perfect man*, to the *measure* of the *stature* of the *fulness* of *Christ*. Thirdly, The *surest test* of a state of *grace*, is our *abounding* in *good works*: you shall know the *tree* by its *fruit*, is our *Master's* own rule, and it can never deceive us: *He that doth righteousness is born of God*. If then we be frequent and fervent in our

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devotion towards *God*; if we be modest and grateful in the *successes*, patient and resigned, calm and serene under the *crosses* and *troubles* of life; if we be not only *punctual*, but *honourable* in our dealings; if we be *vigorous* and *generous* in the exercises of *charity*; if we be not only just and true, but meek, gentle and obliging in our *words*; if we retrench not only the *sinful*, but *something* from the *innocent* liberties and gratifications of *sense*, to give our selves more *intirely* up to the duties and pleasures of *faith*: if, finally, we never be ashamed of virtue, nor flatter, compliment, nor wink at vice; if we be ready to meet *death* with comfort, and retain *life* with some degree of indifference: if *these* things, I say, be in us, we have *little* reason to *doubt* of the *goodness* of our *state*: for *good works* being the natural fruit of *grace*, it is impossible we should abound in the *one* without being possessed with the *other*. One would think now, that there should be nothing further needful to establish the *consolation* of a *Christian*; and yet *God*, out of regard, no doubt, to the vast *importance* and happy *influence* of *assurance*, has furnished us with *another* ground of it, which is,

The *3d* and *last*, namely, the testimony of the *Spirit*. This *Spirit*, as it *assists* us in our *examination*, so it *ratifies* and *confirms* our sentence by its *suffrage*, *fortifying* our *assurance*,

assurance, and increasing our joy. All this the scripture expressly teaches us; for the Spirit is called, *The earnest of our inheritance, the seal of our redemption*, Eph. i. 13, 14. Eph. iv. 30, 31. 2 Cor. ii. 10. 2 Cor. v. And though it be not improbable, but that these, and such like places, may relate more immediately to the spirit of promise which was conspicuous in miracles, and seems to have accompanied all that believed in the infancy of the Church, according to those words of our Saviour, *And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name they shall cast out devils, &c.* Mark xvi. 17. Yet there are texts enough which assure us, that the Spirit of God should be imparted to believers through all succeeding ages, and that this should be one effect of it to comfort us, and be a pledge to us of the divine favour: thus, Rom. xv. 13. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.* And Rom. viii. 15, 16. *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father; the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.* If it be here demanded, *what this testimony of the Spirit*

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is: I answer, 'tis a powerful energy of the blessed Spirit, *shedding abroad* and increasing the love of God in our hearts, Rom. v. *Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope, and hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.* This is the spirit of adoption, the spirit of oblation, the spirit of glory, and the spirit of love; happy is he who is partaker of it, he has attained the maturity of *Perfection* and *pleasure*. I can scarce forbear going in with some of the *fathers*, who thought that such as these could never finally fall. I can scarce forbear applying to such, those words, Rev. xx. 6. *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power.* Thus far I have considered *assurance* as it relates to the present time. But,

2. *Assurance* may regard the *time to come*; and it conduces very little less to the *peace* and *pleasure* of a *Christian* to be *assured* that he shall *persevere* in a good state, than that he is *now* in one. Let us therefore in the next place examine what grounds the *perfect* man may have for such a persuasion: Now these are likewise *three*.

First, The propension and favour of God for the *perfect* man.

Secondly,

Secondly, The sufficiency of divine assistance.

And,

Thirdly, The conscience of his own integrity.

1. *The favour of God.* I need not go about to prove that *God* will be ever ready to *assist* the *perfect* man ; I need not prove that *his eyes are always upon the righteous, and that his ears are always open to their prayers* : that *they are the dear objects of his delight and love* : *reason and scripture* both do abundantly *attest* this, and the repeated *promises of God to good men*, encourage them to *hope* from *God* whatever beloved *children* may from a tender and kind *father*. Is not *this* enough then to inspire the *perfect* man with great and confident *hopes*? He knows, not only, that *God* is an *immutable God*, free from all levity and inconstancy ; and therefore, that nothing less than presumption and obstinacy, habitual neglect or wickedness, can tempt him to recall his gifts, or repent him of his favours : he knows not only that *God* is *faithful, and will not suffer him to be tempted above what he is able* ; but he knows also, that he has a powerful *Intercessor* at the *right-hand of God*, an *Advocate* with the *Father*, who cannot but prevail. Nor is this all yet ; yet he has a great *many things* that *plead* for him with *God* : there are his

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tears which are *bottled up*; there are his *prayers* and *alms* which are gone up for a *memorial* before God; there is a *book of remembrance* written, wherein all his pious discourses are registred; and God is faithful, and cannot forget his *works*, and *labour of love*. The *Spirit of God* will not soon quit the *bosom* that it so long *resided* in: it will not suffer itself to be *divided* from that person, with whom it had entered into so close an *union*, that it seemed as it were inanimated or incorporated with him, and become essential to his Being: whence it is that the *spirit* is said to be *grieved* when he is forced and compelled to retire.

2. The *second* ground of *assurance* for the *time to come*, is the *sufficiency* of *divine assistance*. The good man is well *assured*, that God will never refuse the protection of his *Providence*, or the aid of his *Spirit*: and *what* can be too *difficult* for *such a one*? *Providence* can prevent a temptation, or remove it; the *Spirit* can support him under it, and enable him to vanquish it; nay, it can enable him to extract new *strength* and *vigour* from it; *my grace is sufficient for thee*, 2 Cor. xii. 9. the truth of which assertion has been illustriously proved by the victories of *martyrs* and *confessors*, who *triumphed* over the united force of *men* and *devils*. Tho' then the *conscience* of human
frailty

frailty may awaken in the best of men *fear* and *caution*, the *assurance* of *divine assistance* cannot but beget in them an *holy confidence*; the *snares* and *temptations* of the *world*, the *subtilty* and *vigilance* of the *devil* may justly create a *solicitude* in the best of men; but when they consider themselves encompassed with the *divine favour*, they can have no reason to *despond*.

3. The *conscience* of his own *integrity* is a *third* ground of a good man's *confidence*; he knows that nothing but *crying* provocations can *quench* the *spirit*, and oblige *God* to *desert* him; and he has reason to hope, that *this* is that he *cannot* be *guilty* of. He is sure, that *presumptuous* wickedness is not only repugnant to his *principles*; but to the very bent of his *nature*, to all the *inclinations* and *passions* of his soul: I speak here of the *perfect* man; can he ever wilfully dishonour and disobey *God*, who loves him above all things, and has done so long? Can he forsake, and betray his *Saviour*, who has long rejoiced and gloried in him; who has been long accustomed to look upon all the glories and satisfactions of this life, as dung and dross in comparison of him? Can he, in one word, ever be seduced to renounce and hate *religion*, who has had so long an *experience* of the beauty, and of the pleasure of it? *Good habits*, when they are grown up to *perfection*
and

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and *maturity*, seem to me as *natural* as 'tis possible *evil* ones should be: and if so, 'tis no less difficult to extirpate the *one* than the *other*. And I think I have the *scripture* on my side in this opinion: Does the *prophet* *Jeremy* demand, *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may you that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well*, Jer. xiii. 23. *St. John* on the other hand does affirm, *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God*, 1 John iii. 9. *Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not*, v. 6. These are the grounds of *assurance* with respect to the *time to come*. As to personal and peremptory *predestination* to life and glory, 'tis at least a *controverted* point, and therefore *unfit* to be laid as the *foundation* of *assurance*. But suppose it were granted, I see not which way it can affect our present enquiry, since the wisest amongst those who stickle *for* it, advise all to govern themselves by the *general* promises and threats of the *gospel*; to look upon fruits of *righteousness* as the only solid *proof* of a *state* of *grace*; and if they be under the dominion of any *sin*, not to presume upon personal *election*, but to look upon themselves as in a *state* of *damnation*, till they be recovered out of it by *repentance*. Thus far all sides agree; and this I think is abundantly enough; for
 here

here we have room enough for *joy* and *peace*, and for *caution* too: room enough for *confidence*, and for *watchfulness* too: the *Romanists* indeed, will not allow us to be certain of salvation, *certitudine fidei cui non potest subesse falsum*, with such a *certainty* as that with which we entertain an article of *faith*, in which there is no room for *error*; *i. e.* we are not so *sure* that we are in the *favour* of *God*, as we are, or may be, that there *is a God*: We are not so *sure*, that we have a title to the *merits* of *Christ*, as we are, or may be, that *Jesus is the Christ*. Now if this assertion be confined to that *assurance* which regards the *time to come*, as it generally is; and do not deny *assurance* in *general*, but only certain *degrees* or *measures* of it; then there is nothing very *absurd* or *intolerable* in it. For a *less assurance* than that which this doctrine excludes, will be *sufficient* to secure the *pleasure* and *tranquillity* of the *perfect* man. But if this assertion be designed against that *assurance* which regards our *present* state; then I think it is not *sound*, nor agreeable, either to *reason*, *scripture*, or *experience*. For *first*, the question being about a matter of *fact*, 'tis in vain to argue *that cannot be*, which does appear manifestly to *have been*: and certainly they who rejoiced in *Christ* with *joy unspeakable*, and *full of glory*, were

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as fully *persuaded*, that they were in a state of *grace* and *salvation*, as they were that *Jesus* was *risen* from the dead. *Secondly*, 'tis *one* thing to balance the *strength* and *degrees* of *assurance*; another to balance the *reasons* of it. For it is very possible that *assurance* may be stronger, where the *reason* of it may not be so clear and evident as where the *assurance* is less. Thus for *example*; the evidence of *sense* seems to most learned men to be stronger than that of *faith*: and yet through the assistance of the *spirit*, a man may embrace a truth that depends upon *revelation*, with as much *confidence* and *certainty* as one depending upon *sense*. And so it may be in the case of *assurance*: the *Spirit* of God may by its concurrence raise our *assurance* as high as he pleases; although the *reason* on which it be built, should not be *divine* and *infallible*, but merely *moral*, and subject at least to a *possibility* of error. But *thirdly*, why should not the *certainty* I have concerning my *present state*, be as *divine* and *infallible*, as that I have concerning an *article* of *faith*? if the *premises* be *infallible*, why should not the *conclusion*? he that *believes* and *repents* is in a *state* of *grace*, is a *divine* and *infallible* proposition: and why may not this other, *I believe* and *repent*, be equally *infallible*, though not equally *divine*?

divine? *What* faith and repentance is, is *revealed*; and therefore there is no room for my being here *mistaken*: besides, I am *assisted* and *guided* in the trial of myself, by the *Spirit of God*. So that the truth of this proposition, *I believe and repent*, depends *partly* upon the evidence of *sense*; and I may be as *sure* of it, as of what I *do* or leave *undone*: *partly* upon the evidence of *inward sensation*, or my *consciousness* of my own thoughts; and I may be as *sure* of it as I can be of what I *love* or *hate*, *rejoice* or *grieve* for: and lastly, it depends upon the evidence of the *Spirit of God*, which *assists* me in the *examination* of myself according to those characters of faith and repentance, which he hath himself revealed. And when I *conclude* from the two former propositions, that *I am in a state of grace*, he confirms and ratifies my *inference*. And now, let any one tell me, what kind of *certainty* that is, that can be greater than *this*? I have taken this pains to set the doctrine of *assurance* in a clear light, because it is the great spring of the *perfect* man's *comfort* and *pleasure*, and source of his *strength* and *joy*. And this puts me in mind of that *other* fruit of *Perfection*, which in the beginning of this *chapter* I promised to insist on, which is,

Its

Its subserviency to our happiness in this life.

That *happiness* increases in proportion with *Perfection*, cannot be denied; unless we will at the same time deny the happiness of a man to exceed *that* of an infant, or the happiness of an angel *that* of a man. Now *this* truth being of very great importance, and serving singly instead of a thousand *motives* to *Perfection*, I will consider it impartially, and as closely as I can. *Happiness* and *pleasure* are generally thought to be only two words for the same thing: nor is this very remote from truth; for let but *pleasure* be solid and lasting, and I cannot see what more is wanting to make man *happy*. The best way therefore to determine how much *Perfection* contributes to our *happiness*, is to examine how much it contributes to our *pleasure*.

If, with the *Epicurean*, we think *indolence* our supreme *happiness*, and define *pleasure* by the *absence* of *pain*; then I am sure the *perfect* man will have the best claim to it. *He* surely is freest from the mistakes and errors, from the passions and follies, that embroil human life: he creates no evil to himself, nor provokes any un-

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necessary

necessary danger. His *virtue* effectually *does that*, which *atheism* attempts in vain; dispels the terror of an invisible power: he needs not drown the voice of conscience by wine, or noise, or the toil of life; it speaks nothing to him, but what is kind and obliging; it is his comforter, not his persecutor: and as to this world, he reaps that satisfaction and tranquillity from the *moderation* of his affections, which *ambition* and *avarice* do in vain promise themselves from *preferments*, or the *increase* of *wealth*. If therefore there were *any* state on this side heaven exempt from *evil*, it must be *that* of the *perfect* man. But he knows the world too well to flatter himself with the expectation of *indolence*, or an *undisturbed tranquillity* here below; and is as far from being *deluded* by *vain hopes*, as from being scared by *vain fears*, or tortured and distended by *vain desires*. He *knows* the world has its *evils*, and that they cannot wholly be *avoided*; he *knows* *it*, and dares *behold* them with open eyes, *survey* their force, and *feel* and *try* their edge. And then, when he has collected his *own* strength, and called in the *aid* of heaven, he *shrinks* not, nor *desponds*; but *meets* evil with that *courage*, and *bears* it with that *evenness* of mind, that *he* seems, even in his *affliction*, nearer to *indolence*,
than

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than the *fool* and *sinner* in his *prosperity*. So that I cannot forbear professing, there appears so much *beauty*, so much *loveliness* in the deportment of the *perfect* man, with respect to the *evils* of *life*, that for *that* reason alone, were there no *other*, I should admire and prefer his *virtue* above any *possession* or *enjoyment* of *life*. Give me leave to *compare* the *saint* and *sinner* on this occasion; and but very briefly: *The wise man's eye*, saith *Solomon*, *Eccles. ii. 14. are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness.* The *wise man* sees that he has *enemies*, I mean *evils*; and therefore he informs himself well of their *strength*, observes their *motion*, and prepares for the *encounter*: but *ignorance* and *stupidity* is the greatest blessing of the *sinner's* *life*; and his most admired quality is not to be apprehensive of *evil*, till it crush him with its weight. But if the *sinner* be not *fool* enough to arrive at this degree of *brutality*; then as soon as the report of the most distant *evil*, or the most inconsiderable, reaches his ear, how it fills his *imagination*, how it shakes his *heart*, and how it embitters his *pleasures*! and to what poor and despicable arts, to what base and dishonourable shifts does his *fear* force him! when on the same occasion we discover nothing in the *perfect* man, but a beautiful mixture of
humi-

humility and faith, devotion and confidence or assurance in God; *He is not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord*, Psal. cxii. a frame of spirit, which, to those who have opportunity and sense to observe it, renders him both more *beloved* and *revered*. *Lastly*, if we consider the *wicked* and the *good* man, actually under the weight and pressure of *evil*, how much *unlike* is the state of the *one* in reality to that of the *other*, even while the *outward* circumstances are the same? What cheerfulness, what courage, what resignation, what hopes adorn the *one*! what instruction to all, what satisfaction to his friends and relations does his deportment afford! and how does it inspire and warm the breasts of those that converse with him, with an esteem for, and love of *goodness*, and *himself*! what charm, what delight is there in those gracious speeches, that proceed at this time out of a good man's mouth! *I know that my Redeemer liveth: the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the name of the Lord: thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be afflicted: God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever:* and such like. And how often does he pour out his heart in secret before God! how often does he reflect on the gracious and wise ends of divine chastisement! and

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how often does he, with desire and thirst, meditate on that fulness of joy which expects him in the presence of God! But let us cast our eye now on the *voluptuary*, on the *ambitious*, on the *covetous*, or any *other* sort of *sinner*, under disgrace, poverty, sickness, or any such calamity; what a mean and despicable figure does such a one make! what impatience, what despondency, what guilt, what pusillanimity does every *word*, every *action* betray! or it may be, his insolence is turned into crouching and fawning; his rudeness and violence, into artifice and cunning; and his irreligion, into superstition. Various indeed are the *humours*, and very different the *carriage* of these unhappy men in the day of *trial*; but all is but *misery* in a *different* dress; *guilt* and *baseness* under a *different* appearance. Here I might further remark, that *that* faith which produces *patience* in *adversity*, produces likewise *security* and *confidence* in *prosperity*. I will lay me down (may every good man say in the words of the *Psalmist*) and sleep, and rise again, for thou, Lord, shalt make me dwell in safety. And surely the *one* is as serviceable to the ease of human life as the *other*. But I think I have said enough to shew, that if *pleasure* be supposed to imply no more than *indolence*, the *perfect* man has without controversy a far *greater* share

share of it than any *other* can pretend to.

But let us take *pleasure* to be, not a mere *calm*, but a gentle *breeze*; not to consist in mere *rest* and *quiet*, but a delightful *motion*; not in the mere *tranquillity* of the mind, but in the *transport* of it, or something *nearly* approaching it. *Perfection*, I am confident, will suffer nothing by this change of the notion of *pleasure*. How many *pleasures* has the *wise* man, which depend not on *fortune*, but *himself*, (I mean his diligence and integrity) and to which the *sinner* is an utter *stranger*! What *pleasure*, what *triumph* is equal to that of the *perfect* man, when he *glories* in *God*, and makes his *boast* of him all day long? when he *rejoices* in the Lord with joy *unspeakable* and full of *glory*? when being filled with all the *fulness* of *God*, *transported* by a vital sense of *divine* love, and *strengthened* and *exalted* by the mighty energy of the *spirit* of *adoption*, he maintains a *fellowship* with the *Father*, and with his *Son* *Jesus*? All communion with *God* consists in this joy of *love* and *assurance*, and has a taste of *heaven* in it. Let the most *fortunate*, and the *wisest* *Epicurean* too, ransack all the store-houses and treasures of *nature*; let him muster together all his legions of *pleasure*, and let him, if he can, consolidate and incorporate

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them all; and after all, being put into the scale against *this* alone, they will prove lighter than vanity itself. To be the care, the delight, the love of an *Almighty God*, to be dear to *him* who is the *origin* and *fountain* of all *Perfection*; Lord, what rest, what confidence, what joy, what extasy do these thoughts breed! how sublime, how lofty, how delightful and ravishing are those expressions of St. *John*! 1 Epist. iii. 1, 2. *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And those again of the Psalmist, I am continually with thee; thou dost hold me by my right hand: thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me into glory, Psal. lxxii. 23, 24. But I will descend to cooler and humbler pleasures. It is no small happiness to the perfect man, that he is himself a proper object of his own complacency. He can reflect on the truth and justice, the courage and constancy, the meekness and charity of his soul, with much gratitude towards God, and contentment in himself. And this surely he may do with good reason:*

For

For the *Perfections* of the *mind* are as justly to be preferred before those of the *body*, as those of the *body* before the *gifts* of *fortune*. Nor is it a matter of *small* importance to be *pleased* with one's *self*: for grant any one but *this*, and he can never be very *uneasy*, or very *miserable*. But *without* this there are very few things which will not disturb and discompose; and the most obliging accidents of life will have no relish in them. 'Tis true, *folly* and *vanity* does sometimes create a *self-complacency* in the sinner; why, even *then*, 'tis a *pleasing error*. But there is as much difference between the *just* and *rational* complacency of a *wise* man in himself, and the *mistaken* one of a *fool*, as there is between the false and fleeting fancies of a dream, and the solid satisfactions of the day. This will be very manifest upon the *slightest* view we can take of *those* actions, which are the true *reason* of the good man's *satisfaction* in himself, and render his conscience a continual *feast* to him.

It is commonly said, that *virtue* is its *own* reward: and though it must be acknowledged, this is a *reward* which is not sufficient in *all* cases, nor great enough to vanquish *some* sorts of *temptations*; yet there is a great deal of *truth* and *weight* in this saying. For a state of virtue is like a state of health or peace, of strength and beauty;

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and therefore desirable on its *own* account. And if *pleasure*, properly speaking, be nothing else but the *agreeable exercise of the powers of nature about their proper objects*; and if it be *then* absolute and compleat, when these *powers* are *raised*, and the *exercise* of them is *free* and *undisturbed*, then certainly *virtue*, which is nothing else but the *perfect* action of a *perfect* nature, as far as the *one* and the *other* may be admitted in this state of *mortality*, must be a very considerable *pleasure*. Acts of wisdom and charity, the contemplation of truth, and the love of goodness, must be the most *natural* and *delightful* exercise of the mind of man: and because *truth* and *goodness* are *infinite* and *omnipresent*, and nothing can hinder the *perfect* man from *contemplating* the one, and *loving* the other; therefore does he in his degree and measure participate of his *self-sufficiency*, as he does of *other* Perfections of *God*; and enjoys within *himself* an inexhaustible spring of *delight*. How many, how various are the exercises and employments of the mind of man! and when it is once polished and cultivated, how agreeable are they all! to invent and find out, to illustrate and adorn, to prove and demonstrate, to weigh, discriminate and distinguish, to deliberate calmly and impartially, to act with an absolute liberty, to despise

little

little things, and look boldly on dangers ; to do all things dexterously, to converse with a *sweet* and yet a *manly* air, in *honest* and *open*, yet *taking*, *obliging* language ! how delightful are these things in themselves ! how much do they conduce to the service, the beauty, and dignity of human life ! to these *accomplished* minds we owe histories, sciences, arts, trades, laws. From all which if *others* reap an unspeakable *pleasure*, how much more the *authors*, the *parents* of them ? And all this puts me in mind of *one* great *advantage* which the *perfect* man enjoys above the most *fortunate* sensualists ; which is, that he can never want an *opportunity* to employ all the *vigour* of his mind, *usefully* and *delightfully*. Whence it is, that *retirement*, which is the *prison* and the *punishment* of the *fool*, is the *paradise* of the *wise* and *good*.

But let us come at length to *that* pleasure which depends upon *external* objects ; where, if any where, the *fool* and *sinner* must dispute his title to *pleasure* with the *wise* and *good*. How many things are there here which force us to give the preference to the *wise* man ? I will not urge, that a *narrow*, a *private* fortune can furnish store enough for all the *appetites* of *virtue* ; that a *wise* man need not at any time purchase his *pleasure*, at too *dear* a rate ; he need not lie, nor

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cheat, nor crouch, nor fawn: *this* is the price of *sinful* pleasure. I will not, I say, urge *these* and the *like* advantages, since the world thinks it want of *spirit* to be *content* with a *little*; and want of *wit* not to practise those *arts*, let them be never so *base*, by which we may compass *more*. I'll only remark these few things. *First*, the *wise* man's *prospect* is enlarged. He is like an artist or philosopher, which discovers a *thousand* pleasures and beauties in a *piece*, wherein the *idiot* can see *none*: he sees in all the works, in all the providences of *God*, those *depths*, those *contrivances*, which the *fool* cannot *fathom*; that *order*, that *harmony*, which the *sinner* is *insensible* of. *Next*, The pleasure of *sense*, that is not refined by *virtue*, leaves a *stain* upon the mind: 'tis *coarse* and *turbulent*, *empty* and *vexatious*. The *pleasure* of *virtue* is like a *stream*, which runs indeed *within* its banks, but it runs *smooth* and *clear*; and has a *spring* that always *feeds* the current: but the pleasure of *sin* is like a *land-flood*, impetuous, muddy, and irregular: and as soon as it *forsakes* the ground it overflows, it leaves nothing behind it, but *slime* and *filth*. *Lastly*, The *wise* man forming a true *estimate* of the objects of *sense*, and not looking upon them as his *ultimate* end, enjoys all that is in them, and is not fooled by an *expectation* of more.

Thus

Thus having considered the *objects* of human *pleasure*, two things are plain: *First*, That the *perfect* man has many sources or fountains of *pleasure*, which the *sinner* never tastes of, which he cannot relish, which he is a stranger to: *Next*, As to *outward* things, that *he* has even here, many advantages above the *other*. But what is more *considerable* yet, is,

All the claim the *sinner* lays to *pleasure*, is confined to the *present* moment, which is extremely *short*, and extremely *uncertain*; the *time* that is *past* and to *come*, he *quits* all pretensions to, or *ought* to do so. As to the *time past*, the thing is *self-evident*: for the *sinner*, looking back, sees his *pleasures* and *satisfactions*; the *good man* his *trials* and *temptations* past and gone: the *sinner* sees an *end* of his *beauty* and his *strength*; the *good man* of his *weaknesses* and *follies*: the *one* when he looks back is encountered with *sin* and *folly*, *wickedness* and *shame*; the *other* with *repentance* and *good works*: *guilt* and *fear* haunt the reflections of the *one*, *peace* and *hope* attend those of the *other*. As to the *time to come*, the *atheist* hath no *prospect* at all *beyond* the *grave*, the *wicked Christian* a very *dismal* one, the *weak and imperfect* a *doubtful* one; only the *wise and perfect* an *assured*, *joyful*, and *delightful* one. And this puts me in mind of *that*
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which is the proper *fruit of Perfection*, and the truest and greatest *pleasure* of human life, that is, *assurance*, assurance of the *pardon of sin*, assurance of the *divine favour*, assurances of *imortality* and *glory*.

Need I prove, that *assurance* is an unspeakable *pleasure*? One would think, that to man, who is daily engaged in a *conflict* with some *evil* or other, it were superfluous to prove that it is a mighty *pleasure* to be raised, though *not* above the *assault*, though not above the *reach*, yet above the *venom* and *malignity* of *evils*: to be filled with joy, and strength, and confidence; to ride *triumphant* under the protection of the *divine favour*, and see the sea of life swell and toss itself in vain, *in vain threaten* the bark it cannot sink, *in vain invade* the cable it cannot burst. One would think, that to man, who lives all his life long in *bondage* for fear of *death*, it should be a surprizing *delight* to see *death* lie *gasping* at his feet, naked and impotent, without *sting*, without *terror*: one would, finally, think, that to man, who lives rather by *hope* than *enjoyment*, it should not be necessary to prove, that the *Christian's hope*, whose confidence is greater, its objects more glorious, and its success more certain than *that* of any worldly fancy or project, is full of *pleasure*; and that it is a *delightful* prospect to see the

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the *heavens* opened, and *Jesus*, our *Jesus*, our *Prince* and *Saviour*, sitting at the *right hand* of *God*.

Thus I have, I think, sufficiently made out the subserviency of *Perfection* to the *happiness* of this *present* life, which was the thing proposed to be done in this *chapter*. Nor can I imagine what *objections* can be sprung to invalidate what I have said; unless there be any thing of colour in these *two*.

I. To reap the *pleasure*, will some one say, which you have described here, it requires something of an *exalted* genius, some *compass* of understanding, some *sagacity* and *penetration*. To this I *answer*, I *grant* indeed that some of those *pleasures* which I have reckoned up as belonging to the *perfect* man, demand a spirit *raised* a little above the *vulgar*: but the *richest* pleasures, not the most *polished* and *elevated* spirits, but the most *devout* and *charitable* souls are *best* capable of. *Such* are the *peace* and *tranquillity* which arises from the *conquest* and *reduction* of all inordinate affections: the *satisfaction* which accompanies a sincere and vigorous *discharge* of *duty*, and our *reflections* upon it; the *security* and *rest* which flows from *self-resignation*, and *confidence* in the *divine* protection: and lastly, the joy that springs from the *full* assurance of *hope*.
But,

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But, 2dly, It may be objected, 'tis true all these things seem to hang together well enough in *speculation*; but when we come to examine the matter of *fact*, we are almost tempted to think, that all which you have said to prove *the ways of wisdom ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace*, amounts to no more than a pretty *amusement* of the mind, and a *visionary* scheme of happiness. For how *few* are there, if *any*, who *feel* all this to be truth, and *experiment* the *pleasure* you talk of? How *few* are they in whom we can discover any signs of this spiritual joy, or *fruits* of a divine tranquillity or *security*? I answer, in a word, the examples of a *perfect* and *mature* virtue are very *few*; *religion* runs very *low*, and the *love* of God and *goodness* in the bosoms of *most* Christians suffers such an *allay* and *mixture*, that it is no wonder at all, if so *imperfect* a state breed but very *weak* and *imperfect* hopes, very *faint* and *doubtful* joys. But I shall have occasion to *examine* the force of this *objection* more *fully*, when I come to the *obstacles* of *Perfection*.

C H A P. V.

Of the attainment of Perfection: with a particular account of the manner, or the several steps, by which man advances or grows up to it: with three remarks to make this discourse more useful, and to free it from some scruples.

I Have in the *first, second, and third* chapters explained the *notion of Religious Perfection*. In the *fourth* chapter I have insisted on *two effects* of it, *assurance and pleasure*: my method therefore now leads me to the *attainment of Perfection*. Here I will do *two things*. *1st*, I will trace out the *several steps and advances* of the Christian towards it, and draw up, as it were, a short history of his *spiritual progress*, from the very infancy of virtue to its maturity and manhood. *2dly*, I will discourse briefly of the *motives and means of Perfection*.

Of the Christian's progress towards Perfection.

Many are the figures and metaphors by which the scripture describes this; alluding *one* while to the formation, nourishment and growth of the natural man; *another* while to that of plants and vegetables: *one* while

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while to the dawning and encreasing light that shines more and more to the perfect day. *Another* while to that succession of labours and expectations which the husbandman runs through from ploughing to the harvest. But of all the similes which the spirit makes use of to this end, there is *one* especially that seems to me to give us the truest, and the liveliest image of the change of a sinner into a saint. The scripture represents *sin* as a state of *bondage*, and *righteousness* as a state of *liberty*; and teaches us, that by the same steps by which an enslaved and oppressed people arrive at their secular, by the very same does the Christian at his spiritual liberty and happiness.

First, then, as soon as any judgment or mercy, or any other sort of call, awakens and penetrates the sinner; as soon as a clear light breaks in upon him, and makes him see and consider his own state, he is presently agitated by various passions, according to his different guilt and temper, or the different calls and motives by which he is wrought upon: one while fear, another while shame; one while indignation, another while hope, fills his soul: he resents the tyranny, and complains of the persecution of his lusts; he upbraids himself with his folly, and discovers a meanness and shamefulness in his vices, which he did

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not reflect on sufficiently before; he is vexed and troubled at the plagues and mischiefs his sin and folly have already procured him, and thinks he has reason to fear, if he persist, others far more intolerable. *Then* he calls to mind the goodness, the long-suffering of *God*, the love of *Jesus*, the *demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*; and how distant soever he be from virtue, he discerns there is a beauty and pleasure in it; and cannot but judge the righteous happy. *These* thoughts, these travels of the mind, if they be not strangled in the birth by a man's own wilfulness or pusillanimity, or unhappily diverted upon some temptations, do kindle in the bosom of the sinner, the desires of righteousness and *liberty*; they fill him with regret and shame, cast him down, and humble him before *God*, and make him finally resolve on shaking off the yoke. This may be called a state of *illumination*; and is a state of *preparation* for, or *disposition to repentance*: or, if it be *repentance* itself, 'tis yet but an *embryo*: to *perfect* it, 'tis necessary,

Secondly, that the sinner make good his resolutions, and actually break with his lusts; he must reject their solicitations, and boldly oppose their commands; he must take part with reason and religion, keep a watch and guard over his soul, and must

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earnestly labour by mortification and discipline, by meditation and prayer, to root out vice and plant virtue in his soul. This in the language of the prophet is *ceasing to do evil and learning to do well*, Isai. i. 16, 17. He that has proceeded thus far, tho' he feel a great conflict within; though the opposition of lust be very strong, and consequently the discharge of his duty very difficult, he is nevertheless in a state of *grace*, but in a state of *childhood* too; he is *sincere*, but far from being *perfect*. And yet *this* is the state which many continue in to the end of their lives, being partly abused by false notions, and taught to believe, from *Rom.* vii. that there is no higher or perfecter state; partly intangled and incumbered by some unhappy circumstances of life: or, it may be, the force or *impetus* of the soul towards *Perfection*, is much abated by the satisfaction of prosperity, and the many diversions and engagements of a fortunate life: but he that will be *perfect*, must look upon this state as the beginning of virtue. For it must be remembered, that a stubborn and powerful enemy will not be subdued and totally brought under in a moment. The Christian therefore must prosecute this war till he has finished it; I will not say by
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extirpating, but disabling the enemy. But here I would have it well observed, that the reducing the enemy to a low condition, is not always effected by an uninterrupted series of *victories*; for seldom is any so fortunate, or so brave, so wise, or so watchful, as to meet with no check in the long course of a difficult war; 'tis enough if he be not discouraged, but instructed and awakened by it. And to prevent any fatal disaster, two errors must carefully be avoided. *First*, A hasty and fond confidence in ourselves, with an over-weening contempt and neglect of the enemy; and *next*, all false and cowardly projects of truces and accommodations: nor is the sitting down content with poor and low attainments very far removed from this latter. *This* is the *second* stage of the Christian's advance toward *Perfection*; and may be called the state of *liberty*. The *third* and last, which now follows, is the state of *zeal*, or *love*, or, as *mystic* writers delight to call it, the state of *union*.

The yoke of sin being once shaken off, the love of righteousness, and a delight in it, is more and more increased: and *now* the man proceeds to the *last* round in the scale of *Perfection*. The wisdom, courage, and vigour of a convert, is generally at first employed in subduing his corruptions, in conquering his ill habits, and defeating

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his enemies; in watching over his own heart, and guarding himself against temptations. But this being once done, he is in full *liberty* to pursue the works of peace and love. Now he may advance from *necessary* to *voluntary* acts of self-denial, which before would have been *putting new wine into old bottles*, contrary to the advice of our *Master*, Mat. ix. 17. Now he may enlarge his knowledge, and exchange the *milk of the word* for *strong meat*, for the wisdom and the mysteries of it: now he may extend his watchfulness, his care; and whereas they were before wisely, for the most part, confined to his own safety, he may now, like our Saviour, *go about doing good*, Acts x. 38. protecting, strengthening, and rescuing his weak brethren; propagating the faith, and inflaming the bosoms of men with the love of *Jesus* and his truth. Now, in a word, he may give himself up to a life of more exalted contemplation, purity and charity, which will be natural and easy now, though it were not so in the beginning. And this life is accompanied with *peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*; with confidence and pleasure: now the *yoke of Christ* is easy, and his burden light; now he rejoices with joy unspeakable, and hopes full of glory. Now 'tis not so much he that lives, as *Christ that lives in him*: For the life which he now leads, is
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intirely the product of faith and love ; and his greatest business is to maintain the ground which he has got, and to hold fast the steadfastness of his hope unto the end.

To render this short account of the growth of virtue, from its very seed to maturity, the more *useful*, and to free it from some *scruples*, which it may otherwise give occasion to ; I will here add *two* or *three* remarks. 1. That the state and habit of *perfection* is a different thing from some sudden flights, or efforts of an extraordinary *passion* ; and so is the fixt and established tranquillity of the mind, from some sudden gusts, and short-liv'd fits of spiritual joy. No man attains to the habits of virtue and pleasure but by degrees ; and the natural method and order by which he advances to *either*, is that which I have set down. But as to some fallies of the most pure and exalted passions ; as to short-liv'd fits of *perfection*, as to transient tastes, short and sudden transports of spiritual pleasure, it is very often otherwise. God sometimes, either to allure the frailty of a new convert, or to fortify his resolution against some hazardous trial, does raise him to an extraordinary height, by more than usual communications of his blessed Spirit ; and ravishes him by some glance, as it were, of the beatifick vision.

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Raptures of love, the melting tenderness of a pious sorrow, the strength of resolution and faith, the confidence and exultancy of assurance, do sometimes accompany some sort of Christians in the beginnings of righteousness, or in the state of *illumination*. Where the conviction is full, the imagination lively, and the passions tender, it is more easy to *gain Perfection*, than to *preserve* it. When a profligate sinner in the *day of God's power* is snatched like a firebrand out of the fire, rescued by some amazing and surprizing call, like *Israel* by miracles out of *Egypt*; I wonder not, if such a one *loves much*, because *much has been forgiven him*; I wonder not, if he be swallowed up by the deepest and the liveliest sense of guilt and mercy; I wonder not, if such a one endeavour to repair his past crimes by *heroick* acts, if he make haste to redeem his lost time by a zeal and vigilance hard to be imitated, never to be parallel'd by others. Hence we read of *Judah's love in the day of her espousals*, Jer. ii. 2. And of the *first love of the church of Ephesus*, Rev. ii. 4. as the most perfect. And in the first times of the gospel, when men were converted by astonishing miracles; when the presence and example of *Jesus* and his *followers*; when the perspicuity and authority, the spirit and power, the lustre and surprize

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of the *word* of life and salvation dazzled, over-powered and transported the minds of men, and made a thorough change in a moment; and when again no man professed Christianity, but he expected by his sufferings and martyrdom to seal the truth of his profession; I wonder not, if virtue ripen'd fast under such miraculous influences of heaven; or if *assurance* sprung up in a moment from these bright proofs of an unshaken integrity. But we who live in colder climates; who behold nothing in so clear and bright a light as those happy souls did, must be content to make shorter and slower steps towards *perfection*, and satisfy our selves with a natural not miraculous progress. And we, whose virtues are so generally under-grown, and our trials no other than common ones, have no reason to expect the joys of a *perfect assurance*, till we go on to *Perfection*.

2dly, As *Perfection* is a work of time, so is it of great expence and cost too; I mean, 'tis the effect of much labour and travel, self-denial and watchfulness, resolution and constancy. Many are the dangers which we are to encounter through our whole progress towards it; why else are we exhorted, to *learn to do good? To perfect holiness in the fear of God*, 2 Cor. vii. 1, 2. *To be renewed in the spirit of our minds from day to day*, Eph. iv. 23. *To*

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watch, stand fast, to quit us like men, to be strong, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. To take to us the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, and when we have done all, to stand, Eph. vi. 11, 13. To use all diligence to make our calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10. and such like? nay, which is very remarkable, these and the like exhortations were addressed to Christians in those times, which had manifold advantages above these of ours. If I should say, that the spirit of God, the sanctifying grace of God, was then poured forth in more plentiful measure than ever after, not only scripture, as I think, but reason too, would be on my side. The interest of the church of Christ required it; sanctity being as necessary as miracles to convert the Jew and the Gentile. But besides this, the then wonderful and surprizing light of the gospel, the presence of Jesus in the flesh, or of those who had been eye-witnesses of his glory; a croud of wondrous works and miracles, the expectation of terrible things, temporal and eternal judgments at the door, and an equal expectation of glorious ones too. All these things breaking in, beyond expectation, upon a Jewish and Pagan world, overwhelmed before by thick darkness, and whose abominations were too notorious to be concealed, and too detestable to be excused or defended, could

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not but produce a very great and sudden change. Now therefore, if in these times many did start forth in a moment fit for *baptism* and *martyrdom*; if many amongst these were suddenly changed, justified and crowned, I wonder not. *This* was a *day of power*, a *day of glory*, wherein God asserted himself, exalted his Son, and rescued the world by a *stretched-out hand*. I should not therefore from hence be induced to expect any thing like at *this day*. But yet if, notwithstanding all this, Christians in those happy times, amidst so many advantages, stood in *need* of such exhortations, what do not we in these times? if so much watchfulness, prayer, patience, fear, abstinence, and earnest contention became them, when God as it were *bowed the heavens*, and *came down and dwelt amongst men*; what becomes us in these days, in the dregs of time, when God stands as it were aloof off, to see what will be our latter end, retired behind a cloud, which our heresies and infidelities, schisms and divisions, sins and provocations have raised? To conclude, he that will be *perfect* must not sit like the lame man by *Bethesda's* pool, expecting till some *angel* come to cure him: but, like our *Lord*, he must climb the mount, and pray, and then he may be transformed; he may be raised as much above the moral corruption of his

nature by *Perfection*, as our Saviour was above the meanness and humility of his body, by his glorious *Transfiguration*. These two observations are of manifold use. For many expect pleasure when they have no right to it ; they would reap, before virtue be grown up and ripen'd ; and being more intent upon the fruit of duty, than the discharge of it, they are frequently disappointed and discouraged. Others there are, who mistaking some fits and flashes of spiritual joy for the habitual peace and pleasure of *Perfection*, do entertain too early confidences, and instead of *perfecting holiness in the fear of God*, they decline, or it may be, fall away through negligence and security: or, which is as bad, the duties of religion grow tasteless and insipid to them for want of that pleasure which they ignorantly or presumptuously expect should constantly attend them : and so they are disheartened or disgusted, and give back ; which they would never do, if they did rightly understand, that *Perfection* is a work of time ; that a settled tranquillity, an habitual joy of spirit, is the fruit only of *Perfection* ; and that those short gleams of joy, which break in upon new converts, and sometimes on other imperfect Christians, do depend upon extraordinary circumstances, or are peculiar favours of heaven. *Lastly*, there are many, who have
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entertained very odd fancies about the *attainment of Perfection*; they talk and act as if *Perfection* were the product, not of time and experience, but of an instant; as if it were to be infused in a moment, not acquired; as if it were a mere arbitrary favour, not the fruit of meditation and discipline. 'Tis true, it cannot be doubted by a Christian, but that *Perfection* derives itself from heaven; and that the seed of it is the grace of God: yet it is true too, and can as little be doubted by any one who consults the gospel, and the experience of the best men, that we must watch, and pray, and contend, labour and persevere, and that long too, ere we can attain it. And whoever fancies himself rapt up into the *third heaven* on a sudden, will find himself as suddenly let down to the *earth* again; if he do not use his utmost diligence to fortify his resolutions, to cherish the new-born flame, and to guard and improve his virtues.

3dly, It may be objected against the account I have given of the *growth* of virtue, that when I come to the maturity of it, my colours are *too* bright, my strokes *too* bold, and the form I have given it *too* divine. For you describe it, will one say, as if man, now grown *perfect*, had nothing to do, but to enjoy God and himself; as if he were already *entered into rest*,

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and did actually *fit down with Christ in heavenly places*; as if, in a word, *virtue* were no longer his task, but *pleasure*; as if he had nothing to do but to rejoice continually, nothing further to press after, nothing to combat, nothing to contend with: whereas the *fathers* generally, and all judicious *modern* writers, seem to place *Perfection* in nothing higher, than in a perpetual progress towards it; they look upon life as a perpetual warfare, and utterly deny any such height or eminence as is raised above clouds and storms, above troubles and temptations. But to *this*, I have *several* things to say, which will *clear* my sense about this matter, and dispel all *objections*. *First*, I have described the last stage of the Christian's spiritual progress which I call a state of zeal, and in which I suppose the Christian to commence perfect; this, I say, I have described in the same manner, and as near as I could, in the same words which the scripture does. *Secondly*, I do not pretend any where to assert, that there is any state in this life raised above trials and temptations. Alas! the most *perfect* man will find it work enough to make good the ground he has gained, and maintain the conquest he has won; much watchfulness and labour, much humility and fear, and many other virtues are necessary to perseverance in a state of *Perfection*.

Perfection. *Thirdly*, As the world now goes, and indeed ever did, *Perfection* is a state we arrive at very *late*; and all the way to it full of labour and travel, full of dangers and difficulties; so that upon this account, the life of man may well enough be said to be a perpetual warfare. But, *Fourthly*, I do by no means affirm, that the *perfect* man is incapable of growth and improvement. Of this I shall have occasion to unfold my sense more fully afterwards. In the mean time I cannot forbear observing here, that there is a great difference between the growth of an *imperfect* and a *perfect* Christian; for supposing grace to be always increasing, and the very maturity of virtue to admit of degrees; yet the marks and distinctions of such different degrees are so nice and delicate, that the *advances* of the *perfect* man are scarcely perceptible to himself, without the closest and strictest enquiry, much less can they fall under the observation of others. The *first change* of a sinner from darkness to light, from vice to virtue, from an aversion for God and goodness, to a *sincere*, though not a *perfect* love of both, is very palpable: so *again*, the change from a state of weakness and inconstancy, to one of strength; of conflict and difficulty, to one of ease and liberty; of fear and doubt, to one of confidence and pleasure, is little
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less evident than sensible. *But* the several degrees of growth *afterwards*, the improvements, whatever they be, of a mature state, are of *another* nature, not consisting in a *change*, but *addition*; and that made *insensibly*. Here therefore, the *perfect* man, in order to maintain the peace and pleasure of his mind, need not enter into a nice and scrupulous examination of the degrees and measures of his virtues; 'tis sufficient that he make good his post; 'tis enough if he follow the advice of *St. Paul*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. *If he be stedfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord.*

C H A P. VI.

Of the means of Perfection. Five general observations, serving for directions in the use of gospel-means, and instrumental-duties. 1. *The practice of wisdom and virtue, is the best way to improve and strengthen both.* 2. *The two general and immediate instruments, as of conversion, so of Perfection too, are the gospel and the spirit.* 3. *The natural and immediate fruit of meditation, prayer, eucharist, psalmody, and good conversation, or friendship, is the quickening and enlivening the conscience, the fortifying and confirming*

firming our resolutions, and the raising and keeping up an heavenly frame of spirit. 4. *The immediate ends of discipline, are the subduing the pride of the heart, and the reducing the appetites of the body.* 5. *Some kinds of life are better suited to the great ends of religion and virtue, than others.*

SHould I insist particularly on every one of the *means* or *instruments* of *Perfection*, it would lead me through the whole system of religion; it would oblige me to treat of all the articles of our faith, and all the parts of moral righteousness. For the virtues of the gospel do all afford mutual support and nourishment to one another; and mutually minister to their own growth and strength. And *prayer* and the *Lord's supper*, not to mention *meditation*, *psalmody*, *conversation*, *discipline*, are founded upon the belief of all the mysteries of our religion; and consist in the exercise of almost all Christian graces, as repentance, faith, hope, charity: but this would be an endless task. I purpose therefore here only to lay down some few *general observations*, which may serve for directions in the use of *gospel-means*, point out the *end* we are to aim at, and enable us to reap the utmost *benefit* from them.

§ 1. The *practice* of wisdom and virtue, is the best way to improve and strengthen both. This is a proposition almost self-evident: for besides that it is acknowledged on all hands, that the frequent repetition of single *acts* of virtue, is the natural way to arrive at an *habit* of it; the *practice* of virtue gives a man great boldness towards God, mingles joy and pleasure in all his addresses to him, purifies and enlightens the mind, and entitles him to more plentiful measures of grace, and higher degrees of favour. *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,* John viii. 31; 32. *To him that bath, shall be given, and he shall have more abundance,* Matth. xiii. 12. If this be so, as undoubtedly it is, it is plain, that we ought not to be fond of such a solitude or retirement, as cuts off the opportunity of many virtues, which may be daily practised in a more publick and active life. The true *Anchorite*, or *hermite*, was at *first* little better than a *pious extravagant*: I will not say how much *worse* he is now. Meditation and prayer are excellent duties; but meekness and charity, mercy and zeal, are not one jot inferior to them. The *world* is an excellent *school* to a good Christian; the follies

follies and the miseries, the trials and temptations of it, do not only exercise and employ our virtue, but cultivate and improve it: they afford us both *instruction* and *discipline*, and naturally advance us on towards solid wisdom, and a well-settled power over ourselves. 'Tis our own fault if every accident that befalls us, and every one whom we converse with, do not teach us somewhat; occasion some wise *reflection*, or inkindle some pious *affection* in us. We do not reflect on our words and actions, we do not observe the motions of our own hearts as diligently as we ought; we make little or no application of what we see or hear, nor learn any thing from the wisdom and the virtue, the folly and the madness of *man*, and the consequences of both: and so we neither improve our *knowledge*, nor our *virtue*, but are the same to *day* we were *yesterday*, and life *wastes* away in common accidents, and customary actions, with as little alteration in us, as in our affairs: whereas, were we mindful, as we ought, of our true interest, and desirous to reap some spiritual benefit from every thing, the virtues of *good* men would inkindle our emulation, and the folly and madness of *sinners* would confirm our abhorrence for sin; from *one* we should learn content, from *another* industry; here we should

should see a charm in meekness and charity, *there* in humility; in *this* man we should see reason to admire discretion and command of himself; in *that* courage and constancy, assiduity, and perseverance: nor would it be less useful to us, to observe, how vanity exposes *one*, and peevishness torments *another*; how pride and ambition embroil a *third*; and how hateful and contemptible avarice renders a *fourth*; and to trace all that variety of ruin, which lust and prodigality, disorder and sloth, leave behind them.

And as this kind of observations will fill us with solid and useful *knowledge*, so will a diligent attention to the rules of righteousness, and discretion in all the common and daily actions of life, enrich us with true *virtue*. Religion is not to be confined to the *Church*, and to the *closet*, nor to be exercised only in *prayers* and *sacraments*, *meditations* and *alms*; but every-where, we are in the presence of God, and every word, every action, is capable of *mortality*. Our defects and infirmities betray themselves in the daily accidents and the common conversation of life; and *here* they draw after them very important consequences; and therefore *here* they are to be watched over, regulated and governed, as well as in our more *solemn* actions. 'Tis
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to the virtues or the errors of our *common* conversation and *ordinary* deportment, that we owe both our friends and enemies, our good or bad character abroad, our domestic peace or troubles; and in a high degree, the improvement or depravation of our minds. Let no man then, that will be *perfect* or *happy*, abandon himself to his humours or inclinations in his carriage towards his acquaintance, his children, his servants: let no man, that will be *perfect* or *happy*, follow *prejudice* or *fashion* in the common and customary actions of life: but let him assure himself, that by a daily endeavour to conform these more and more to the excellent rules of the gospel, he is to train up himself by degrees to the most absolute *wisdom*, and the most *perfect* virtue he is capable of. And to this end he must first know himself, and those he has to do with; he must discern the proper season and the just occasion of every virtue; and then he must apply himself to the acquiring the perfection of it by the daily exercise of it, even in those things, which, for want of due reflection, do not commonly seem of any great importance. To one that is *thus* disposed, the dulness or the carelessness of a servant, the stubbornness of a child, the sourness of a parent, the inconstancy of friends, the coldness of relations, the neglect

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or ingratitude of the world, will all prove extremely useful and beneficial; every thing will instruct him, every thing will afford an opportunity of exercising some virtue or another; so that such a one shall be *daily* learning, *daily* growing better and wiser.

§ 2. The *two* great *instruments*, not of *regeneration* only, but also of *Perseverance* and *Perfection*, are the *Word* and the *Spirit of God*. This no man doubts that is a Christian; and therefore I will not go about to *prove* it: nor will I at present discourse of the energy and operation of the *one*, and the *other*; or examine what each is in its self, or wherein the one differs from the other. 'Tis abundantly enough, if we be assured that the *gospel* and the *Spirit* are proper and sufficient *means* to attain the great *ends* I have mentioned, namely, our *conversion* and *Perfection*. And that they are so, is very plain from those *texts* which do expressly assert, that the *gospel* contains all those truths that are necessary to the clear exposition of our duty, or to the moving and obliging us to the practice of it. And that the *Spirit* implies a supply of all that supernatural strength, be it what it will, that is necessary to enable us, not only to will, but to do that which the *gospel* convinces us to be our duty. *Such*
are,

are, Rom. i. 2. *For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* 2 Cor. xii. 9. *And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* 1 Pet. i. 5. *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.* 'Tis needless to multiply texts on this occasion; otherwise it were very easy to shew, that all things necessary to life and godliness, are contained in the *Word and Spirit*; that whatever is necessarily to be wrought in us to prepare us for, or entitle us to eternal salvation, is ascribed to the *gospel* and the *Spirit*. This truth then being unquestionable, that the *gospel* and the *Spirit* are the *two* great instruments of *Perfection*; we may from hence infer *two* rules, which are of the most universal use, and of the most powerful efficacy in the pursuit of *Perfection*. 1. We cannot have too great a value, too great a passion for the *Book of God*; nor fix our thoughts and hearts too earnestly upon the truths

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of it. We must imitate the *Thessalonians*, in behalf of whom St. Paul thanks God, because when they received the word of God which they heard of him, they received it not as the word of men; but as it is in truth, the word of God, 1 Theff. ii. 13. that is, we must entertain the gospel, as *that* which has infallible truth in all its doctrines, uncontrollable authority in all its precepts, a divine certainty in all its promises and threats, and a divine wisdom in all its counsels and directions: and *he* that thus believes will certainly find the gospel to work effectually in *him*, as it did in the *Thessalonians*. What light and beauty will he discern in all its descriptions of our duty! what force in all its persuasions! what majesty, what dignity, what life, what power, what consolation, what support! in one word, what heavenly virtue will he discern in each part of it, and what vast and unfathomable wisdom in the whole composure and contrivance of it! how will he then admire it, how will he love it, how will he study it, how will he delight in it! how will he be transported by the promises, and awed by the threats of it! how will he be pierced and struck through by those exaggerations of sin, and captivated and enamoured by those lively and divine descriptions of virtue he meets in it! how will he adore the goodness of

God;

God, conspicuous in our redemption! how will he be inflamed with the love of *Jesus*, and be amazed at his condescension and humility! *this* and much more is the natural effect of our receiving the *gospel* as we ought, and pondering the truths of it with devout and incessant meditation. This the royal *Psalmist* was abundantly sensible of, *Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee*, *Psal. cxix. 11.* *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation*, ver. 98. To which I might add many other *verses* out of that *Psalm*, containing the various and mighty *effects* of the *word* of God. Nor will any one think that I attribute too much to the study of this *word of life*, who shall consider that it is one of the great works of the *Holy Spirit*, to *incline our hearts to the testimonies of God*, to *write his laws in our hearts*, to dispose us to attend to revealed truths; and, in one word, to fix our minds and thoughts upon them. 2. Since the *Spirit*, together with the *gospel*, is a joint principle of *regeneration* and *Perfection*, 'tis manifest, that we ought to live in a continual dependance upon God. *He* must be our hope and confidence in the *day of trial*: *He* must be our praise and boast in the *day of victory*,

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and in the *day of peace*: when we *lie down* and when we *rise up*, we must say with the *Psalmist*, 'Tis thou, Lord, that makest me dwell in safety, Psal. iv. 8. We must look upon ourselves as surrounded by enemies, and besieged by *spiritual* dangers, as *David* was by *temporal*: and as he in the one, so must we in the other, expect strength and salvation from him. *Through God we shall do valiantly, for he it is that shall tread down our enemies*, Psal. lx. 12. *Many nations compass me round about; but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.* And when we have conquered temptations, and routed the powers of darkness, we must ascribe all, not to our own strength, nor to our own watchfulness, but to the grace and the power of God. *If the Lord himself had not been on our side, now may Israel say; if the Lord himself had not been on our side,* when the legions of hell combined with the world and flesh against us, *they had swallowed us up alive*, Psal. cxxiv. 1, 2, 3. Now, many will be the happy effects of this dependance upon God; we shall be passionately desirous of his presence, of his grace and favour; we shall dress and prepare our souls, we shall awaken and dispose all our faculties to receive him; we shall ever do the things that may invite and prevail with him to abide with us; we shall be apprehensive of his forsaking us,

as the greatest evil that can befall us. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the king of glory shall come in: awake, O my soul, raise thyself above this world and flesh, that thou mayest be fit for the King of glory to dwell in thee: Who is the king of glory? the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle; that Holy Spirit that subdues our enemies, that strengthens us with might, and fills us with courage and holy alacrity, Psal. xxiv. 7, 8. Nor does the Psalmist prepare his soul for God by meditation only, and spiritual recollection and soliloquies; but by a careful and circumspect regulation of all his actions, Psal. ci. 2, 3. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me. And how earnestly does he pray against God's forsaking him? Psal. li. 11. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. The result of all this, must needs be steadfastness and growth in holiness and goodness. For, first, This is the natural influence of such a dependance upon God; it places us always before him, and makes us walk humbly and circumspectly, as becomes those that are awed by the presence of so*

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holy a Majesty : I have *set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right-hand, I shall not be moved*, Psal. xvi. 1. Secondly, We cannot doubt but that God will plentifully bestow his grace on those, who thus rely upon him. For where can he bestow it with more advantage to his glory, or to the propagation of holiness? both of which are so dear to him. Who is a subject more capable of it, or who can be better entitled to it, than he who thus depends upon God? As he begs it *humbly*, and receives it *thankfully*; so he will husband it *carefully*, and employ it *zealously*.

§ 3. In *prayer, meditation*, and other *instrumental duties* of religion, we are to aim at *one* or *all* of these *three* things.

1. The quickening and enlivening the *Conscience*. 2. The confirming and strengthening our *resolutions* of obedience. 3. The raising and keeping up *holy* and *devout affections*. Great is the benefit of *each* of these. *Tenderness* of conscience will keep us not only from evil, but every appearance of it; increase of *spiritual strength* will render us stedfast and unmoveable in all the works of God; and *holy passion* will make us abound in them. To *spiritual passion* we owe the zeal and pleasure, to *spiritual strength* and *liberty*, the constancy
and

and uniformity of an holy life; and both *strength* and *passion* are generally owing to a *tender* and *enlightened* conscience. For while the *conscience* preserves a *quick* and *nice* sense of good and evil, all the great truths of the gospel will have their proper force and natural efficacy upon us. These then are the genuine *fruits* of *meditation*, the *eucharist*, *psalmody*, and such like. If they do not add life and light to the *conscience*; if they do not augment our *strength*, nor exalt our *passions*; if they do not increase our detestation of *sin*, and our love to God and goodness; if they do not quicken and exite devout purposes; if they do not engage and refresh the soul by holy joy and heavenly pleasure; if, I say, they do not in some degree or other promote *these* things, we reap *no* benefit at all from them, or we can never be *certain* that we do. But though the ends I have mentioned, be of this great use to *all*, and consequently *all* are obliged to aim at them, yet may the *different* defects and imperfections of *different* Christians, render *one* of these ends more necessary than *another*; and by consequence, it will be *wisdom* more immediately and directly to intend and pursue *that*. For *example*; if a man's *temper* be such, that his *passions* do soon kindle, and soon die again; that he is apt to form wise and great projects, and as

unapt to accomplish any thing; in *this* case, it will be his duty to aim especially at the *increase of strength*. But if on the *other* hand, a man's *temper* be cold and phlegmatick, slow and heavy; it is but fit that he should particularly apply himself to the awakening and exciting *devout affections* in his soul. For *as* excellent purposes do often miscarry for want of constancy and firmness of mind; *so* steadiness and firmness of mind doth seldom effect any great matter, when it wants life and passion to put it into motion. *Again*, if one's *past* life has been very *sinful*, or the *present* be not very *fruitful*, it will behove such a one to increase the *tenderness of conscience*, to add more light and life to its *convictions*; that, by a daily repetition of contrition and compunction, he may wash off the *stain*, or, by the fruitfulness of his following life, repair the *barrenness* of that past. Having thus, in few words, both made out the usefulness of those *three ends* I proposed to a Christian in the performance of *instrumental* duties of religion, and shewed in what cases he may be obliged to aim more immediately at *one* than *another*; I will now enquire, and that as briefly as I can, *how* these *three ends* may be *secured* and *promoted*.

1st, Of *tendernefs of conscience*, or the full and lively convictions of it.

To promote this, the *first* thing necessary is *meditation*. No man, who diligently searches and studies the *Book of God*, can be a stranger to *himself* or to his *duty*. Not to his *Duty*; for this *book* reveals the whole *will of God* in clear and full terms; it gives us such infallible *characters* of good and evil, right and wrong, as render our ignorance or error inexcusable: it points out the great *ends of life* so plainly, and conducts to them by such general and unerring *rules*, that there is no variety of circumstances can so perplex and ravel our duty, but that an *honest* man by the help of this may easily discover it. For this reason 'tis, that the *Word of God* is called *light*, because it does distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong; and like a *lamp* does manifest the path which we are to chuse, and disperses that *mist* and *darkness*, with which the lust of man, and the subtilty of hell has covered it. And for this reason 'tis, that the good have such a *value*, and the wicked such an *aversion* for the *Book of God*. For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God, John

iii. 20, 21. Nor can he that studies the *Word of God*, be a stranger to *himself* any more than to his duty. For this light ransacks all the recesses of the soul; it traces all its affections back to their first springs and sources; it lays open all its desires and projects, and strips its most secret purposes of all their disguises: *For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,* Heb. iv. 12. In a word, if we would preserve the *conscience quick and sensible*, we must be daily conversant in the *Book of God*. For this commands with that authority, instructs with that clearness, persuades with that force, reproves with that purity, prudence, and charity; that we shall not easily be able to resist it: it describes righteousness and sin in such true and lively colours, proclaims rewards and punishments in such powerful and moving language, that it rouses even the dead in sin, penetrates and wounds the stupid and obdurate.

To *meditation* we must add *prayer*. For this is a very proper and essential *means* to refresh and renew in the soul, the hatred of sin, and love of goodness; and to improve those impressions which *meditation* has made upon it. We cannot easily put

up petitions to *God* with confidence, unless we do the things that *please* him; for our hearts will misgive us, and our very petitions will reproach us: and the mere *thought* of entering more immediately into the presence of *God* does oblige us to a more careful trial and examination of our actions. For *God* being not only omniscient, but just and holy too, we can no more flatter our selves with the hope of pardon for any sin into which we are betrayed by fondness or negligence, than we can imagine him ignorant of it. But this is not all; we are to pray, that *God* would enable us to *search* out and *discover* our own hearts. *Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24. Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* And if we do this sincerely, *God* will undoubtedly grant our requests; and will lay open to us all our present defects and infirmities, and shew us how far short we come of the *glory of God*: that *Perfection* of holiness and happiness, which many eminent *saints* actually arrived at upon earth. And we may be sure, that light which breaks in upon our mind with this brightness, will not suffer any latent *corruptions* to continue undiscovered; nor permit us to forget the stains and ruins, which the *sins* of our past life
have

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have left behind them. *Conversation* is another way, by which we learn to know ourselves, and by which *conscience* is kept awake, and in its *vigour*. How convictive, how *moving* is the discourse of a devout and pious *friend*? when he complains, or when he rejoices; when he relates the history of his own experience; when he lets us see the designs he has formed, and the excellent ends his soul thirsts after; how does our heart burn within us? what variety of *affection* does it raise in us, when he makes his remarks on human nature and the world; when he bewails the dishonour of God and the decay of religion amongst us; when he relates the misery and misfortune of sinners, and observes the particular sins and follies that occasion it? how often does he hereby *provoke* us to wise *reflections* on ourselves? how many new beauties does he *discover* to us in virtue? how many deformities in sin, which had escaped *our* observations? but 'tis not the *conversation* only of my friend, but his *life* also, from which I derive, or may do so, *instruction* and *admonition*. The *Perfections* of my *friend* are the gentlest and the mildest, and yet the most awakening *reproofs* too of my *own defects*; and by the freshness and lustre of his *virtue*, I discern best the weakness and the dimness of my *own*. How often have I been moved to

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turn my thoughts with some *indignation* on my own heats and commotions, while I have admired and blessed the sweetness and the gentleness, the softness and the calm, very conspicuous in an excellent friend? and when I have heard *another* mention his *nightly praises*, and those divine thoughts which filled the *intervals* of his *sleep*, and made those hours that are so burthensome to some, the most entertaining and delightful parts of his rest, how have I been inwardly filled with confusion and shame? how have I upbraided and reproached myself, condemned the sluggishness of my days, the dulness and the wanderings of my soul by night? and I believe every sincere man must find himself thus affected on the like occasions. For in *this* kind of *reproof*, which I talk of, there is something more of force and authority than is to be found in any *other*; for the example of friends, does not only teach us *what* we are to do, but demonstrates also that it *may* be done. Nor does virtue any-where appear with so lovely and charming an *air*, as in a friend. But after all, amongst all the benefits we gain by excellent friendships, we ought not to reckon *this* as the *least*, that it is one, and that an indispensable *office of friendship*, to *admonish* and *reprove*:
For the reproofs of instruction are the paths of
life,

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life, Prov. vi. 23. But then that we may be capable of this blessing, we must dispose our minds to *expect* and *bear* reproof; we must strive after an humble and teachable temper; and we must invite and encourage our friends to this kindest office; not only by unaffected requests, but also by *obeying* their advice; *pardon*ing whatever infirmity may be interspersed with it, and *loving* them the better, as indeed they deserve: for there is scarce any *better* proof of their affection, prudence and courage, which they are capable of giving us.

2dly, A *second* end of *instrumental* duties is the *increase* of *spiritual strength*. Now *spiritual strength* consists in the power and dominion we have over our affections and actions: and it stands upon *two bases*; the *reduction* of *sin*, and the *growth* of *virtue*; whatever does weaken and reduce our propensions to sin, whatever promotes the subjection of the body, adds power and authority to the mind, and renders virtue more easy and pleasant. And because virtues have a mutual connexion and dependance upon one another; therefore whatever promotes any one promotes all. But, especially, whatever strengthens our hope, or quickens our fear, or enlarges our knowledge, and encreases our faith; this does confirm and
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establish our resolution more than any thing else. *Faith* is the *root*, *fear* the *guard*, and *hope* the *spur* of all our virtues. Faith convinces us what is our duty; fear makes us impartial, diligent, and watchful; hope, resolved and active in the prosecution of it. It being thus clear *what* our *spiritual strength* consists in, it will be easy to discern by *what means* we are to gain it. But I can here only suggest those hints and intimations which the *reader* must upon occasion, as he needs, enlarge and improve.

1. *Meditation* is the *first* thing necessary. We must often survey the grounds and foundations of our faith; we must consider frequently and seriously the *scripture topicks* of hope and fear; such are the death of *Jesus*, a judgment to come, the holiness and justice, and the omnipresence of *God*: we must diligently observe the wiles and stratagems of *Satan*, the arts and insinuations of the *world* and *flesh*, and mark the progress of *sin* from its very beginning to maturity; and all this with a particular regard to the corruption of our own *nature*, and the deceitfulness of our own *hearts*. We must often ponder upon the beauty and peace of *holiness*, the love of *God* and of *Jesus*, the virtues, sufferings, and crowns of *martyrs*. And, *finally*, if we will increase in *strength*, we must practise this duty of

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meditation often, and we must not suffer ourselves to be withdrawn from it, or be prevailed with to intermit it on any slight and trivial pretences. And because we are not always *masters* of our own *affairs*, nor consequently of our *time*; therefore ought we to have ever ready at hand, a good collection of *texts*, which contain, in *few* words, the power, and spirit of *gospel motives*; the *perfection* and beauty of duties, and the substance of advice and counsel: and to fix these so in our *memory*, that they may serve as a *shield* for us to oppose, as our *Saviour* did, *against the darts of the devil*, and as a *supply* of excellent and useful thoughts upon a sudden: so that in all the little interruptions of business, and the many little vacancies of the day, the mind, which is an active and busy spirit, may never want a proper *subject* to work upon: much less lose itself in wild and lazy amusements, or *defile* itself by vain or vicious thoughts. But we must not only take care that *meditation* be frequent, but also that it be not loose and roving. To which end it will be necessary to study our *selves* as well as the *scriptures*, and to be intimately acquainted with the advantages and disadvantages of our constitution, and our state; so that in our *meditations* on the *scriptures*, we may more particularly have

have an eye to those vices *we* are most obnoxious to, and those virtues which are either more necessary, or more feeble and under-grown.

Next after *meditation* must follow *prayer*. Great is the *power* of *prayer* in promoting Christian strength and fortitude; whether we consider its *prevalence upon God*, or its natural *influence upon ourselves*. If we consider the *latter*, what divine force and energy is there in the confidences of faith, the joys of hope, the earnest longings and desires of love, the tender sorrows of contrition, the delight of praises and thanksgivings, the adorations and self-depressions of a profound humility, and the resolutions and vows of a perfect abhorrence of, and holy zeal and indignation against sin! how do these things mellow and enrich the soul! how do they raise it higher and higher above *the corruption which is in the world through lust*! how do they renew it daily, and make it a *partaker of the divine Nature*! the repetition of the same acts naturally begets an habit; an habit is the strength and perfection of the soul; for it is a disposition ripened and confirmed by custom. How naturally then must *prayer* fortify the mind, ripen good dispositions, or add strength and perfection to good habits! since it is nothing else but a re-

peated *exercise* of almost all the graces of the gospel, repentance, faith, hope, charity, and the like : and it ought to be observed, that *prayer* gives us a frequent opportunity of exercising *those* virtues, which we should not otherwise be so often obliged to do. If, *secondly*, we enquire into the *prevalence of prayer with God*, we shall have further reasons yet to resolve, that it is a most effectual *means of encreasing our spiritual strength*. What will God deny to the prayer of a righteous man? He may deny him temporal things, because they are not good for him. He may refuse to remove a temptation, because this is often an occasion of his own glory, and his servant's reward; but he will never refuse him grace to conquer it. He will no more deny his Spirit to one that earnestly and sincerely begs it, than the natural parent will bread to his hungry and craving child. And no wonder, since grace is as necessary to the spiritual life as bread to the natural; the goodness of God is more tender and compassionate than any instinct in human nature; and the purity and perfection of God more zealously solicitous for the holiness and immortality of *his* children, than earthly parents can be for a sickly perishing life of theirs. Thus then 'tis plain, that *prayer* contributes wonderfully to the

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strengthening and establishing the mind of man in goodness. But then we must remember, that it must have these two qualifications; it must be frequent and incessantly importunate. 1. It must be frequent. I would have this rule complied with as far as it may, even in our stated, regular, and solemn addresses to God. But because business, and several obligations we lie under to the world, do often press hard upon us; therefore must I give the same counsel here, which I did before under the head of meditation; that is, to have always ready and imprinted in our memory several texts of scripture, containing the most weighty and important truths, in the most piercing and moving language; that we may be able to form these on a sudden into ejaculations, in which our souls may mount up into heaven, amidst the ardours and transports of desires and praise, as the angel did, in the flame of Manoah's sacrifice. 2. Prayer must be incessantly importunate. Importunate it will be, if the soul be prepared and disposed as it ought; that is, if it be disengaged from this world, and possessed entirely with the belief and earnest expectation of a better; if it be humbled in itself, disclaim all strength and merit of its own, and rest wholly on the goodness and all-sufficiency of God. I add incessantly, in conformity to the parables

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of our *Lord*, Luke xi. 8. and xviii. 5. and the ἀδιαλείπτως of the *apostle*, 1 Thess. v. 17. And whosoever considers human nature well, and remembers how soon pious motions vanish, and how little they effect, will discern a plain reason, both for *vehemence* and *perseverance in prayer*: for *vehemence*, that the soul may be deeply impressed by pious passions; for *perseverance*, that such impressions may not be effaced and obliterated. Nor let any one fancy, that *prayer* thus qualified has not a better influence upon *God*, as well as upon *ourselves*: 'tis true, *God* is void of the painfulness and defects of *human* passions, but not of the Perfection of *divine* ones. Woe were to us, if *God* were an inflexible, inexorable Deity, and incapable of being wrought upon by the incessant importunity of his poor creatures; woe were to us, if the softness and the tenderness of the *divine Nature* did not infinitely exceed the little resemblances of it in *man*: If, in a word, *God* did not abound in goodness, mercy, and compassion, more easily to be moved and excited than those human passions that bear some *analogy* to them. Next to *conversation with God by prayer*, the *conversation of good men* does wonderfully contribute to the building us up in faith and virtue: How does the sense and experience of such as deserve our esteem

and

and affection, settle and establish our judgment when they concur with us! how does their knowledge enlighten us, their reason strengthen our faith, and their example inflame us with emulation! A pious friendship renders religion itself more engaging: it sanctifies our very diversions and recreations, and makes them minister to virtue; it minds us when we are forgetful, supports and encourages us when we faint and tire, reproves and corrects us when we give back, and recalls us into the right path when we go out of it. This is, or this *should* be, the business of *conversation*, the end and advantage of *friendship*: we should be often *talking* together of the things of God, *communicating* and laying open the state of our souls, our fears, our hopes, our improvements, and defects; we should *watch* over one another, *comfort* and *support* one another; our *discourse* should always minister new warmth, or new strength to our holy faith and love. But among *all* the *means of grace*, there is *no one* does so much *corroborate* and *nourish* the soul of man as the *Holy Eucharist*. How many wise and impartial reflections does the *preparation* for it occasion? What unfeigned humility, and what a profound awe of the divine Majesty, does a previous *self-examination* beget in us? What a tender sense

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of the divine love does the *contemplation* of the whole mystery inkindle? What firmness and resolution do we derive from fresh *vows* and repeated *engagements*; and these offered up with so much *solemnity*? And how much, finally, is the habit of holiness improved by that *spiritual pleasure*, which the sensible *assurances* of grace and salvation work in us, by that *awe* and holy *fear*, which the whole action leaves behind on our minds, and the *zeal*, *vigilance*, and *circumspection* it obliges us to for the time following? Not to mention here, how the participation of this *holy sacrament* obliges us to a most solemn *exercise* of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus, of brotherly love and charity, and the hope of immortality and glory. *Here*, in a word, we prepare to meet God as we would do in death and judgment; *here* we make an open profession of our holy faith, renounce the world and flesh, all our sinful or vain desires; devote ourselves to the service of *Jesus*, and learn to expect happiness from nothing else, but the merits and the imitation of his cross. So profound is the *wisdom* of this institution, that it evidently speaks God the *author* of it, and proclaims the too common *neglect* of it in most parts of *this nation*, an *inexcusable* sin and folly.

3. A *third end* of *instrumental* duties of religion, is the *raising* and *keeping up* *holy* and *devout affections*. I know not why *passion* is so commonly undervalued and disparaged in *religion*, unless they, who thus treat it, mean nothing by it, but a short-lived and superficial commotion of the mind, which leaves no print or relish behind it, and is presently succeeded by sin and folly. *Holy passion* is the vigour and strength of the soul; 'tis the state and frame of the mind when it is thoroughly moved and affected. And therefore to form to one's self *religion* destitute of *passion*, is little better than to content one's self with one that is lazy, lukewarm, and lifeless. And tho' there be some *tempers* very unapt to be *moved*, yet 'tis hard to imagine how even these can be wrought up to a resolution, or that resolution be supported and continued without their being affected so thoroughly, as to feel either a *real* passion, or something very nearly *approaching* one. 'Tis an excellent frame of spirit, when the soul is easily elevated and transported into *holy passion*: and I find that all those *virtues*, or rather *acts of virtue*, which are described to the life, and which are by all judged most perfect and lovely, have most of *passion* in them. How *warm* and *passionate* was the *love* of *David* for his *God*! what flame, what
vehemence

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vehemence of desire was he moved by, when he cries out, *Pfal. xlii. 1, 2. As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.* What awful concussions and agitations of spirit did he feel, when he thus describes his fear! *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments, Psal. cxix. 120.* What afflictions of soul, what tenderness of heart do we meet with in the repentance of St. Peter, when he went forth and wept bitterly! of Mary Magdalen, or whoever that woman in *Luke vii.* was, when she washed the feet of our Saviour with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head! and of the royal Psalmist, when he watered his couch with his tears! *Pfal. vi. 6.* Nor were the pleasures of assurance less sensible and vehement than the sorrows of repentance, when the first Christians rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and hopes full of glory. Shall I here add that holy indignation against sin, that vehement desire of making some reparation for it, which is the effect of godly sorrow, that zeal and fervency of spirit in the service of God, which is the highest character of Perfection it self? Shall I call these passions? I must not; for tho' they have the heat and agitation of passion, they have in them the firmness and steadiness of an habit. And I wish

wish with all my heart, that all those other excellent *affections* of soul, which I before named, could be rendered *natural* and *habitual*. The *nearer* we come to *this*, undoubtedly the *perfecter*. I doubt mortality is incapable of any such height: but the more *frequent* as well as the more *vehement* and *fervent* such *affections* are, the *better* certainly; for great is the force and virtue of *holy passion*; the flame of *love* refines our nature, and purifies it from all its dross; the tears of a *godly sorrow* extinguish all our carnal and worldly lusts; and the agitations of *fear* preserve the chastity and purity of the soul. 'Tis plain then, that our religion ought to be animated by *holy passions*; that the more frequent and natural these grow, the more *perfect* we are; that being the most excellent frame of spirit, when we are most apt to be sensibly and thoroughly *affected* by divine truths. By what *means* we may attain to this, is *now* briefly to be considered. 'Tis certain, that great and important, wonderful and glorious *truths*, will not fail to affect us, and that thoroughly, unless lust or infidelity have rendered us stupid and impenetrable. And that *gospel-truths* are *such*, is no doubt at all; let the conviction be full, the representation lively, and the *truth* will do its work. 'Tis for want of such circumstances and such sensible notions;

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notions of an object as may strike the imagination; for want of close and particular applications, when *divine truths* do not move us. This now does not only call us to the frequent *meditation* of the most *affecting* subjects, the majesty and omnipresence of God; the suffering of Christ, death and judgment, heaven and hell; but it shews also, how to model and form our *meditations*, that they prove not cold and fluggish. Let the object of our thoughts be described by the most *sensible* images or resemblances; let it be clad with the most *natural* circumstances; let it be made as *particular* as it can, by fixing its eye *upon* us, and pointing its motion *towards* us; but above all, and in the first place, let the *proof* of it be clear and strong. *Prayer* is an exercise very apt to move the *passion*: the mind having disengaged itself from all earthly and bodily affections, is prepared for the impression of *truth* and the *Spirit of God*; it draws nearer into the presence of God, and the sense of this sheds an awful reverence upon it; it has a clearer, calmer, and more serious *view* of divine things, than when it is obscured and disturbed by worldly objects. In a word, *meditation* is in *this* exercise rendered more *solemn* and more *particular*; and when the holy fire is kindled in the soul, it dilates and diffuses it self
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more and more, till the strength of desire, the vehemence of holy love transcending the weakness of this mortal nature, we *faint* under the *passions* that we cannot bear. The *Lord's Supper* is an holy rite, wonderfully adapted to raise excellent *passions*: Here Christ is, as it were, *set forth crucified amongst us*; we see his *body* broken, and his *blood* poured forth; *here* with a devout joy we receive and embrace him by faith and love in those *symbols* of his body and blood, and *pledges* of his love. The *soul* must be very *ill prepared*, it must have very imperfect notions of sin and damnation, the cross of Christ, grace and salvation, which is not sensible of a *crowd* of *holy passions* springing up in it at this *sacrament*. *Hymns* and *Psalms* have, 'by I know not what natural *magick*, a peculiar force and operation upon a pious mind. *Divine Poetry* has a noble elevation of thoughts; it does not devise and counterfeit *passions*, but only *vents* those which it *feels*; and these are pure and lovely, kindled from above. Therefore are all its characters natural, its description lively, its language moving and powerful; and all is so directly suited to a *devout* mind, that it presently enters, moves, and actuates it, inspires and informs it with the very *passions* it describes. And though all good men are not *equally* moved in this duty,

duty, yet all, I believe, are *more* or *less* moved. It was very much the business of the *prophets*, and all of *prophetic education*; our *Lord* and his *disciples* practised it frequently; it was ever a great part of *religious joy*, and one of the greatest pleasures of pious *retirement*: and I wish from my heart the esteem of it were revived in our days; I persuade myself it would add much to the *warmth* and *pleasure* of devotion; it would contribute to introduce *religion* into our *families*; and for ought I know, into our very *recreations* and *friendships*. And this minds me, that as I have under every *foregoing Head* taken notice of the advantages of *conversation*, so I should not forget it *here*. This has a lively influence upon our minds, and always kindles in the soul a gentle heat. And did we but accustom ourselves to *entertain* one another with discourse about another world; did we mingle the *praises of God* with the feasts and joys of life; did we retire to our *country-houses*, to contemplate the variety and riches of divine wisdom and bounty in those *natural scenes of pleasure* which the *country* affords, and did we now and then invite our *friends* to join with us in offering up *Hallelujah's* to God on this account, what brightness and serenity, what calm and pleasure would this diffuse through all our souls, through
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all our days ! To this that I have said touching the exciting *holy passions*, I will only add one *observation*, formed upon those words of the *apostle*, James v. 13. *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing Psalms* : That religion must be accommodated to *nature*, and that devout *passions* will soon shoot up, when they are engrafted upon a *natural* stock. With which I will join this *other*, that since we are most affected by such truths as are most particular, circumstantiated, and sensible, and therefore imprint themselves more easily and deeply on our imagination ; for this reason I should recommend the *reading* the *lives* of *saints* and *excellent persons*, were they not generally writ so, that we have reason to desire somewhat more of the spirit of *piety* in the *learned*, and more of *judgment* in the *pious*, who have employed their pens on this argument.

§ 4. The immediate *ends* of *discipline* are the *subduing the pride of the heart*, and the *reducing the appetites of the body*. By *discipline*, I here understand whatever *voluntary rigours* we impose upon our *selves*, or whatever *voluntary restraints* we lay upon our allowed *enjoyments*. And when I say, that the *humiliation* of the *heart*, and *subjection* of the *body* are the immediate ends
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of *both*, I do not exclude any *other* which may be *involved* in these, or *result* from them. Nor, of what *importance* these two things are, I need not shew. For since all sin is distinguished in scripture into the filthiness of the *spirit* and the *flesh*, it is plain, that the *pride* of the *heart*, and the *lust* of the *body*, are the *two* great causes of all immorality and uncleanness. And therefore these are the *two* great *ends* which the wise and good have ever had in their *eye*, in all their acts of *self-denial* and *mortification*. This is sufficiently attested by the example of *David*, Psal. cxxxi. *Lord, I am not high-minded, I have no proud looks. I do not exercise myself in great matters, which are too high for me: But I refrain my soul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother; yea, my soul is even as a weaned child.* And from that other of *St. Paul*, 1 Cor. ix. 25, 26, 27. *And every one that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things: Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.* Whoever thus mortifies the *pride* of the *heart*, whoever thus brings under the *body*, will soon find him-
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elf truly set free, and master of himself and fortune: he will be able to *run the way of God's commandments*, and to advance on swiftly towards *Perfection*, and the pleasure and happiness that attends it.

And to *attain* these blessed ends, I do not think that we need ensnare our souls in the perpetual bonds of *monastick vows*; I do not think that we are to expose our selves by any *ridiculous* or *fantastick* observances: there is, I say, no *need* of this; for we may, as oft as we shall see fit, retrench our pleasures, abate of the shew and figure of life; we may renounce our own wills to comply with theirs who cannot so well pretend either to authority or discretion: and if these things cannot be done in some circumstances, without becoming *fools for Christ*; that is, without that tameness, that condescension, that diminution of our selves, which will never comport with the humours and the fashions of the world; here is still the more room for *mortification*, and for a nearer and more eminent imitation of the blessed *Jesus*: provided still we decline all affectation of singularity; and when we practise any extraordinary instance of *self-denial*, we be ever able to justify it to religious and judicious persons, by the proposal of some excellent end. *Fasting* indeed is plainly described in *scripture*; and tho' the *obligation*

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to it, with respect to its frequency and measure, be not the same on *all*, yet *all* should some time or other practise it, as far as the rules of *Christian prudence* will permit. And I have often thought, that *fasting* should generally consist, rather in abstinence from *pleasing meats*, than from *all*; not the food which *nourishes* our strength, but that which *gratifies* the palate, ministering most directly to wantonness and luxury.

For the better regulating of voluntary discipline, I propose, by way of advice, three things. 1. I do not think it best to bring our selves under any perpetual and unalterable ties in any instance of self-denial: there is a virtue in *enjoying* the world, as well as in *renouncing* it; and 'tis as great an excellence of religion to know how to *abound*, as how to *suffer want*. Nay, what is more, all voluntary austerities are in order to give us a power and dominion over our selves in the general course of a prosperous life. And lastly, I very much doubt, when once a man has long and constantly *accustomed* himself to any rigour, whether it *continue* to have much of *mortification* in it, or whether it so effectually tend to promote our *spiritual liberty*, as it would if we did *return* to it but *now and then*, as we saw occasion. 2. We must not multiply *unnecessary* severities; and

and that no man may think more needful than really are, I observe here, that as there are very *few* who have not in their *nature* very considerable *infirmities*, so are there *as few* who have not in their *fortune* very considerable *inconveniencies*: and if they would apply themselves to the *mastering* of both these as they ought, they would stand in *less need* of the *discipline* of arbitrary austerities. There are many things too *trifling* to be taken notice of; which yet do prove sufficient to disturb the quiet of most, and betray them to many passions and indecencies: nay, the weaknesses of good men are sometimes fed by temptations of very little moment. Now, to *surmount* these temptations, and to frame and accommodate the mind to bear the little shocks and jostles which we daily meet with, without any discomposure or displeasure, is a matter of great *use* to the tranquillity of life, and the maturity of virtue. To be able to *bear* the pride of one, and the stupidity of another; one while to encounter rudeness, another while neglect, without being *moved* by either; to *submit* to noise, disorder, and the distraction of many little affairs, when one is naturally a lover of quietness and order, or when the mind is intent upon things of importance; in a word, to *digest* the perpetual disappointments which we meet

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with, both in business and pleasure, and in all the little projects, which not the elegant and ingenious only, but people of all stations and all capacities pursue; to *suffer* all the humours and follies, the errors, artifices, indecencies, and faults of those we have to do with, with that temper we ought, that is, with a *calmness* which proceeds, not from an unconcernment for the good of others, but a just dominion over our own spirits: *this* is a great *height*; and to train our selves up to it daily with much patience, vigilance and application of mind, is the *best discipline*: though I do not mean hereby to exclude all *voluntary impositions*; for, in order to *master* the evils which we cannot avoid, it may be of good use now and then to form the mind by *voluntary trials* and difficulties of our own chusing.

3. Lastly, We must ever have a care not to lose the *substance* for the *shadow*; not to rest in the *means*, and neglect the *end*; being much taken up in *discipline*, without producing any *fruit* of it. For this is taking much pains to little purpose; travelling much without making any progress. But much more must we take care, in the *next* place, that the *discipline* we put our selves upon, do not produce any *ill fruit*. To which end, we must carefully observe *three* things. 1. That we keep to that *moderation* which spiritual *prudence* requires; neither

neither exposing nor entangling our selves, nor discouraging others by *excesses* and *extravagancies*. 2. That our *self-denial* never betrays us into *pride* and *uncharitableness*; for if it tempts us to over-rate our selves and to despise others, this is a flat *contradiction* to one of the main ends of Christian discipline, which is the *humiliation* of the *heart*. 3. That we ever preserve, nay, increase the *sweetness* and *gentleness* of our minds; for whatever makes us sour and morose, or peevish and unfociable, makes us certainly so much worse; and, instead of begetting in us nearer resemblances of the *Divine Nature*, gives us a very strong tincture of a *devilish* one. *Athanasius* therefore, in the life of *Anthony the hermite*, observes, amongst others his great virtues, that after thirty years spent in a strange kind of retired and solitary life, καὶ γὰρ ἔκως ὄρει τραφεὶς καὶ κεῖ γέρον γενόμενος, ἀγριον εἶκε τὸ ἦθος, ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρίεις ἦν, καὶ πολιτικός. He did not appear to his friends, with a sullen or savage, but with an obliging fociable *air*: and there is indeed but little reason, why the *look* should be louring and contracted, when the *heart* is filled with joy and charity, goodness and pleasure. A serene open *countenance*, and a chearful grave *deportment*, does best suit the tranquillity, purity, and dignity of a Christian mind.

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§ 5. *Lastly, Some kinds of life are better suited and accommodated to the great ends of religion and virtue than others.* I shall not here enter into an examination of the advantages or disadvantages there are in the *several kinds of life* with reference to religion. The settling *this* and several *other* things relating to it, was one main design of my *last book*. All therefore that I have *here* to do, is but to make one plain *inference* from all that has been advanced in *this chapter*. If *Perfection* and *happiness* cannot be obtained without a frequent and serious *application* of our selves to the *means* here insisted on; then 'tis plain that we ought to cast our *lives*, if we can, into such a *method*, that we may be in a *capacity* to do this. To speak more particularly and closely; since *meditation*, *prayer*, and *holy conversation* are so necessary to *quicken* the *conscience*, *excite* our *passions*, and *fortify* our *resolutions*; it is evident that it is as necessary so to model and form our lives, that we may have time enough to bestow on these. For they, whose minds and time are taken up by the *world*, have very little leisure for things of *this* nature, and are very little disposed to them, and as ill qualified for them. As to *conversation*, as the world goes now, 'tis not to be expected that it should have in it any relish of piety, unless between such as have entered
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into a close and strict *friendship*. But the *worldly man* is a stranger to true *friendship*; 'tis too sacred, too delicate a thing, for a mind devoted to the *world*, to be capable of. A regard to interest, to some outward forms and decencies; the gratification of some natural inclination, the necessity of some kind of diversion and enjoyment, may invite him to more *familiarity* with some, than others. But 'tis hard to believe, that there should be any thing in such *combinations*, of *that* which is the very life and soul of *friendship*, a sincere and undefigning passion, increased by mutual confidencies and obligations, and supported and strengthened by virtue and honour. As to *prayer*, *men of business* do, I doubt, oftner *read* or *say prayers*, than *pray*; for 'tis very hard to imagine, that a soul that grovels perpetually here upon earth, that is incessantly sollicitous about the things of this world, and that enters abruptly upon this duty without any *preparation*, should immediately take fire, be filled with heavenly vigour, and be transported with earnest and impatient desire of grace and glory. Ah! how hard is it for him, who hungers and thirsts perpetually after the profits of *this world*, to *hunger and thirst after righteousness* too! if such minds as *these* retain the belief of a providence, some awe of God, and some degree of gratitude towards

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him, 'tis as *much* as may reasonably be expected from them: and may *this* avail them as far as it *can*! Lastly, as to *meditation*, how can it be imagined, that such, whose minds and bodies are fatigued and harrassed by *worldly business*, should be much inclined to it, or well prepared for it? How should these men form any notion of a perfect and exalted virtue, of devout and heavenly passion? What conceptions can they have of the power and joy of the Holy Ghost, of poverty of spirit, or purity of heart, or the diffusion of the love of God in our souls? What ideas can they entertain of an heaven, or of angelical pleasure and beatitude? In a word, the *religion* of men intent upon *this world*, when they pretend to any, which too often they do not, consists especially in *two* things, in *abstaining* from *wickedness*, and *doing the works* of their *civil calling*; and how far they may be sensible of *higher* obligations, I determine not. Good God! what a *mercy* it is to these poor creatures, that 'tis the fashion of their country, as well as a precept of our religion, to dedicate *one* day in *seven* to the service of God and their souls! but have I not often taught, that *purity of intention* converts the *works* of a *secular calling* into the *works* of God? I have so; 'tis universally taught; 'tis the doctrine of the gospel; and therefore I shall never *retract*
it:

it: but ah! how hard a thing is it for a worldly man to maintain this purity of intention! how hard a thing is it for a mind, eaten up by the love and cares of *this world*, to do all to the honour of God! tho' therefore I cannot retract this doctrine, yet the longer I live, the more reason do I see for qualifying and guarding it with this caution: let no man that desires to be saved, much less that desires to be perfect, take sanctuary in *purity of intention*, while he suffers the works of his *secular calling* to ingross his soul, and entirely usurp his time. If *secular works* exclude and thrust out of doors such as are properly *religious*, it will not be easy to conceive, how the power of godliness should be maintained, how any wise thoughts, or heavenly desires should be preserved in such men; or how, finally, those who have utterly given up themselves to the *wisdom of this world*, should retain any true value for those maxims of the gospel, wherein consists the *true wisdom that is from above*. All that I have said against a life of *business*, may, with equal or greater force, be urged against a life of *pleasure*, I mean *that* which they call *innocent pleasure*: the *one* and the *other* entangle and ensnare the mind; the *one* and the *other* leave in it a peculiar relish, which continues long after the hurry both of pleasure and business

is over. But all this while, I wou'd not have what I have *said* to be *extended* further than I design it, to raise *scruples* in *virtuous* and *good* men, instead of *reforming* the too eager applications of the *earthly* to the things of this world.

C H A P. VIII.

Of the motives to Perfection. Several motives summ'd up in short; and that great one, of having the other life in our view, insisted upon.

INnumerable are the *motives* to *Perfection*, which offer themselves to any one that reflects seriously on this argument. An hearty endeavour after *Perfection* is the best proof of *sincerity*; the nearest approach to *Perfection* is the nearest approach to the utmost *security* this life is capable of. Great is the beauty and loveliness of an *exalted* virtue, great the honour and authority of it; and a very happy influence it has even upon our temporal affairs: and to this may be added, the peace and tranquillity of a wise mind, sanctified affections, and a regular life. Besides, the love of *God* is boundless, and the love of *Jesus* is so too; and therefore demand not a lazy, feeble, or unsteady

unsteady virtue, but a strong and vigorous one, a warm and active: such as a true *faith*, great *hopes*, and a passionate *love* do naturally excite us to. To all this I might add, that the *Spirit* of God is always pressing on and advancing, desirous to communicate *himself* to us more and more plentifully, if we be not backward or negligent our selves. But these, and many other *inforcements* to the duty of *Perfection*, should I enlarge on them, would swell this *treatise* to an intolerable bulk. Nor indeed is it necessary: for the 4th *chapter*, where I treat of the *Fruit of Perfection*, does contain such *motives* to it, as are sufficient to excite, in any one that reads them, a most vehement desire and thirst after it. Here therefore all that I think fit to do, is, to put my *reader* in mind of *another life*: in the glories and pleasures of which I need not prove that the *perfect* man will have the greatest share. This is a *motive* that must never be out of the thoughts of the man that will be *perfect*; and that for *three* reasons, which I will but just mention.

1. Without *another life*, we can never form any true notion of a *perfect* virtue. *Sociable* and *civil* virtues may be supported by *temporal motives*, and framed and modelled by *worldly conveniencies*; but a *divine*
virtue

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virtue must be built upon a *divine* life, upon a heavenly kingdom. The reason of this assertion is plain, the *means* must always bear proportion to the *end*; where therefore the end is an imperfect temporal good, there needs no more than imperfect *unfinished* virtue to attain it; but where the end is heavenly and immortal, the virtue ought to be *so* too. Were there no *other* life, the standard and measure of the good or evil to be found in actions would be their subserviency to the temporal good or evil of *this* world; and by a necessary consequence, it would be impossible to prove any higher degrees of poverty of spirit, purity of heart, charity, and the like, to be truly *virtue*, than what we could prove truly *necessary* to procure the good, or guard us against the evil of *this* life: and if so, 'tis easy to conclude what *mean* and *beggarly* kind of virtues would be produced from this ground.

2. Without *another life*, all other *motives* to *Perfection* will be insufficient. For though, generally speaking, such is the contrivance of human nature, that neither the common good of civil *society*, nor the more particular good of *private* men, can be provided for, or secured, without the practice of sociable and political *virtues*;
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yet 'tis certain, that not only in many extraordinary cases there would be no reward at all for *virtue*, if there were not one reserved for it in *another world*; but also in most cases, if there were not a *future* pleasure, that did infinitely outweigh the enjoyments of *this* life, men would see no obligation to *Perfection*. For what should raise them above the love of *this* world, if there were no *other*? or above the love of the body, if when they died they should be no more for ever? and certainly our minds would never be able to soar very high, nor should we ever arrive at any excellence or *Perfection* in any action, if we were always under the influence of the love of the *world* and the *body*.

3. A *life to come* is alone a sufficient motive to *Perfection*. Who will refuse to endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, who firmly believes that *he* is now a spectator, and will very suddenly come to be a judge and rewarder of his sufferings? how natural is it to run with patience the race that is set before us, to him who has an eternal joy, an eternal crown always in his eye? and if a *life to come* can make a man rejoice even in suffering evil, how much more in doing good? If it enable him to conquer in the day of the church's trial and affliction, how much more

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more will it enable him to *abound* in all *virtues* in the day of its peace and prosperity? how freely will a man give to the distressed *members of Christ*, who believes that he sees *Christ* himself standing by, and receiving it as it were by their hands, and placing it to his own account, to be repaid a thousand-fold in *the great day of the Lord*? how easily will a man allay the storms of passion, and cast away the weapon of revenge and anger, with indignation against himself, if his faith do but present him often with a view of that *Canaan*, which the *meek in heart shall inherit* for ever? how importunately will a man pray for the pardon of sin, whose sense, whose soul, whose imagination is struck with a dread of being for ever divided from God, and excluded from the joys and virtues of the blessed? how fervently will a man pray for the Spirit of God, - for the increase of grace, whose thoughts are daily swallowed up with the contemplation of an eternity; and whose mind is as fully possessed of the certainty and the glory of *another world*, as of the emptiness and vanity of *this*? how natural, finally, will it be to be poor in spirit, and to delight in all the offices of an unfeigned humility, to that man who has the image of *Jesus washing the feet of his disciples*, and a
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little after *ascending* up into *heaven* always before him?

But I know it will be here *objected*, we *discern* not this efficacy you attribute to this *motive*. The doctrine of *another life* is the great *article* of the *Christian faith*, and it is every-where preached throughout *Christendom*; and yet men generally seem to have as much fondness for *this world*, as they could were there no *other*: they practise no virtues but such as are profitable and fashionable, or none any further than they are so. To this I *answer*; tho' *most* act thus, there are *many*, I hope *very many*, who do otherwise; and, that *all* in general do *not*, proceeds from want, either of due *consideration* or firm *belief* of this doctrine of *another life*. *First*, From not *considering* it as we should. 'Tis the greatest disadvantage of the objects of *faith*, compared with those of *sense*, that they are distant and invisible. *He* therefore that will be *perfect*, that will derive any strength and *virtue* from this *motive*, must supply this distance by devout and daily *contemplation*; he must fetch the remote objects of *faith* home to him; he must render them, as it were, present; he must see and feel them by the strength of *faith*, and the force of *meditation*; which if he do, then will his *faith* certainly prove a vital and victorious *principle*; then will

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no pleasure in this world be able to combat the assured hopes of an *heaven*, nor any worldly evil or difficulty sustained for virtue, be able to confront the terrors of an *hell*. A *second* reason why this *motive* doth not operate as it should, is want of *faith*. We doubt, we waver, we stagger, we take things upon trust; assenting very slightly and superficially to the doctrine of *another life*, and looking upon good works rather as not injurious to this world, than serviceable to a *better*: and then 'tis no more wonder that the *unbelieving Christian* does not enter into Perfection and rest, than that the *unbelieving Jew* did not: 'tis no more wonder, if the word of life do not profit the *Christian* when *not believed* by him, than if it do not profit a *pagan*, who has *never heard* of it. And what is here said of *infidelity*, is in its measure and proportion true when applied to a *weak* and *imperfect faith*. He therefore that will be *perfect* must daily pray, *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief*. He must daily *consider* the grounds on which the faith and hope of a Christian stand; the express declarations of the divine will concerning the future immortality and glory of the children of God; the demonstration of this contained in the resurrection of *Jesus* from the dead, and his ascension, and session at the right hand

hand of God: and to this he may add, the love of God, the merits of Jesus, and the state and fortune of virtue in this world. From all which one may be able to infer the undoubted *certainty* of *another world*. The *sum* of all amounts to *this*: whoever will be *perfect*, must daily, I should, I think, have said almost hourly, ponder the *blessedness*, that attends *Perfection* in *another life*; he must ponder it *seriously*, that he may be thoroughly persuaded of it: he must ponder it *often*, that the notions of it may be fresh and lively in his soul.

S E C T. II.

Of the several parts of Perfection, illumination, liberty, and zeal.

WHAT the several *parts* of religious *Perfection* are, will be easily discerned by a very slight reflection, either on the *nature* of *man*, or the general *notion* of *Perfection* already laid down. If we consider *man*, whose *Perfection* I am treating of; as it is plain that he is made up of *soul* and *body*, so 'tis as plain that moral *Perfection* relates to the *soul*, as the chief subject of it, and to the *body* no otherwise than as the *instrument* of that righteousness which is planted in the *soul*. Now in the *soul* of man we find these three things;

Illumination what,

understanding, will, and affections: in the improvement and accomplishment of which, human *Perfection* must consequently consist. And if we enquire wherein this improvement or accomplishment lies, 'tis a truth so obvious, that it will not need any proof, that *illumination* is the *Perfection* of the *understanding, liberty* of the *will, and zeal* of the *affections*. If, in the next place, we reflect upon the description I have before given of *Perfection*, nothing is more evident, than that to constitute a firm *habit* of righteousness, three things are necessary: 1. The *knowledge* of our *duty*, and our obligations to it. 2. The *subduing* our *lusts* and *passions*, that we may be enabled to perform it. Lastly, Not only a free, but warm and vigorous *prosecution* of it. In the *first* of these consists *illumination*; in the *second, liberty*; and in the *third, zeal*. Upon the whole then 'tis evident, both from the *nature* of *Perfection* and of *man*, that I am now to treat in order of these three things, *illumination, liberty, and zeal*, as so many essential *parts* of religious *Perfection*. Nor must I stop here, but must to those three unavoidably add *humility*: for whether we consider the sins of the *perfect* man's past life, or the slips and defects of his best state; or whether we consider man's continual dependance upon God in all respects, but especially in reference to
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the beginning, progress, and consummation of his *Perfection*; or whether lastly, we consider the scantiness and deficiency, not only of this or that man's *Perfection* in particular, but of *human Perfection* in general, we cannot but conclude, that nothing can become mortal man (even tho' all the excellence human nature is capable of were united in one) better than *humility*. *Humility* therefore must begin and compleat religious *Perfection*; it must accompany the Christian in every stage of his spiritual progress; it must crown all his actions, and add that beauty and excellence, that grace and lustre to all his other virtues, that is wholly necessary to render them acceptable to God.

The general *notion* of *Perfection* being thus resolved into its *parts*, 'tis plain I am now to discourse of *each* of these. And what I have to say of *each* ought, according to the strict rules of *method*, to be comprized within the *same* chapter: but to consult the *ease* and *benefit* of my *reader*, I shall slight this nicety, and distribute my thoughts into as *many chapters* as I shall judge most convenient for the ease and support of the *memory*.

C H A P. I.

Of illumination. I. *The distinguishing characters of illuminating truths.* 1. *They purify us.* 2. *They nourish and strengthen us.* 3. *They delight us.* 4. *They procure us a glorious reward.* II. *The nature of illuminating knowledge.* 1. *It must be deeply rooted.* 2. *It must be distinct and clear.* 3. *It must be thoroughly concocted.*

§. 1. **W**HAT it is. It happens in the point of *illumination*, as it does in that of *happiness*: all men, at first hearing, form in general an agreeable and pleasing *notion* of it; all men admire and love it; but few have any distinct and true understanding of those things which 'tis made up of. All men conceive *illumination* to be a state of *light* and *knowledge*, as they do *happiness* to be a state of *pleasure*: but are as little agreed in particular, wherein consist the light or knowledge which makes the *one*, as wherein consists the pleasure that makes the *other*. The lust and passion of some, the superstition and prejudice of others; curiosity and confidence, weakness and design, enthusiasm and fancy, embroil and perplex all things. However, every honest man hath a *clue*, by which he may escape out of this *labyrinth*. The *scripture* shines with bright and gracious beams through-

throughout all this darkness: and, if we will attend to it, we cannot wander into any dangerous mistake. This describes the state of *illumination* very plainly to us, calling it sometimes *wisdom*, sometimes *knowledge* and *understanding*; sometimes *faith*, sometimes the *spirit of wisdom* and *revelation*. Next, it acquaints us with the *design* and *end* of it; namely, to *convert us from the power of Satan to the service of the living God*, to purify and sanctify us, to enable us to *approve the holy, acceptable and perfect will of God*, and, in one word, *to make us wise unto salvation*. Nay, it proceeds further, and points out to us particularly the *truths*, in the knowledge of which *illumination* consists. Thus the *Old Testament* reckons *wisdom* to be, sometimes the *knowledge of God*, sometimes the *knowledge of his law*, sometimes the *understanding of proverbs and parables*; these containing as it were the soul of moral instruction, and wrapping up in a few and lively words, whatever the experience of the aged, or the observation of men of the most piercing judgment, thought best deserved to be transmitted to posterity. But all this amounts to the same thing, and all the descriptions of *wisdom* in the *Old Testament* may be summed up into that one, *Job xxviii. 28. Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart*

Illumination what,

from evil is understanding. The New Testament tells us, this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent: that Christ is the way, the truth and the life; that in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge: that true understanding consists in knowing the will of God; which will is our sanctification. And when St. Paul understands by wisdom, as sometimes he does, the penetrating into the spirit and mystery, the depths and recesses of the Old Testament, and discovering the great design of man's redemption, carried on through all the ages of the world, and through a wise variety of dispensations, this alters not the notion of illumination: for this does not point out to us any new or different truths; but only regards one peculiar way of explaining, or establishing and confirming the great Christian doctrine. To conclude; we may easily learn what sort of knowledge the Spirit of God recommends to us above all other, from those petitions which St. Paul puts up for the Ephesians and Colossians. For the former he prays thus, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, &c. Eph. i. 17, 18, 19, 20. For the latter thus: that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, Col. i. 9, 10. If from these and the like texts we form a general idea of illumination, it will be this: illumination is a state of knowledge, consisting in the abolishing or relinquishing those errors, which deprave and pervert our affections, and undermine and supplant the empire and authority of reason; and in entertaining and embracing those truths, which purify the one, and restore and establish the other: and all this in order to entitle us to the favour of God, and a blessed eternity. I might content myself with this general delineation of illumination: but because this is a subject from which we cannot but reap so much pleasure and advantage, as will abundantly requite whatever labour can be bestowed upon it; I will proceed to a fuller discovery of it, if I can.

Illumination then being a *state of knowledge*, and the *object* of this *knowledge* being *truth*, 'tis plain, that in order to form a just and distinct *notion* of *illumination*, it will be necessary to enquire into *two* things: *First*, What kind of *truths*, and *next*, what kind of *knowledge* of these *truths*, constitutes *illumination*.

1. Of the *truths* which *illuminate*: we have many noble characters in the *Old Testament* and the *New*, which distinguish *these* from *truths* of an *inferior* nature: all which are, I think, comprized by *Solomon* in very few words; *Prov.* xxiv. 13, 14. *My son*, saith he, *eat thou honey*, because it is good; and the *honey-comb*, which is sweet to thy taste; so shall the *knowledge of wisdom* be unto thy *soul* when thou hast found it; then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off. *Solomon* here, as is very usual with *inspired writers*, does compare spiritual with corporeal things, or illustrates the one by the other. He tells us, that what *honey* is to the *body*, that *wisdom* is to the *soul*: and recommending the former from two incomparable properties, its ministering to *health* and *pleasure*, he recommends the latter from advantages, which bear indeed some resemblance; but are as much superior to these, as the *soul* is to the *body*. *My son*, eat thou *honey*, because it is good; i. e. because

cause it both *cleanses* and *purges* all noxious humours, and *nourishes* and *strengthens* the body: and *the honey-comb*, because it is *sweet to the taste*; which is the *second excellence* of this sort of *food*, namely, its *pleasantness*; and properly urged to invite the eater: then, proceeding to compleat the comparison, he adds, *so shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul, when thou hast found it*; i. e. it shall minister to the *purification, strength, and delight* of thy soul. But this is not all: though the parallel can be extended no further between *honey* and *wisdom*; yet he does not think fit for that reason to omit one of the greatest *excellencies* of *wisdom*: and therefore he adds, *then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off*. *Wisdom* does not only *perfect* and *entertain* our minds; but also it gives us a title to those *rewards*, for the enjoyment of which it prepares and fits us. Here then we have from *Solomon* the true *properties* of true *wisdom*: by these we may pronounce safely of all the different kinds of *knowledge*; distinguishing the *precious* from the *vile*, and fixing the true *estimate* of each. If there be any sort of *truths*, whose *knowledge* does not promote, but *obstruct* these great ends, *these* we are to despise and flight, to *shun* and *hate*. But if there be any *knowledge*, that does *neither* oppose nor hinder, *nor* yet contribute to these

these ends, unless accidentally, and very remotely; for *this* we may have *some*, but *no* very great regard or esteem. But whatever *knowledge* that be which is attended by these *fruits*, *this* is that which we are to *search for as for hidden treasure*: this is that which, when we have found it, we are to value above *the gold of Ophir, the topaz, and the carbuncle, and all precious stones*. The distinguishing *characters* then of *illuminating truths* are *four*.

1. They *purify* us.
2. They *nourish* and *strengthen* us.
3. They *entertain* and *delight* us.
4. They procure us a *glorious reward*.

1. They *purify* us. This is a property which the *royal Psalmist* frequently attributes to the *word of God*, that it is *pure* and *clean*, Psal. cxix. and elsewhere. And the *New Testament* frequently ascribes to *faith* and *hope*, that they *purify* the heart, 1 *John* iii. 3. *Acts* xv. And this sure is the first thing necessary to the *perfecting* the soul of man. 'Tis with the *soul*, as with the *body*; it must be first *cleansed* from hurtful humours, before it can be *fed* and *nourished*; *purged* of its errors and vices, ere it can be *enriched* with divine virtues, and *attain* that liberty and strength, wherein consists the true greatness and excellence of the

the mind of man. The *first step* towards the *Perfection* of *virtue*, is the *relinquishing* our *vice*; for *we must cease to do evil, ere we can learn to do good*: and the *first step* towards the *Perfection* of *wisdom*, is the *dispelling* those *errors*, which deceive and mislead the mind, and pervert life. *What* these were in the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and what they are at *this day* in *us*, it is easy enough to discern. The *mind* of man, as far as I can observe, is naturally *prone* to *Religious* worship. Not only the consideration of the wonderful mechanism and contrivance of the *world*, and of *events*, strange, sudden, and unaccountable; but also the conscience of his own *impotence* and *obnoxiousness*, inclining him to the belief, and prompting him to seek the patronage of an *invisible all-sufficient* power. In the next place, the mind of *man* is ever prone to propose to him some great, some sovereign *good*; in which he may acquiesce, and by which he may secure himself as well as he can, against the indigence and poverty of his *nature*, and the changes and revolutions, the disasters and the miseries, to which this *mortal state* is exposed. These are two things of that importance, that no man can err in them, but the error must prove fatal to his repose. He that sets up to himself for his ultimate end, an *empty*, and *uncertain* good, instead of a *solid* and
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eternal one, must needs be as miserably deluded and disappointed, as *he* must, who sets up to himself a *false God* instead of the true; or goes about to endear and recommend himself to the *true*, by a *false* and *superstitious* worship. Now in these points the *Jew* and *Gentile* were *miserably*, though not *equally*, mistaken. The *Gentiles* worshipped *devils*, instead of *God*: their *mysteries* were either sensual or cruel; their *religion* did oftner encourage sin than virtue. And as to their sovereign *good*, their hearts were set upon *this world*, upon the pomp and pleasure, upon the ease and honour of it; and they had either none, or very dark and uncertain prospects beyond the *grave*: all beyond it was an unknown region, full of fables and idle phantoms. The *Jews*, though they enjoyed the *oracles of God*, and generally preserved the worship of one *true* and *living God*, yet were they not free from very deplorable errors relating to these points; they seemed to have turned the *true God* into an *Idol*, and to have entertained some *notions* of *him* very repugnant to *his nature*: they looked upon him as *the God of the Jews*, not of the *Gentiles*; as a *respector of persons*, as fond and *partial* to the nation; and as delighted with a religion, made up of numerous *rites* and *ceremonies*, and *external* observances. And this could not but have a very sad influence upon

upon their *religion*, as it really had; the *holiness* which is truly acceptable to God, being neglected and abolished; and *Sad-ducism* or *Pharisaism*, i. e. *sensuality* or *hypocrisy*, introduced in the room of it. And as to their ultimate *end* or supreme *good*, the *Sadducees* denied the *resurrection*, *angels*, and *spirits*; and therefore 'tis not to be expected they should entertain any design above the pleasure of the *body*. And tho' the *Pharisees* acknowledged *angels* and a *resurrection*, yet can we not discern that they had a real value for any thing besides the honour, power, and wealth of this *world*. And no wonder, since they could, upon their *principles*, satisfy themselves in a *religion* which had nothing of internal *purity* or solid *righteousness* in it. So that upon the whole, the *Jew* and *Gentile* were alike wicked: only the wickedness of the *Jews* had this *aggravation* in it above that of the *Gentiles*, that they enjoyed the *oracles of God*, and the favour of a peculiar *covenant*. This being the state of *darkness*, which lay upon the face of the *Jewish* and *Gentile* world, our *Lord*, who was to be a *light to lighten the Gentiles*, and the *glory of his people Israel*, advanced and established in the world that doctrine, which directly tends to dispel these errors, and rescue mankind from the misery that attends them.

For

For all that the *gospel* contains may be reduced to these *three* heads: *first*, the assertion of *one* only true *God*, with a bright and full *revelation* of his divine *Attributes* and *Perfection*. *Secondly*, an account of the *will* of *God*, or the *worship* he delights in, which is a *spiritual* one, together with *suitable means* and *motives*; in which last is contained a full *declaration* of *man's* supreme *happiness*. *Thirdly*, the *revelation* of *one Mediator* between *God* and *man*, the *man* *Christ* *Jesus*; through whom we have access with *boldness* to the *throne* of *grace*; through whom we have obtained from the *Father*, *grace*, and *pardon*, and *adoption*; and thro' whom, *lastly*, all our *oblations* and *performances* are *acceptable* to him. The *design* of this glorious manifestation was to *open mens eyes*, to *turn them from darkness* to *light*, and from the *power* of *Satan* to the *living* *God*; that they might obtain *remission* of *sins*, and an *inheritance* of *glory*. These then are the *truths* which *illuminated* the *Gentile* and *Jewish* world: and these are the *truths* which must *illuminate* us at *this* day. These dispel all *destructive errors* that lead us to *vice* or *misery*: these point out our *supreme felicity*, and the *direct way* to it: these open and enlarge the *eye* of the *soul*, enable it to *distinguish* and *judge* with an *unerring exactness* between *good* and *evil*,

between *substantial* and *superficial*, *temporal* and *eternal* good. And I wish from my soul, whatever *light* we pretend to at *this day*, we were well grounded and established in *these truths*. I doubt, notwithstanding our *belief* of *one God*, and *one Mediator*; and notwithstanding we are well enough assured, that *God*, who is a *spirit*, *must be worshipped in spirit and in truth*; and notwithstanding our pretending to believe a *life to come*; I say, I am afraid that notwithstanding these things, we do generally err in *two* main points; namely, in the *notion* we ought to have of *religion*, and the *value* we are to set upon the *world* and the *body*. For who, that reflects upon the pomp and *pride* of *life*, upon the ease, the softness and the luxury of it, upon the frothiness and the freedom, the vanity and impertinence, to say no worse, of *conversation*, will not conclude, that either we have renounced our *religion*, or form to ourselves too complaisant and indulgent a *notion* of it? for is *this* the imitation of *Jesus*? is this to walk as *he* walked in the world? can this be the deportment of men to whom the world and the body is crucified? can such a life as this flow from those divine fountains, *faith*, *love*, and *hope*? *who* again can reflect upon the passion we discover for *superiority* and *precedence*,

cedence, our thirst of power, or ravenous desire of wealth, and not conclude, that we have mistaken our main end, that we set a wrong value upon things; and that whatever we talk of an eternity, we look upon this present world as our portion, and most valuable good? for can such a tender concern for, such an eager pursuit after, temporal things, flow from, nay consist with, purity of heart, and poverty of spirit, the love of God, and a desire of heaven? Whoever then will be perfect or happy, must carefully avoid both these errors: he must never think that religion can subsist, without the strength and vigour of our affections: or, that the bent and vigour of our souls, can be pointed towards God, and yet the air of our deportment and conversation be earthly, sensual, and vain, conformed even to a pagan pride, and shew of life. Next, he must never cherish in himself the love of this world: he must never look upon himself other than a stranger and pilgrim in it: he must never be fond of the pleasure of it: he must never form vain designs and projects about it, nor look upon the best things in it, as ingredients of our happiness, but only as instruments of virtue, or short repasts and refreshments in our journey. And because all our mistakes about the nature

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ture and Perfection of religion; and the value of temporal things do generally arise from *ἑυπεριστάτῃ ἀμαρτία*, that peculiar sin to which our constitution betrays us; therefore the knowledge of our selves, an intimate acquaintance with all our natural propensions and infirmities, is no inconsiderable part of illumination. For we shall never address our selves heartily to the cure of a disease which we know nothing of, or to the rectifying any inclination, till we are thoroughly convinced that 'tis irregular and dangerous.

2. The second character of illuminating truths is, that they are such as feed and nourish, corroborate and improve the mind of man. Now the properties of bodily strength are such as these: it enables us to baffle and repel injuries, to bear toil and travel, to perform difficult works with speed and ease; and finally, it prolongs life to a much further date, than weak and crazy constitutions can arrive at. And of all these we find some resemblances in spiritual strength; but as much more perfect and excellent, as the spirit is above the body. These truths then are indeed illuminating, which enable us to vanquish temptations, to endure with constancy and patience the toils and hardships of our Christian warfare, to discharge the duties of our station with zeal and vigour; and

which, lastly, render us firm, steddy, and immortal. And these are the glorious effects which are attributed to the *truths of God*. Hence is the *gospel* called the *power of God unto salvation*, Rom. i. 16. And hence it is, that we read of the *armour of God*, Ephes. vi. 11. *The sword of the spirit, the shield of faith, the breast-plate of righteousness, &c.* to intimate to us the *strength* and *virtue of the word of God*, and that it brings with it *safety and success*. And hence it is that the *word of God* is said to *quicken and strengthen*; that *man* is said to *live, not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*; that *righteousness* is called *everlasting*; and that he that *doth the will of God* is affirmed to *abide for ever*: to teach us plainly, that there is nothing *steddy and unalterable, nothing durable, nothing eternal, but God, divine truths, and those that are formed and moulded by them*.

There are *truths* indeed which are merely *barren and unactive*, which amuse and suspend the mind, but never benefit it: but there are *others* which are, in the language of *Solomon*, like *health to the navel, and marrow to the bones*: wisdom and virtue, life and honour, the favour of God and man, attend them where'er they dwell. And these are the *truths* which *illuminate*: *truths* that are *active and fruitful*; that

make us wise and good, perfect and happy: such as we have a mighty interest in, such as have a strong influence upon us, such as give a new *day* to the understanding, and new strength and liberty to the will; such as raise and exalt our affections, and render the whole man more rational, more steady, more constant, more uniform. *These* are the *truths* which make men great and modest in prosperity, erect and courageous in adversity; always content with *this* world, yet always full of the hopes of a *better*: serene, calm, and well assured in the *present* state of their souls, and yet thirsting after *Perfection, maturity, and the absolute consummation* of righteousness in the *world to come*. Now the *truths* that effect all this, are all reducible to those which I have mentioned under the former head: for in those we find all that is *necessary to life and godliness, to virtue and glory*; in those we find all that is necessary to raise and support true *magnanimity*, to enlarge and free the mind, and to add strength and courage to it. For what can more certainly promote all this, than *immortality and glory*? what can be a surer foundation for the hope of both to rest on, than the favour of *God* himself? and what can more effectually reconcile and ingratiate us with *God*, than sincere universal *righteousness*, and the *mediation* of his dearly beloved *Son*?

3. The *third* character of *illuminating truths*, is, that they are *pleasant* and *agreeable* to the soul: Hence it is, that the *royal Psalmist* pronounces the *word of God sweeter than the honey and the honey-comb*: that he ascribes to it *delight* and *joy*; for he tells us, that *it rejoices the heart*, that *it enlightens the eyes*. And accordingly we find the true servants of God, not only continually blessing and praising God in the *temple*, but magnifying him by *Psalms* and *Hymns* in their *prisons*, and *rejoicing* in the midst of *tribulation*. But when I reckon *pleasure* and *delight* amongst the *fruits of Illumination*, I must add, that there is a vast difference between the *fits* and *flashes* of *mirth*, and the serenity of a *fixed* and *habitual delight*; between the *titillations* of *sense*, and the *solid joys* of the *mind*; and lastly, between the *pleasures* of *fancy*, and of *reason*. And when I say, *Illumination* consists in the *knowledge* of *pleasant* and *agreeable truths*, I mean it of *rational* pleasure, an *habitual* tranquillity of the *mind*; and then the matter is beyond question. Whatever *truths* do contribute to promote *this*, the study and contemplation of *them* must be our true *wisdom*. Joy, when 'tis *solid* and *rational*, does enlarge and exalt the *mind* of man; 'tis, as it were, *health to the navel*, and *marrow to the bones*; it renders us more thankful to God, more kind and courteous

to man. 'Tis an excellent *preparation* to invite more *plentiful* influxes of the *Spirit of God*. Hence did *Elijah* call for a *musical instrument* when he desired to *prophecy*: and we find the company of *prophets* rejoicing with *hymns, musick, and dances*, all *outward* testimonies of the *inward* transports and ravishments of their *minds*. And as I am persuaded that that which distinguishes a *godly* sorrow, from a *worldly* or *impious* one, *repentance* and *contrition*, from the agonies and perplexities of *despair*, is the *peace* and *tranquillity* which attends it; so am I persuaded, that *God* does press and invite us to *mourning* and *sorrow* for *sin*, for *this* reason, not excluding *others*, because it naturally leads on to *peace* and *joy*: a soft and tender *sorrow* dissipating the fears and distresses of *guilt*, like mild and fruitful *showers*, that do lay *storms*. In a word, there is no such powerful antidote against *sin*, nor spur to holy *industry*, as holy *pleasure*, pious *joy*, or spiritual *peace* and *tranquillity*. This is a partaking or anticipating the *powers of the world to come*; and the mightiest corroboration of every thing that is good in us. The *study* then of *such truths*, is true *wisdom*. And *Illumination* thus far will consist in quitting those *errors* which beget melancholy, superstition, desperation; and in *such truths*, as enlarge our view of the divine Perfection;

tions, and exhibit to us a nearer presence of his goodness and glory: *such*, again, as unfold the dignity of human nature, and the wise and gracious ends of our creation: *such*, lastly, as extend our prospect, and enlarge our hopes; support our frailties, and excite our vigour.

4. The *last property* of those *truths* in the knowledge of which *Illumination* consists, is, that they are such as procure us a *reward*. If we reflect upon those *three* heads under which I ranged those *truths*, which *illuminated* the *Gentiles* and *Jewish* world, we shall easily discern how well they fit this character: they fill the mind with *joy* and *peace*, and make it abound in *hope*; they purge the man from his natural corruption, and fortify the mind against such impressions, from outward good or evil in this world, as disquiet and torment the sinner; they procure him the protection of God's providence, and the assistance of his spirit in *this* life, and they invite him to hope for *glories* and pleasures in *another*, far above any thing that *the heart of man can conceive*. God is the God of *hope*; he has all *fulness* and *sufficiency* in himself: and therefore *blessed* must all they be, who have the Lord for their God. Jesus is the fountain of all *consolation*: He is made unto us of God, *wisdom* and *righteousness*, and *sanctification*, and *redemption*:
happy

happy is he that does *rejoice* always, and *glory* in him. *Righteousness* is a state of *health* and *strength*, of *Perfection* and *beauty*, of *peace* and *tranquillity*, of *rest* and *hope*: *blessed* are they who are possessed of it, who are made *free from sin*, and become *servants of God*, who have their *fruits unto holiness*, and the end *everlasting life*. Such are already *passed from death to life*; for the *spirit of life and holiness, of God and glory, rests upon them*. This is the character that distinguishes *gospel knowledge* from all other sorts of knowledge. No knowledge of *arts and sciences*, and much less the most exquisite knowledge of all the *mysteries of the kingdom of darkness*, can pretend to an eternal reward. A short and impure *pleasure*, and a transient *interest* is all that *this sort of knowledge* can bestow, and very often, instead of *pleasure and profit*, it requites its disciples with *pain and trouble*. The *gospel* only contains those *truths, which confer life and immortality* on those that believe and obey them. 'Tis the *gospel* alone that teaches us how we are to gain the love and favour of *God*; and 'tis *God* alone who *rules and governs* the visible and invisible world. He therefore alone is to be *feared*; and he alone is to be *loved*. *Fear not them*, saith our Saviour, *Matth. x. 28. which kill the body, but are not able*

Illumination what,

to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. And St. John gives the same precept concerning the world: Love not the world, neither the things of the world: and backs it by the same reason; for the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever. That is, the world can at best but gratify for a moment the appetites of the body, or the desires of a sensual fancy; therefore love it not; but love the Father, who, after the dissolution of the vital union betwixt soul and body, is able to confer life and happiness on both to all eternity.

Thus I have considered the *characters of illuminating truths*. And the whole of what I have said amounts to these two things. 1. There are *truths of very different kinds: truths that are of no use; such are those which are either trifling or merely notional, and can have no influence on human life: truths that are of ill use; such are those of which consist the arts of sensuality, avarice, vanity and ambition: these are to be detested, the former to be contemned by all that seek after true wisdom. Again, there are truths of an inferior use; such as concern our fortunes, our relations, our bodies: and these may be allowed their proper place, and a reasonable value.*

But

But the *truths* which concern the peace and pleasure, strength and liberty of our *souls*; which procure us the *favour of God*, and the *grace of his spirit*; the *truths*, in a word, which secure our *temporal and eternal happiness*; these are *illuminating truths*, these have a *transcendent worth*, and *inestimable excellence*, or usefulness, and consequently can never be too *dear* to us.

2. Since the great *characters of illuminating truths* do exactly *fit the gospel of Jesus*, 'tis plain, that *this* is that *system of knowledge*, which we are to *study day and night*; *this* is that *divine philosophy*, whose *principles and laws* we must incessantly revolve and ponder. 'Tis not without reason, that the *Psalmist* bestows such glorious *elogies* upon the *word of God*, Psal. xix. and elsewhere: that he magnifies one while the *intrinsic excellence and beauty*, another while the *force and efficacy of it*; and ever and anon enlarges himself upon the *advantages, the unspeakable advantages*, which reward the *meditation and practice of it*. *Of all Perfections I have seen an end; but thy commandments are exceeding broad. They are pure, they endure for ever; they enlighten the eyes, and rejoice the heart. Moreover by them thy servant is warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward.* That is, by them we are preserved from all *real evil*, and put in possession of, or entitled to all

real

real good. How well did St. Peter answer, when our Lord asked his disciples, *will ye also go from me? Lord, whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* And how wisely did St. Paul resolve, *to know nothing but Christ Jesus and him crucified? For he is the way, the truth, and the life; and in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

But after all, as there is a *form of godliness*, so there is a *form of knowledge*, without the *power of it*. The knowledge of the *same truths*, as I observed in the beginning, in *different persons*, may be very *different*, as meeting with a very *different reception*. Our *conceptions* may be more clear or confused, more lively or faint, more perfect or maimed; and our *assent* may be stronger or weaker. In some they may only float superficially, in *others* they may penetrate deeper: and the degrees of their *influence* and *operation* will be certainly proportioned to the different manner of their *reception*. For this reason it will be necessary to the right understanding of a *state of illumination*, to discourse,

2. Of the *nature* of that *knowledge* we must have of the *former truths*; to shew, *what sort of conception* we must form of them, and what kind of *assent* we must pay them, and what kind of *consideration* we must employ about them. As I have therefore

fore laid down the *properties* of those *truths*, so will I now lay down the *properties* of that *knowledge* of them, which is essential to *illumination*.

1. *Illuminating knowledge* must be deeply *rooted*. This our *Saviour* has taught us in that *parable*, wherein he has observed to us, that the *seed* which had not *depth* of earth, as it soon *sprang up*, so it soon *withered* and *dried away*. We often know (or pretend to do so) the *rudiments* of our *religion*, without the *grounds* and *foundation* of it. We embrace *conclusions*, without examining the *principles* from whence they flow; and contrary to the advice of the *apostle*, we are *unable* to give a *reason* to any one that *asketh* us of the *faith*, and the *hope* that is in us. And then *ours* is not properly *knowledge*, but *opinion*; 'tis not *faith*, but *credulity*: 'tis not a firm *persuasion*, but an *easy* *customary* assent. And this is *overthrown* by every *temptation*; defaced or much blurred by every *atheistical suggestion* or *prophane subjection*. Does the *world* or our *lust* tempt us, as the *devil* did our *first parents*, ye shall not *surely die*? How easily is that *faith* shaken, which is *no better founded*? How easily is a man induced to *hope*, that *sin* is not very *fatal* and *pernicious*, that *God* will easily be prevailed with to *pardon* it, that the *flames of hell* are *metaphorical*, and its *eternity* a *mistaken* notion and *groundless* fancy,

fancy, if he be ignorant of the true *reasons of God's wrath and indignation*, which are founded in the very *nature of God and sin*? Whereas, on the *other* hand, he that well understands *both* these; the deformity and tendency of sin, and the holiness and the purity of the divine Nature, cannot but *discern* an irreconcilable *opposition* between them; and be convinced that were there *no tribunal* erected for the *sinner*, yet would *sin* be its own *punishment*; and that an intolerable *hell*, consisting in the *disorder of nature*, and *exclusion of God*, &c. would be the natural and necessary *issue* of it. The *sum* of this argument is, *that knowledge*, which has no deep *root*, is subject to be overthrown by every *blast*: *that faith*, which is little more than *credulity*, does very seldom stand against any very rude *shock*. Now the *grounds* of our *faith* and *duty* are fully and clearly expounded in the *gospel*: and here especially we must *seek* them. When I say *this*, I reject no *collateral* arguments, I refuse no *foreign* aids, which contribute any thing to *confirm* and *fortify* our belief of *gospel truths*. The *faith* of St. *Thomas* did, in part at least, depend upon the evidence of *sense*; *Thomas, because thou hast seen thou hast believed*, John xx. 29. And so did that of the *rest* of them, who were *eye-witnesses* of the

the *resurrection* and *ascension* of the *blessed Jesus*. The *doctrine* of *one God*, and a *judgment to come*, may receive much *light* and *strength* from *natural reason*: and whatever *establishes* a *revealed truth*, will be so far from *diminishing*, that it will increase the *virtue* and *efficacy* of it. All the *caution* I think fit to give here is, that we be sure that the ground be plain and firm on which we build the belief of an *illuminating truth*. *Philosophy*, in many cases, is clear and convictive: St. Paul himself amongst the *Gentiles*, frequently appeals to *reason*. But too often we call our *fancy philosophy*; and obtrude upon the world, the wild and undigested *theories* of a warm and confident *imagination*, for new *discoveries*. What strange *stuff* was *Gnostick philosophy* once? What did it produce but the *corruption* of the *Christian faith*? And what can be expected from *mystick enthusiastick philosophy* or *divinity* in any age, any man may guess, without any deep penetration. Nor do I doubt but that all judicious and experienced men, do as much despise and nauseate the blendures and mixtures of pretended *philosophy* with our *faith* and *morals*, as the world generally does the *subtilties* and *perplexities* of the *schools*. For my part, I can't endure to have my *religion* lean upon the rotten *props* of *precarious* notions. I admire, I love the *elevations*

vations and *enlargements* of soul: but I can have no value for unaccountable *amusements* or *rambles* of *fancy*. An itch of *novelty* or *curiosity* has a tincture in it of our *original corruption*. I ever suspect an *opinion* that carries an *air* of *novelty* in it; and do always prefer a *vulgar truth* before *refined error*. They are *vulgar truths*, which, like *vulgar blessings*, are of *most use*, and *truest worth*: and surely our *Saviour* thought so, when he *thanked his Father*, that he had *hid these things from the wise and prudent*, and *revealed them unto babes*. And when he himself taught the people *with power and authority*, and *not as the scribes*, he did advance no *subtil theories*, but *bright and dazzling*, *useful and convictive truths*. This minds me of another *property* of *illuminating knowledge*.

2. This *knowledge* must not be *obscure* and *confused*, but *distinct* and *clear*. Where the images of things are *slight*, *faint*, and *vanishing*, they move men but very *weakly*, and affect them but very *coldly*; especially in such matters as are not subject to our senses. And this I persuade myself is one chief *reason why* those *glorious and wonderful objects*, *God*, a *judgment to come*, *heaven*, and *hell*, do strike us so *feebly* and operate so *little*. We have generally no *lively*, *distinct*, and *clear conception* of them: It being otherwise impossible, that things

in their own *nature dreadful and amazing*, should excite in us *no fear*; or that things in their own *nature infinitely amiable*, should inkindle in us *no passion, no desire*. The *notions* we have of *spiritual and invisible* things are *dim, dusky, and imperfect*: our *thoughts* pass over them so *slightly*, that they scarce retain any *print or traces* of them. Now this sort of *knowledge* will never do the work. These drowsy notices of things will never ferment and raise our *passions* for *heaven* high enough to confront and combat those we have for the *world*. From hence we may give a fair account, what the use is of *prophetick retirement*, and *prophetick eloquence*: what is the purpose of all those *schemes and tropes*, which occur in *inspired writings*: and why the best of men have ever so much affected *solitude and retreats*, from the noise and the hurry of the world. Serious, frequent, and devout *contemplation* is necessary to form in our minds, clear, distinct, and sprightly *notions*: and to *communicate* these well to the world, they must be expressed in *moving language*, in *living tropes and figures*. Ah! did we but consider this, we should sure allot more *time* to the *study of divine truths*; and we should not think, that to discover them *thoroughly*, it were enough to let our thoughts *glance* upon them. But we should survey
and

and ponder them with all the *exactness* and *diligence* that were necessary to make lasting and distinct *impressions* upon us. Could we know by *intuition*, doubtless wonderful *objects* would raise very extraordinary *passions* in us. But this we cannot, let us come as near it as we can: only let us avoid forming *absurd* and *false* notions of things, whilst we endeavour after *distinct* and *clear* ones. *Spiritual* things do not answer *corporeal*, like *face* to *face* in a glass: and therefore, tho' to give some light to things that are *above* us, we may find out all the *resemblances* of them we can in *those* things we are acquainted with *here below*; yet we must still remember, that the *one* do vastly exceed the *other*, and that we cannot thus get a just, adequate *notion* of them.

3. This *knowledge* must not lie in the understanding, *crude* and *undigested*; but it must be thoroughly *concocted* and turned into *nourishment*, *blood*, and *spirits*. We must know the true *value* and *use* of every *principle*, of every *truth*; and be able readily to *apply* them. For what does it signify, how important *truths* are in themselves, if they are not so to me? What does it avail that they are impregnated with *life* and *power*, if I *feel* not any such influence? Of what use is the knowledge of *gospel-promises* to me, if I reap no *comfort* from them?

Or

Or the knowledge of *gospel-threats*, if they are unable to *curb* and *restrain* my passions? And so is it with other *truths*: what will it avail me that I *know*, the *life of man consists not in the multitude of the things which he possesses*, if notwithstanding I *cannot content* myself with a *competency*? That *righteousness* is the chief *good*, and the richest *treasure* of the soul of man, if notwithstanding I seek *this world*, and the *things* of it, with a more *early* and *passionate* concern? That *sin* and *pain* are the most *considerable*, if not *only*, *evils* of man, if notwithstanding I be *cast down* and *broken* under every *adversity*? And thus I might go on, and shew you, that the *knowledge* which is not digested into *nourishment* is, if not a burden, of no benefit to us. 'Tis plain, that is to me nothing worth, which I make *no use* of. We must then follow the advice of *Solomon*, and never quit the search and meditation of *truth*, till we grow *intimate* and *familiar* with it: and so have it always ready for a *guide* and *guard* for our *support* and *strength*, and for our *delight* and *pleasure*. We must *bind it about our heart*, as he speaks, and *tie it as an ornament about our neck*. Then, when we go forth it shall lead us, when we sleep it shall keep us, and when we awake it shall talk with us: for the *commandment is a lamp*, and the *law is light*, and *reproofs of instruction are the way of life*, Prov.

vi. In a word, nothing can render the most important *truths* powerful and operative in us, but such a *digestion* of them by serious and devout *meditation*, as may in a manner *incorporate* them with us. And this the *scripture* plainly teaches, when to signify the force and virtue of the *gospel* above that of the law, it uses these words: *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts,* Heb. viii. 10. intimating, that no *laws*, no *principles* can ever influence us, till they be deeply *imprinted* in our hearts.

To *wind up* all. There are *several* kinds of *knowledge* of the *same truths*: there is a *knowledge*, which serves us only as *Pisga's* top did *Moses*; to *shew* us *Canaan*, but not to *bring us* into it. There is again a *knowledge*, which serves us only as the *talent* did the *wicked servants*; not to procure *rewards*, but *punishments*. And finally, there is a *knowledge*, which, like the *talents* in the hand of the *faithful* and good *steward*, *enriches us first*, and *recommends us afterwards* to *higher trust* and dignities; which *improves* and *perfects* our *nature first*, and then puts us into *possession* of such *blessings*, as only *nature thus improved* and *perfected* is capable of. And this *knowledge* must not be a *flight*, *superficial* and *undigested* one; it

it must not be a confused and obscure, a weak and imperfect one: *this is not the knowledge* which will bring forth those excellent *fruits*, which we have reason to expect from true *illumination*. But it must be a *knowledge* that has all the quite *contrary* characters: even such as I have *before* described at large. That *this* is an *observation* of the greatest weight and moment is *evident* to any one who will give himself leave to make any *reflection* on the *present* state of *Christianity*. For how does the power of *darkness* prevail amidst the *light* of the gospel? How has the *devil* erected *his throne* in the midst of that *Church*, which should be the *kingdom of God*? and sin and death *reign* where life and immortality are *preached*? *Whence* is this? Are men *ignorant* of those *truths* which make up the system of the true *wisdom*? *This* is not easy to be *imagined*; scarcely of the darkest corners of the *popish* churches, much less of ours. And therefore we must conclude, that this is because our *knowledge* is not *such* as it *ought* to be, with respect to its *clearness*, *certainty*, and *digestion*.

C H A P II.

Of the fruits and attainment of illumination. That illumination does not depend so much upon a man's outward fortune, extraordinary parts, acquired learning, &c. as upon his moral qualifications, such as humility, impartiality, and love of the truth. Four directions for the attainment of illumination. 1. That we do not suffer our minds to be engaged in quest of knowledge foreign to our purpose. 2. That we apply ourselves with a very tender and sensible concern to the study of illuminating truths. 3. That we act conformable to those measures of light which we have attained. 4. That we frequently address ourselves to God by prayer for the illumination of his grace. The chapter concluded with a prayer of Fulgentius.

HAVING dispatched the notion of illumination in the foregoing chapter, and shewed both what truths, and what sort of knowledge of them is requisite to it; I am next to treat,

1. Of the fruits: and
2. Of the attainment of it.

§. 1. As to the fruits of illumination, I have the less need to insist upon them, because whatever can be said on this head, has been
been

been in a manner *anticipated*: all the characters of *illuminating truths* and *illuminating knowledge* being such as sufficiently declare the blessed *effects* of *true illumination*. I will therefore be very *short* on *this head*; and only just *mention two advantages* of *illumination*. As the use of *light* is especially *twofold*, to *delight* and *guide* us; so do we reap *two benefits* from *illumination*.

1. The *first* and most immediate one is, that it *sets* the whole man, and the whole life *right*; that it *fixes* our *affections* on their proper and natural *object*, and directs all our *actions* to their true *end*. I do not mean, that the *understanding* constantly and necessarily *influences* and *determines* the *will*. *Experience* tells us, that we have a *fatal liberty*: that our *affections* are too often *independent* of our *reason*: that we *sin* against the dictates of *conscience*; that we pursue *false pleasure*, and a *false interest*, in opposition to the *true*, and in plain opposition to our *judgment* too; at least to a *sedate* and *calm* one. And the *reason* of all this is, because we consist of *two* different and repugnant *principles*, a *body*, and a *soul*: and are solicited by *two different worlds*, a *temporal* and an *eternal* one. But all this notwithstanding, 'tis certain that *illumination* in the mind has a mighty influence upon us: for it is continually exciting in us wise *desires* and excellent *purposes*. 'Tis always

Illumination what,

alluring and inviting us towards our sovereign *good*, and restraining and deterring us from *sin* and *death*: it alarms, disquiets, disturbs, and persecutes us as often as we err and wander from the path of life. In one word, the great *work* of *illumination* is, to be always representing the beauties and pleasures, and the beatitude and glory of *virtue*; and remonstrating the evils and dishonours, the deformities and dangers of *vice*: so that a man will never be at rest, who has this *light* within him, till it be either *extinguished* or *obeyed*.

2. This *light* within us, if it be followed and complied with, not muddied and disturbed; if it be not quenched and extinguished by wilful sin, or unpardonable *ostentancy* and *remissness*: if, in a word, its influence be not interrupted, disperses all our *fears* as well as *errors*, creates an unspeakable *tranquillity* in the soul, spreads over us a calm and glorious *sky*, and makes every thing in us and about us look *gay*, *verdant* and *beautiful*. The *dissipation* of *Pagan darkness*, and all participation or resemblances of *it*; *deliverance* from a state of *bondage* and *wrath*, the *peace* of *God*, the *love* of *Jesus*, the *fellowship* of the *Holy Ghost*, the *immortality* of the *soul*, the *resurrection* of the *body*, the *perfection* and *blessedness* of *eternity*; good *God*! what surprising, what ravishing *themes* are these for the thoughts

thoughts of an *enlightned* soul to dwell upon! blessed and happy is he who enjoys this *pleasure* upon earth. And that *we may*, I am now to discourse,

§. 2. Of the *attainment* of *illumination*. Now whatever advice can relate to *this*, may be reduced under *two* heads:

1. *What qualifications* do render man *capable* of *illumination*.

2. *What it is* that one duly qualified is to do in *pursuit* of it.

§. 1. To begin with the *qualification* requisite to *illumination*. One man is distinguished from *another* several ways: by his *estate* or *fortune*, by *natural* or *acquired endowments*, and by *moral dispositions*: and each of these may have some, tho' a very different influence upon human *Perfection*. For if we inquire after only the *essence* and *integrity* of *Perfection*; then are there *two* or *three moral qualifications*, which are all that is required in order to this: but if we inquire after the *largeness* of its stature, the *symmetry* of its features, the *lustre* of its complexion, and the *elegance* of its dress; then may we allow something to be ascribed to *fortune*, to *nature*, and a liberal *education*. This is an *observation* very *necessary* to be made. For tho' *every* man may be

capable of *Perfection*, that is, *habitual holiness*, if it be not his own fault; yet is not every man capable of being *equally perfect*, because of that accidental *variety* which I have suggested, and which flows from *different gifts of God*, which depend *not* on *our selves*. This being premised; in order to prevent my being mistaken, I proceed, and determine,

1. That *illumination* depends not upon a man's *outward fortune*. There are indeed *several sorts of knowledge*, which we can never arrive at without much *leisure*, and much *expence*: and in order to support the one, and enjoy the other; it is requisite that we be masters of a *good fortune*. Hence is that *observation* of the *author of the Ecclesiasticus*, chap. xxxviii. 24. *The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity, of leisure; and he that has little business, shall become wise*. And therefore in the following verses he excludes the *husbandman*, the *statuary*, the *engraver*, the *smith*, the *potter*; and all consequently whose time and mind is taken up in the *labours* of their *profession*, and in making the necessary *provision* for *life*, these, I say, he excludes from all pretensions to *wisdom*. How can he get *wisdom* that *holdeth the plough*, and that *glorieth in the goad*, whose talk is of *bullocks*, &c. But *this* is not the *wisdom* that I am inquiring after, and which constitutes *illumination*. That consists
not

not in the laws of our *earthly*, but *heavenly* country: not in *arts* and *sciences*, which relate to the *body*, and minister to a *temporal* life; but in those *divine truths*, which purify the *soul*, and minister to an *eternal one*: no, nor in *notional improvements* of the *mind*, but in *spiritual* and *vital ones*. And therefore the *husbandman* and the *artist*, the *mechanick* and the *trader*, are as capable of this sort of *wisdom*, as the man of *office*, *money*, or *quality*. There needs no *wealth* to render one the *child of light and of the day*. There is the *book of nature*, the *book of revelation*; both the *books of God*, both writ throughout with glorious *illuminating truths*: these lie wide open to every honest Christian. The being and nature of God; the mediation of Jesus, and a judgment to come; the nature and necessity of holiness, are fully *revealed*, and unanswerably *proved*. And though every honest man be not able to discover all the *arguments* on which they stand, yet may he discover *enough*: and what is more, he may have an *inward, vital, sensible* proof of them; he may *feel* the power, the *charms* of holiness, experiment its *congruity* and *loveliness* to the *human soul*; and observe a thousand demonstrations of its *serviceableness* to the *honour* of God, and the *good* of *mankind*: he may have a full and convictive sense of the *manifestation* of the *divine Perfections*

fections in the great work of our *redemption*; and the excellent *tendency* of it may be so palpable and conspicuous to him, as to leave no room for *doubts* or *scruples*. But besides all this, there is a *voice within*, there is a *divine teacher* and *instructor*, which will ever abide with him, and lead him into all necessary truths: all which is implied in those words of our Lord, *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self*, John vii. 17.

2. Extraordinary *natural parts*, such as sagacity or acuteness of judgment, strength of memory, the liveliness of imagination, are not necessary to *illumination*. The *gospel*, as I remember, takes no notice of these. Such is the *beauty* of *holiness*, that it requires rather *purity* of heart, than *quickness* of *apprehension*, to render us *enamoured* of it. And the very same thing may be said of the *power* and *energy* of all *gospel motives*, and of the *proofs* and *evidences* too of *divine truths*. To *convince* and *affect* us, there is no need of sagacity and penetration, but *probity* and *sincerity*. However, I have *two* or *three reflections* to make here, which may not be unuseful: for though *acuteness* and *retention*, by which I mean quickness in *discerning*, and firmness in *preserving* truth, be commonly accounted *natural parts*, and generally are so;

so; yet, I think, where the *one* or the *other* are most *defective*, they may be much *helped* and wonderfully *improved*. To which end I remark, *first*, that those *defects* of *understanding* or *memory*, which *some* are wont to accuse themselves of in *spiritual* things, are with more *justice* to be imputed to *want* of *concern* and *affection* for *such* things, than to any incapacity of *nature*. 'Tis plain we easily *understand*, and easily *remember*, what we *desire* and *love*: and where-ever we follow the impulse or conduct of *strong inclinations*, we seldom fail of *excelling*. Let us therefore take care, that our *hearts* be *set* upon the *things* of *God*; and we shall soon see that our *judgment* and *memory* will no more fail us *here*, than in those *worldly interests* and *pleasures*, which we are most intent upon. *Secondly*, As to *memory*; it depends very much upon the *perspicuity*, *regularity*, and *order* of our notions. Many complain of want of *memory*, when the defect is in their *judgment*. And *others*, while they grasp at *all*, retain *nothing*. In order then to relieve this *infirmity* of *memory*, it were an excellent way to *confine* our search and *meditation* to a *few objects*, and to have these *clearly* and *methodically* handled. A *catechetical* way of expounding and asserting the *rudiments* of our faith, if done as it ought to be, is of great service to persons of *all capacities*; but

but especially to those of *meaner*. For *thus* they may not only be enriched with the *knowledge* of the most *useful* things, and of the *grounds* on which our obligation either to *belief* or *practice* is bottom'd; but also may be furnished with general *principles* of *reason*, by which they may steer their *judgment* in all cases; and with certain *heads* of *faith* and *morals*, to which they may be able to reduce most of what they *read* or *hear*. *Thirdly*, 'Tis with the understanding as with the eye of the body: *one* sees *further* off, and in a *fainter* light: but *another* sees as *well* with regard to all the *uses* of life, who yet requires that the objects should be *nearer*, and the light *better*. Men of *slow* capacities must not be *daring* or *precipitate* in passing their *sentence* and forming their *notions*. They must *examine*, whether the matters they *enquire* after be not too *remote* and *obscure*: whether the object may be brought *nearer*, and placed in a better *light*; or whether they may be furnished with *telescopes* or *microscopes* fit for them. If *not*, they must quit the search of *such* truths as are *improper* and *unnecessary* for *them*: by which means they will, at least, avoid being *deceived* or *perplexed*; which is no small *advantage*. To be enriched with a kind of *universal knowledge* is a *great* thing; but I doubt *too great* for *man*. Next to this is, to be endowed with a knowledge of *necessary* and

and *important truths*; and to be *freed* from *errors* and *perplexity* in matters of any *moment*: and methinks it were no great excess of *modesty* or *humility*, for *man* to be content with *this*.

3. There is no great need of *acquired learning*, in order to true *illumination*. Our *Saviour* did not exact of his *disciples*, as a necessary preparation for his doctrine, the *knowledge* of *tongues*; the *history* of *times*, or *nature*, *logick*, *metaphysicks*, *mathematicks*, or the like. *These* indeed may be *serviceable* to many excellent *ends*: they may be great *accomplishments* of the mind; great ornaments, and very engaging *entertainments* of life: they may be, finally, very excellent and necessary *instruments* of, or *introductions* to *several* *professions* or *employments*. But as to *Perfection* and happiness, to *these* they can never be *indispensably* necessary. A man may be excellently, habitually *good*, without more *languages* than *one*: he may be fully persuaded of those great *truths*, that will render him master of his passions, and independent of the world; that will render him easy and useful in *this* life, and glorious in *another*, though he be no *logician* nor *metaphysician*. Yet would I not all this while be supposed to exclude the use of true *reason* and solid *judgment*. Tho' the *meanest* capacity may attain to its proper *Perfection*; that is, such a measure of *know-*
ledge,

ledge, as may make the man truly *wise* and *happy*; yet the more *capacious* any man's *soul* is, and the more *enlarged* his *knowledge*, the more *perfect* and *happy* he.

4. The *qualifications* previously necessary to *Illumination*, are *two* or *three* *moral* ones, implied in that *infant temper* our *Saviour* required in those who would be his *disciples*. These are *humility*, *impartiality*, and a *thirst* or *love of truth*. *First, Humility*. He that will be *taught of God* must not be *proud* or *confident in himself*. He must not *over-rate* his own *parts* and *capacity*; nor lean too *stiffly* to his *own understanding*. He must firmly believe, that *illumination* is the *work of God*; and on *him* he must depend. He must confess the *weakness* of his own *faculties*, the natural *poverty* and *indigence* of his *understanding*; and so look up to *God*, who is the *fountain of wisdom*, and giveth *grace to the humble*, but *resisteth the proud*. Secondly, *Impartiality*, *sincerity*, or a certain *purity* or *innocence of judgment*, if I may be allowed to speak so. That the *understanding* may be *capable of divine light*, it must not be blurred and stained by *false principles*: it must not be *bias'd* nor influenced by any *corrupt inclinations*. Some to prove their *impartiality* or *freedom* of judgment, abandon themselves to the scrupulousness of *scepticism*, and a wanton itch of endless *disputation* and *contradiction*. But I cannot think

think it necessary to our *freedom* and *impartiality*, to deny the *evidence* of our sense; to oppose the *universal reason* of mankind; and to shake off all *reverence* for the integrity of *man*, and the *veracity* of *God*. No, this favours too much, either of *ostentation*, or of a raw and unexperienced *affectation* of new theories and speculations. He secures his *freedom* sufficiently, who guards his *reason* against the force of groundless *prepossessions*, and senseless *modes* and *customs*; against the *lust* of the body, and the *prejudices* of *parties*; who keeps a strict eye upon the motions and tendencies of his *inferiour* nature; who admits not the dictates of a *single person* or *party* for *Catholick reasons*; who considers, that there are *revolutions* of *philosophy* and *opinions* as well as of *states* and *kingdoms*; and judges well of *times* and *men*, ere he pay much deference to *authority*. But, *thirdly*, this is not all that is necessary to any *compleat* degree of *Illumination*. *Impartiality* is necessary to the first *dawning* of it; but if we would have it encrease, and diffuse itself into a *perfect* day of *spiritual wisdom* and *understanding*, we must *hunger* and *thirst* after *truths*. An *unprejudiced* mind is necessary to qualify us for the first *rudiments* of *truth*; but we must be enflamed with *desire* and *love* of it, ere we shall enter into the *sanctuary* or *recesses* of it: therefore our *Saviour* invites

to him *every one that thirsts*, John vii. 27. And St. Peter exhorts us, *as new born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby*, 1 Epist. ii. 2. And St. Paul imputes the damnation of *those that perish, to want of love of the truth*, 2 Theff. ii. 10. 'Tis too trifling to object here, how come we to *thirst* after what we do not know? for it concerns every man to enquire what will become of him for ever: and if he be already assured that there is another world and a glorious *salvation* to be attained, it is natural to *thirst* after the resolution of such questions as these, *what shall I do to be saved? what shall I do to inherit an eternal life?* and such is the *beauty of illuminating truth*, that every glance of it kindles in our hearts the love of it; and such its *boundless Perfection*, that the more we know, the more still shall we *desire to know*. Having thus considered what *qualifies* man for *Illumination*, my next business is to enquire,

§. 2. *What* one thus qualified is to *do* for the actual *attainment* of it. All the advice that I can think fit here to be given, may be reduced to *four* heads.

1. That we do not suffer our minds to be *engaged* in quest of knowledge *foreign* to our purpose.

2. That we apply ourselves with a very *tender* and *sensible* concern to the *study* of *illuminating* truths.

3. That we act *conformable* to those *measures* of *light* which we have *attained*.

4. That we frequently and constantly address ourselves to *God* by *prayer*, for the *illumination* of his *grace*.

1. That we do not suffer, &c. *This* is a natural and necessary *consequence* of what has been already said concerning *illumination*. For if *illumination* consist in the *knowledge*, not of *all* sorts of *truths*, but the most *necessary* and *important*, such as *purify* and *perfect* our nature; such as procure us *sacred* and *stable* pleasure, and all the *rewards* that flow from our *adoption* to *God*; it is then plain, he, who would be *perfect*, ought not to amuse and distract his mind in pursuit of *trifling* or *divertive* knowledge; that he ought to shun, and not to admit, whatever is apt to *entangle*, *perplex*, or *defile* him; and to fix his thoughts, and *confine* his me-

ditionations to the *great truths* of the *gospel*. He that *knows the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent*, knows enough to oblige him to *virtue*, and to open the way to *glory and everlasting life*. He that *knows nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, knows enough in order to *peace, grace, and joy*; enough to promote *holiness and hope*: hope that abounds in *joy unspeakable and full of glory*.

2. We must apply ourselves with a very *tender and sensible concern* to the study of *illuminating truths*. This rule must be understood to enjoin *three things*. 1. *Great care and caution* in examining doctrines proposed; and in distinguishing between *truth and falshood*. 2. *Great diligence and industry* to increase and enlarge our *knowledge*. 3. *Frequent and serious reflections* upon the *truths we know*.

1. There is need of *great caution* in the *trial and examination of doctrines*. This the *scripture* itself frequently puts us in mind of: and not without reason; because the devil *sows his tares amongst the wheat*; errors, and these too fatal and destructive ones, are frequently obtruded upon the world for the *revelations of God*; and every party, nay, every *single author*, lays the stress of *salvation* on their *peculiar and distinguishing* opinions. *Beloved, believe not every*

every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God : because many false prophets are gone out into the world, 1 John iv. 1. 'Tis needless to multiply *texts* or *words* on this occasion. When the peace and purity of our mind, the rectitude and happiness of our lives, and the blessedness of eternity has so close and necessary a dependence upon the *doctrines* we imbibe, that we hereby either *secure* or *forfeit* them ; who sees not, unless he be stupid and infatuated, that greater *care* and *solicitude* is necessary *here*, than in *any* matter whatever, because there is *no* other of *equal* moment ? Bad *money*, or bad *wares*, instead of good ; an ill *title* or *conveyance*, instead of a firm and clear one, may *impoverish* us : bad *drugs*, instead of good, may *infect* the *body*, and *destroy* the *health* : but what is all *this* to the dismal consequences of *error* and *heresy*, which *impoverishes* and *infects* the *mind*, *perverts* the *life*, and *damns* the *man* to all *eternity* ? The example of the *Bereans* is never *forgot* ; and indeed never *ought* to be on *this* occasion. We must admit nothing *hastily* ; assent to nothing without examining the *grounds* on which it stands. *Credulity*, *precipitation* and *confidence* are irreconcilable enemies to *knowledge* and *wisdom*.

2. We are to use great *diligence* and *industry* to enlarge and increase our *knowledge*. The treasures of *divine wisdom* are almost infinite; and it fares with *those* that *study* them, as with a *traveller* when he ascends a *rising* ground: every *new* step almost *enlarges* his *horizon*, and presents *new* countries, *new* pleasures to his eye. 'Tis our own negligence, if we do not daily extend the *compass* of our *knowledge*; if our *view* of things grow not more distinct and clear, and our *belief* of them more firm and steady. This is, to *grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord*, 2 Pet. iii. 18. This is, to *have the eye of our understanding opened*, Eph. i. 17. This is, to *be filled with the knowledge of God, in all wisdom and understanding*, Col. i. 9. This is, finally, *for the word of God to dwell in us richly*, Col. iii. 16. And of what *importance* this is, is manifest from what I have before proved; namely, that *illumination* consists not in a credulous and ill-grounded, in a slight and superficial, or a confused and obscure, or imperfect sort of *knowledge*; but in a clear, distinct, firm, and well-established one. And the acquiring such a one demands a very *diligent* and an *indefatigable study* of the *word of life*. To fill the mind with numerous, great, and beautiful *ideas*, and *these* clear and distinct;

to

to have them engraven in the memory in deep and lasting *characters*; to have them lodged and disposed in that *order*, as to be able in an instant to have recourse to them; to discern and demonstrate plainly the *connexion* and *dependance* of one upon another, and the unquestionable *evidence of each*; this is a work of *time* and *labour*; the fruit of a regular and assiduous *search* after *truth*; and if the capacities and fortunes of all men will not suffer them to come up to *this*, they must come as near as they can. But if such a *search* as this be *not* necessary to *penetrate* the depths, and to *discover* the beauties of *divine truths*, or to *convince* the world and our selves of the certainty of them; yet certainly *without* it we shall never be able to *extract* their *force* and *virtue*, and to *derive* *purity* and *nourishment* from them; which is the next thing implied in the rule laid down.

3. We must make frequent and serious *reflections* on the *truths* we *do* know. This again naturally follows from the *notion* of *illumination* as it is before settled. For if it is not *every knowledge* of the *best* things that suffices for *illumination*, but a *vital* and *operative* one, that is, a well-grounded, clear, distinct, and well-digested one; it is plain, that constant, daily, and devout meditation is necessary to *illumination*; because 'tis not a transient and perfunctory

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reflection upon the most *important* truths; 'tis not a fleeting, rambling, irregular, and desultory meditation of them that will possess us with *such* a kind of *knowledge*. To imprint a *truth* in *lively* notions upon our minds, to digest it into *nourishment* and *strength*, and make it *mix* itself with all our *affections*, and all our *actions*, it is necessary that we *dwell* upon it with constancy and delight. And accordingly we find, that excellent and elevated souls, both under the *Old Testament* and the *New*, have been daily, nay, almost hourly conversant in the *Book of God*: they have been passionately devoted to the *study* of it, and *delighted* more in it, than in *treasures* or *honours*, than in the most profitable *employments* or engaging *diversions* of life. 'Tis *this* kind of *meditation* on *God*, on *Jesus*, the *world*, and our *selves*, that can alone acquaint us thoroughly with *each*: 'tis *this* kind of *meditation* on *death* and *judgment*, *heaven* and *hell*, that can make us *wise* unto *salvation*.

The *sum* of all that I have said on this *rule* amounts to *this*: that *illumination* is not to be attained without *labour* and *travel*. It is indeed the *gift of God*: but such a one as he will *never* bestow, but upon those who *ask*, and *seek*, and *knock*. *Divine bounty* and *human industry* do here very well *accord*: the *Spirit of God* generally
joins

joins them together; and 'tis boldness and impiety in man to go about to divide them. Prov. ii. 4, 5, 6. If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. Nor will any one surely think it much to devote his time and labour to the attainment of illumination. For what is there that can more justly challenge, or better deserve both? Can pleasure? There is none but what flows from wisdom, that is either pure, great, or lasting. Can business? What business can be of greater importance, than what secures our salvation, our eternity? Wisdom then is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting, get understanding, Prov. iv. 7. for without this, the most desirable possessions and pleasures of life are but cheats and illusions, mischiefs and snares. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them, Prov. i. 32.

3. That we act conformable to those measures of light which we have attained. The more spiritual we grow, the fitter we are for the residence of God's Spirit, and the more capable of his influences. The more we subdue all inordinate affections, the clearer does the understanding grow, and

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the more *absolute* its *authority*. The *grace* of *God*, if it be complied with and obeyed, while it renders us more *like* *God*, renders us more *dear* to him too: and *one* *favour*, if it be not our own fault, qualifies us for *another*. Whoever shall observe the *scriptures*, will find that *holiness* and *illumination* advance with *equal* steps, and grow up by the *same* degrees of maturity: that as we pass on from the *infancy* to the *manhood* of *virtue*, so do we from the first *rudiments* of *wisdom* to the *heights* and *mysteries* of it. But on the other hand, *lust* obscures and eclipses the *light* within: *sin* depraves and corrupts our *principles*: and while we renounce our *virtue*, we *quench* or *chase away* the *Spirit*. Into a *malicious* soul *wisdom* shall not enter; nor dwell in the body that is *subject* unto *sin*: for the *holy* *spirit* of *discipline* will flee *deceit*, and remove from *thoughts* that are without *understanding*; and will not abide when *unrighteousness* cometh in, *Wisd.* i. 4, 5.

4. We must frequently and constantly address our selves to *God* by *prayer*, for the *illumination* of his *grace*. There is *nothing* that we do not receive from *above*: and if the most *inconsiderable* things be the *gift* of *God*, from *what* fountain but from *him* can we expect *illumination*? The *rap- tures* of *poets*, the *wisdom* of *law-givers*, the noblest pieces of *philosophy*, and indeed

all *heroic* and *extraordinary* performances were by the *Pagans* themselves generally attributed to a *divine inspiration*. And the *Old Testament* ascribes a transcendent skill even in *arts* and *trades* to the *Spirit of God*. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if *illumination* be attributed to *Him* in the *New*. *Wisdom* and *understanding* are essential *parts* of *sanctity*; and therefore must proceed from the *sanctifying Spirit*. We must therefore constantly look up to *God*, and depend upon *Him* for *illumination*; we must earnestly *pray* in the words of *St. Paul*, *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation*, Eph. i. 17. This dependence upon *God*, in expectation of his *blessing* on our *search* after *knowledge*, puts the mind into the best *disposition* and *frame* to attain it; because it naturally frees and disengages it from those *passions*, *prejudices*, and *distractions*, which otherwise entangle and disturb it, and render it incapable of raised, sedate, and coherent thoughts. But what is *more* than this, there are repeated and express *promises* made it; so that it can never fail of success: *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you*. The reason of which is added; *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much*
more

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more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things (or as it is Luke xi. the Holy Spirit) to them that ask him? Mat. vii. 7, 11. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him, Jam. i. 5. nor do I doubt but every good man has these promises verified to him. There are sudden suggestions, unexpected manifestations, extraordinary elevations of mind, which are never to be accounted for, but by a divine principle. Nor does this doctrine of spiritual illumination or irradiation in the least diminish the power and excellence of the gospel of Christ, no more than the instruction of the gospel does supersede that of the Spirit. For we must not think that the Spirit does now reveal any new truth of general use or importance; since the canon of scripture would on this supposal be but a defective rule of faith and manners. But, first, The Spirit may assist us in making a fuller discovery of the sense of scripture. Secondly, The Spirit may help us to form clearer and distinct notions of those things we have yet but an imperfect and general knowledge of; and to fix and imprint them in more lasting, as well as more legible characters in our minds: or it may recall to our remembrance such things as are obliterated and forgotten:

ten: or, finally, it may produce in us a more earnest and steady application to the truth of God. *Thirdly*, I see no reason why the *Spirit* may not vouchsafe us particular *impulses, directions, and intimations* upon extraordinary occasions and sudden emergencies; where *holy writ* affords us no *light*, and *human prudence* is at a loss. Nor does any thing, that I attribute to the *Spirit* in all this, detract or derogate from the dignity or the efficacy of the *scripture*. This then, I conceive, is *what* the *Spirit* does in the work of *Illumination*. But *how* it does it, is not *necessary*, nor, I doubt, *possible* to be determined. Nor ought our *ignorance* of this to be objected against the *truth* of *divine illumination*. We are sure we *understand* and *remember*, and exercise a *freedom* or *liberty* of will, in our choices, resolutions and actions: but the *manner* how we do this, is an enquiry that does hitherto, for aught I can see, wholly surpass and transcend our *philosophy*.

I will here close this *chapter* with a *prayer* of *Fulgentius, lib. 1. cap. 4.* After he has in the beginning of the *chapter* disclaimed all *pretences* to the setting up himself a *master, doctor, or dictator* to his *brethren*, he breaks out into these devout and pious words——“ I will not cease
 “ to *pray*, that our true *Master* and *Doctor*
 “ *Christ*

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“ *Christ Jesus*, either by the *oracles* of his
 “ *gospel*, or by the *conversation* of my *bre-*
 “ *thren* or *joint-disciples*; or else by the *se-*
 “ *cret* and *delightful* instruction of *divine*
 “ *inspiration*, in which, without the *ele-*
 “ *ments* of letters, or the *found* of speech,
 “ *truth* speaks with so much the *sweeter*, as
 “ the *still* and *softer* voice; would vouch-
 “ *safe* to *teach* me those things, which I may
 “ *so* propose, and *so* assert, that in all my
 “ *expositions* and *assertions*, I may be ever
 “ *found* conformable, and obedient, and
 “ *firm* to *that truth*, which can neither
 “ *deceive* nor be *deceived*. For it is *truth*
 “ *itself* that enlightens, confirms, and aids
 “ *me*, that I may always obey and assent
 “ to the *truth*. By *truth* I desire to be
 “ *informed* of those many *more* things
 “ which I am *ignorant* of, from *whom* I
 “ have received the *few* I know. Of *truth*
 “ I beg, through preventing and assisting
 “ *grace*, to be instructed in whatever I
 “ *yet* know not, which conduces to the
 “ *interest* of my virtue and happiness;
 “ to be preserved and kept stedfast in *those*
 “ *truths* which I *know*; to be reformed
 “ and rectified in those points, in which,
 “ as is common to man, I am *mistaken*;
 “ to be confirmed and established in those
 “ *truths* wherein I *waver*; and to be de-
 “ *livered* from those opinions that are *er-*
 “ *roneous* or *hurtful*. I beg, lastly, that
 “ *truth*

“ *truth* may ever find, both in my thoughts
“ and speeches, all that sound and whole-
“ some doctrine I have received from *its*
“ gift; and that *it* would always cause me
“ to utter those things which are agreeable
“ to *itself* in the *first* place; and consequent-
“ ly acceptable to *all* faithful *Christians* in
“ the *next*.”

C H A P. III.

Of liberty in general. The notion of it truly stated, and guarded. The fruits of this liberty. 1. *Sin being a great evil, deliverance from it is great happiness.* 2. *A freedom and pleasure in the acts of righteousness and good works.* 3. *The near relation it creates between God and us.* 4. *The great fruit of all, eternal life; with a brief exhortation to endeavour after deliverance from sin.*

AFTER illumination, which is the Perfection of the understanding, follows liberty, which is the Perfection of the will. In treating of which, I shall, *first*, give an account of liberty in general: and *then* discourse of the several parts of it; as it regards wickedness, unfruitfulness, human infirmities, and original corruption.

§. 1. What

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§. 1. What *liberty* is. There have been several *mistakes* about this matter: but these have been so absurd or extravagant, so designing or sensual, that they *need* not, I think, a serious *refutation*. However, 'tis necessary in a word or two to remove this *rubbish* and *lumber* out of my way, that I may build up and establish the *truth* more easily and regularly. Some then have placed Christian *liberty* in deliverance from the *Mosaic yoke*. But this is to make our *liberty* consist in freedom from a *yoke* to which we were *never* subject; and to make our glorious Redemption, from the tyranny of *sin* and the *misery* that attends it, dwindle into an immunity from *external* rights and observances. 'Tis true, the *Mosaic* institution, as far as it consisted in *outward* observances and *typical* rites, is now dissolved; the *Messias* being come, who was the *substance* of those *shadows*; and the *beauty of holiness* being unfolded and displayed, without any *veil* upon her face. But what is this to *ecclesiastical authority*? or to those *ecclesiastical institutions*, which are no part of the *Mosaic* yoke? From the abrogation indeed, or abolition of *ritual* and *typical* religion, one may infer, *first*, That *Christianity* must be a *rational worship*, a *moral spiritual* service. And therefore, *secondly*, That *human* institutions, when they en-

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join any thing as a *necessary* and *essential* part of religion, which God has not made so, or when they impose such *rites*, as, thro' the number or nature of them, cherish *superstition*, *obscure* the *gospel*, weaken its force, or prove *burthensome* to us, are to be rejected and not complied with. Thus much is plain, and nothing farther. There have been *others*, who have run into more intolerable *errors*. For some have placed *Christian liberty* in exemption from the laws of *man*: and *others*, advancing higher, in exemption even from the *moral* and *immutable* laws of *God*. But the *folly* and *wickedness* of these opinions sufficiently *confute* them; since 'tis notorious to every one, that *disobedience* and *anarchy* is as flat a contradiction to the *peaceableness*, as *voluptuousness* and *luxury* is to the *purity* of that *wisdom*, which is from above. But how absurd and wicked soever these *notions* are, yet do we find them greedily embraced and industriously propagated at *this* day, and behold, with amazement, the baffled and despicable *Gnosticks*, *Priscilianists*, *Libertines*, and I know not what *other* spawn of *hell*, reviving in *deists* and *atheists*. These indeed do not advance their errors under a pretence of *Christian liberty*; but, which is more ingenuous, and less scandalous of the two, in open *defiance* and confessed *opposition* to *Christianity*. They
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tell us that we impose upon the world *false* and *fantastick* notions of *virtue* and *liberty*: that *religion* does *enslave* man, not set him *free*; awing the mind by groundless and superstitious principles, and restraining and infringing our true and natural *liberty*: which, if we will believe *them*, consists in giving *nature* its full swing; letting loose the reins to the most headstrong *lusts*, and the wildest and the most corrupt *imagination*s. But to this 'tis easy to answer, that while these men attempt to establish their errors, and fortify their minds in them, by *arguments* of some sort or other, as they do; 'tis plain, that *they* suppose and acknowledge with *us*, that they ought to be ruled and governed by *reason*: and if *this* be true, then, by undeniable consequence, true *liberty* must consist not in doing what we *list*, but what we *ought*; not in following our *lust* or *fancy*, but our *reason*; not in being *exempt* from *law*, but in *being a law* to our *selves*. And then I appeal to all the world, whether the discipline of *virtue*, or *libertinism*; whether the schools of *Epicurus*, or *Christ*, be the way to true *liberty*. I appeal to the *experience* of mankind, whether *spiritual* or *sensual* pleasure; whether the *love* of *God* and *virtue*, or the *love* of the *world* and *body*, be the more like to qualify and dispose us to obey
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the dictates of sober and solid *reason*. But the truth is, here is no need of *arguments*; the *lives* and *fortunes* of *atheists* and *deists* proclaim aloud what a glorious kind of *liberty* they are like to bless the world with, 2 *Pet.* ii. 19. *Whilst they promise liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.* And this *corruption* draws on their *ruin*. The dishonourable and miserable *courses*, in which these poor wretches are plunged, and in which, generally, they perish before their time, are such an open *contradiction* to *reason*, that no man doubts but that they have abandoned *its* conduct, that they have given themselves up to that of *lust* and *humour*; and that they earnestly endeavour to force or betray their *reason* into *compliance* to *screen* themselves from the reproach and disturbance of their own *minds*, and from the shame and contempt of the *world*. I have dwelt long enough on *this* argument. 'Tis now time to pass on, and resolve what *Christian liberty* really is.

This is in a manner evident from what has been suggested already. For if *reason* be the governing faculty in *man*, then the *liberty* of *man* must consist in his *subjection* to *reason*: and so *Christian liberty* will be nothing else but *subjection* to *reason* enlightened by *revelation*. Two things therefore are *essential* to true *liberty*: A

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clear and unbyassed judgment; and a power and capacity of acting conformable to it. This is a very short, but full account of liberty. *Darkness* and *impotence* constitute our *slavery*; *light* and *strength* our *freedom*. Man is then free, when his *reason* is not awed by vile *fears*, or bribed by viler *hopes*; when it is not tumultuously transported and hurried away by *lusts* and *passions*; nor cheated and deluded by the gilded appearances of *sophisticated* good; but it deliberates *impartially*, and commands *effectually*. And because the great *obstacle* of this liberty is *sin*; because natural and contracted *corruption* are the *fetters* in which we are bound; because the *law in the body wars against the law in the mind*, obscuring the *light*, and enfeebling the *authority of reason*; hence it is, that *Christian liberty* is as truly as commonly described by a *dominion* over the *body*, by the subduing our corrupt *affections*, and by *deliverance* from *sin*. This notion of liberty may be sufficiently established upon that account of *servitude* or *bondage* which the *apostle* gives us, *Rom. vii.* where he represents it as consisting in *impotence* or *inability* to do those things, which *God* commands, and *reason* approves: *For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not, ver. 18.* Liberty therefore must on the *contrary* consist in being
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able, not only to *will*, but to *do* good; in obeying those *commandments*, which we cannot but acknowledge to be *holy*, and *just*, and *good*. And this is the very notion which our *Lord* and *Master* gives us of it, *John* viii. For, when the *Jews* bragged of their *freedom*, he lets them know, that *freedom* could not consist with *subjection* to *sin*: *He that committeth sin is the servant of sin*, ver. 34. That honourable *parentage*, and the *freedom* of the *body*, was but a false and ludicrous *appearance* of *liberty*: that if they would be *free* indeed, *the Son must make them so*, ver. 36. *i. e.* they must, by his *spirit* and *doctrine*, be rescued from the *servitude* of *lust* and *error*, and be set at *liberty* to work *righteousness*. *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed: and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*, ver. 31, 32. Finally, not to multiply *proofs* of a truth that is scarce liable to be *controverted*, as the *apostle* describes the *bondage* of a *sinner* in *Rom.* vi. so does he the *liberty* of a *saint* in *Rom.* viii. For there, ver. 2. he tells us, that the *law* of the *spirit* of *life* has set the true *Christian* free from the *law* of *sin* and *death*. And then he lets us know wherein this *liberty* consists, in *walking*; not after the *flesh*, but after the *spirit*; in the *mortification* of the *body* of *sin*, and *restitution* of the *mind* to its just *empire*

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and authority. *If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness, ver. 10.* And all this is the same thing with his description of liberty, chap. vi. where 'tis nothing else, but for a man to be made *free from sin, and become the servant of God.* Thus then we have a plain account of *bondage and liberty.* Yet for the clearer understanding of *both,* it will not be amiss to observe, that they are *each* capable of different *degrees;* and both the *one* and the *other* may be *more or less* entire, compleat, and absolute, according to the different *progress* of men in *vice* and *virtue.* Thus, in *some* men, not their *will* only, but their very reason is *enslaved.* Their *understanding* is so far infatuated, their affections so *intirely* captivated, that there is no *conflict* at all between the *mind* and the *body:* they commit *sin* without any *reluctancy* beforehand, or any *remorse* afterwards: their *seared conscience* making no *remonstrance,* inflicting no *wounds,* nor denouncing any *threats.* This is the *last* degree of *vassalage.* Such are said in *scripture* to be *dead in-trespases and sins.* Others there are, in whom their lust and appetite *prevails* indeed, but not without *opposition.* They *reason* rightly; and, which is the natural result of this, have some *desires* and *wishes* of *righteousness:* but through
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the prevalency of the *body*, they are unable to act and live *conformable* to their *reason*. Their *understanding* has indeed *light*, but not *authority*: it *consents* to the *law of God*, but it has no power, no force to make it be *obeyed*: it produces indeed some good *inclinations*, *purposes* and *efforts*; but they prove *weak* and *ineffectual* ones, and *unable* to grapple with the stronger *passion* raised by the *body*. And as *bondage*, so *liberty* is of different *degrees*, and different *strength*. For though *liberty* may be able to *subsist*, where there is much *opposition* from the *body*; yet 'tis plain that *liberty* is most *absolute* and *complete*, where the *opposition* is *least*, where the *body* is reduced to an entire *submission* and *obsequiousness*, and the *spirit*, reigns with an uncontrouled and unlimited *authority*. And this *latter* is that *liberty* which I would have my *perfect* man possessed of: I know very well 'tis *commonly* taught by *some*, that there is *no* such state: But, I think, this *doctrine*, if it be thoroughly considered, has neither *scripture*, *reason*, nor *experience* to support it. For as to those places, *Rom. vii.* and *Gal. v.* urged in favour of an almost incessant, strong, and too frequently prevalent *lusting of the flesh against the spirit*; it has been often answered, and proved too, that they are so far from belonging to the *perfect*, that they belong not to

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the regenerate. But, on the contrary, those *texts* that represent the *yoke of Christ easy, and his burthen light*; which affirm the *commandments of Christ not to be grievous to such as are made perfect in love*; do all bear witness to *that liberty* which I contend for. Nor does *reason* favour my opinion less than *scripture*. For if the *perfect* man be a *new creature*; if he be *transformed* into a *new nature*; if his *body* be *dead to sin, and his spirit live to righteousness*; in one word, if the *world* be as much *crucified to him, as he to it*; I cannot see why it should not be *easy* for him to act *consonant* to his *nature*; why he should not with pleasure and readiness *follow that spirit, and obey those affections, which reign and rule* in him. Nor can I see why a *habit of righteousness* should not have the same *properties* with *other habits*; that is, be attended with *ease and pleasure* in its operations and actions. 'Tis true, I can easily see why the *habits of righteousness* are *acquired* with more *difficulty* than those of any *other* kind: but, I say, I cannot see, when they are *acquired*, why they should not be as *natural and delightful* to us as any *other*. *Lastly*, How *degenerate* soever *ages past* have been, or the *present* is, I dare not so far distrust the *goodness* of my cause, or the *virtue* of *mankind*, as not to refer myself willingly, in this point,

to the decision of *experience*. I am very well assured, that truth and justice, devotion and charity, honour and integrity, are to a great many so dear and delightful, so natural, so easy, that it is hard to determine, whether they are more strongly moved by a sense of *duty*, or the instigations of *love* and *inclination*; and that they cannot do a *base* thing without the utmost *mortification* and *violence* to their *nature*. Nor is all this to be wondered at, if we again reflect on what I just now intimated, that the *perfect* man is a *new creature*, transformed daily from *glory to glory*: that he is moved by *new affections*, raised and fortified by *new principles*: that he is animated by a *divine energy*, and sees all things by a *truer and brighter light*; through which the things of God appear *lovely and beautiful*, the things of the world deformed and *worthless*; just as to him who views them through a *microscope*, the works of God appear *exact and elegant*; but those of man, *coarse, and bungling, and ugly*. My opinion then, which asserts the *absolute liberty* of the *perfect* man, is sufficiently proved here, and in *chapter the first*. And if I thought it were *not*, I could easily reinforce it with fresh recruits. For the glorious *characters* that are given us in *scripture*, of the *liberty* of the *children of God*, and the blessed fruit of it, *peace*

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and joy in the Holy Ghost, would easily furnish me with invincible arguments: nor would the contrary opinion ever have been able to have kept the field so long as it has done, had it not been favoured by a weak and decayed piety; by the fondnesses of men for themselves, in spite of their sins and frailties; and by many mistaken texts.

But that this matter may, if possible, be freed from all objections, I here distinguish between inordinate and natural affections. By inordinate affections, I mean the tendencies of the soul towards that which is unlawful: by natural, its propensity to the body with which it is invested; the desire of its health and ease, and the conveniencies and necessities of life for this end. Now when religion enjoins repugnances to the former appetites, the obedience of the perfect man has no reluctance in it: but when it enjoins things, as sometimes occasionally it does, which thwart and cross the latter; here the obedience even of Christ himself could not be exempt from conflict; for our natural appetites, in this sense of them, will never be put off till our bodies be. I think this is so clear, it needs not be illustrated by instances: or else 'twere easy to shew, that tho' good men have practised temperance, chastity, charity, and other virtues

tues of this kind with *ease* and *pleasure* too; yet has nature *shrunken* and *startled* at *persecution* and *martyrdom*: tho' even here too the courage and resolution of *some* hath appeared to be much *above* what *human nature* ever seemed *capable* of. 2. I do not in the least suppose that *nature* is so *changed*, but that the *inclinations* to sinful pleasure, or profit, or any other forbidden object, will soon *revive* again, even in the *perfect* man, unless he keep a *watch* and *guard* upon himself, and *pass the time of his sojourn*ing here in *fear*. Not to be subject to *disorderly desires*, not to be liable to *irregular motions*, is the privilege of *souls* when stripped of a *mortal* body, or cloathed with an *immortal* one. Till then, the conjunction of *flesh* and *blood* will ever render the poor *soul* obnoxious to *carnal* and *worldly* appetites: and the *natural* appetites of the body do so easily pass those bounds that divide them from *sinful* ones, that the *best* of men can never be *secure*, but when the mind is taken up in *contemplation*, *devotion*, *good works*, or engaged in the *prosecution* of some just and honest *design*, or amused by some innocent *recreation*: for in these cases the *body* is either made the *instrument of righteousness*; or at leastwise, 'tis innocently *busied* and *diverted* from those *objects*, to which it has too impetuous a *tendency*. I have now, I think, sufficiently
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stated the notion of true liberty; and, I hope, sufficiently guarded it: and have nothing to do but to *proceed* to the *fruits* of it; which will serve for so many *motives* or *inducements* to its attainment.

§. 2. *Of the fruits of liberty.*

These may be reduced under four *heads*.

1. *Sin* being a great evil, deliverance from it is great *happiness*.
2. A second fruit of this *liberty* is good *works*.
3. It gives us a near *relation* to God.
4. The great and last *fruit* of it is *eternal life*.

These are all comprised by the *apostle* in *Rom. vi. 21, 22, 23*. *What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* And these are the great *ends* which the *gospel*, that *perfect law of liberty*, aims at, and for which it was *preached* to the world; as appears from those words of our *Lord* to *St. Paul*, *Acts xxvi. 17, 18*. *Unto whom*

now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. I will here insist on these blessed effects of Christian liberty; not only because the design of the chapter demands it, but also to prevent the being obliged to any tedious repetition of them hereafter, under every distinct branch of Christian liberty.

§. 1. *Sin* is a great evil; and therefore deliverance from the dominion of it is a great good. To make this evident, we need but reflect a little on the nature and effects of *sin*. If we inquire into the nature of *sin*, we shall find that it is founded in the subversion of the dignity, and defacing the beauty of human nature; and that it consists in the darkness of our understanding, the depravity of our affections, and the feebleness and impotence of the will. The understanding of a sinner is incapable of discerning the certainty and force of divine truths, the loveliness of virtue, the unspeakable pleasure which now flows from the great and precious promises of the gospel, and the incomparably greater which will one day flow from the accomplishment and fruition of them. His affections, which
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if fixed and bent on *virtue*, had been *incentives*, as they were designed by God, to *noble* and *worthy* actions, being *byassed* and *perverted*, do now hurry him on to *lewd* and *wicked* ones. And by *these* the *mind*, if at any time it chance to be awakened and rendered sensible of its happiness and duty, is *overpowered* and *oppressed*. If *this* were not the true *state* of a *sinner*; if the *strength* of *sin* did not thus consist in the *disorder* and *impotence* of all the *faculties* of the *soul*, whence is it that the *sinner* acts as he *does*? Is it not evident that his *understanding* is *infatuated*, when he lives as if he were merely, wholly, *body*? as if he had *no soul*, or none but one *resulting from*, and *dissolved with* its *temperament* and *contexture*? one designed to no higher purpose than to contrive, minister to, and partake in its *sensualities*? Is it not evident that *he* has little expectation of *another world*, who *lays up his treasures* only in *this*; and lives as if he were born only to make *provision for the flesh* to fulfil the *lusts thereof*? 'Tis true, all *sinners* are not equally stupid or obdurate: but even in those in whom some *sparks* of *understanding* and *conscience* remain *unextinguished*, how are the *weak* desires of *virtue* baffled and overpowered by the much *stronger* passions which they have for the *body* and the *world*?

world? Do they not find themselves reduced to that wretched state of bondage, wherein the good that they would do, that they do not; but the evil that they would not do, that is present with them? 'Tis plain then that sin is a disease in our nature: that it not only extinguishes the grace of the Spirit, and obliterates the image of God, stamped on the soul in its creation; but also scatters and diffuses I know not what venom, and infection through it, that makes it eagerly pursue its own misery. 'Tis a disease that produces more intolerable effects in the soul, than any whatever can in the body. The predominancy of any noxious humour can breed no pain, no disturbance equal to that of a predominant passion: no scars or ruins which the worst disease leaves behind it, are half so deformed and loathsome as those of vice: nay, that last change, which death itself produces, when it converts a beautiful body into dust and rottenness, is not half so contemptible or hateful as that of sin; when it transforms man into a beast or devil. If we do not yet sufficiently comprehend the nature of sin, by viewing it as it exists in our minds and hearts, we may contemplate it in our actions. And here, 'tis blindness and folly, rashness and madness, incogitance, levity, falsehood, and cowardise; 'tis every thing that is mean and

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base: and all this aggravated by the most accursed *ingratitude* that human nature is capable of. These and the like *reflections* on the *nature* of *sin* cannot chuse but render it *hateful*. And if,

Secondly, We make any serious ones on the *effects* of it, they cannot fail of rendering it *frightful* and *dreadful* to us. These *effects* may be especially reduced to *three*:
 1. The ill influence *sin* has upon our *temporal* concerns. 2. *Guilt*. And 3. *Fear*.
 As to the *first* of these, I shall only say, that we suffer very few *evils* but what are owing to our own *sins*: that it is very rarely any *calamity* befalls us, but we may put our finger on the *fountain*, the *sin*, I mean, from whence the mischief flows. *Whence* come wars and *fightings* amongst you, saith St. James; come they not from your *lusts*, which war in your members? This is every jot as applicable to *private* as *publick* contentions: and where *envy*, *strife*, and *contention* is, no *evil* work, no *disaster* will be long *absent*. I might run through all the different *kinds* of *evils* that infest the *body*, or embroil the *fortune*: that blast our *hopes*, or stain our *desires*: and easily shew, that they all generally spring from our *vices*. Nay, what is worse yet, I could shew that *sin* converts our *good things* into *evil*, and our *enjoyments* into *punishments*:
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that it renders the *slightest evils intolerable*; turns *scratches into wounds*, and *wounds into gangrenes*. But this is too *copious* a subject; and would insensibly render me *voluminous*, when I would be as *short* as possibly I can. A *second effect* of *sin* is *guilt*; which is nothing else, but a *consciousness* of having *done ill*, and an *obligation* to *punishment* resulting from it. And though men often *sin* with *hopes* of *impunity*; yet it is hard to imagine, even on *this* supposal, that they should *sin* without suffering the *reproaches* of their *own minds*; which surely must be very *uneasy* to them: to be perpetually *vexed* at one's *own folly*; to *commit* those things which we inwardly *condemn*, and be in continual *pain* lest they should *come to light*; to be always *displeased* at *one's self*, and *afraid*, not only of the *reflections* of *others*, but our *own*: *this* is, methinks, a *great evil*, did no *other* attend our *sin*. But, *thirdly*, *fear* is almost inseparably joined with *guilt*: for *guilt* does not only damp the *cheerfulness*, and enfeeble the *vigour* of the *mind*; it does not only destroy that *confidence* man would otherwise *naturally* have in *God*, and render him *cowardly* and *pusillanimous*; but it *terrifies* his soul with *melancholy* apprehensions, and makes him live continually in *fear* of *death* and *punishment*.

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And thus *scripture* represents the *state* of a *sinner*: *The wicked flee when none pursue; but the righteous are bold as a lion, Prov. xxviii. 1. If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things, 1 Joh. iii. 2. There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord, Isa. xlvi. 22. To deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage, Heb. ii. 15. The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness has surprized the hypocrites; who amongst us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? Isa. xxxiii. 14.* Nor let any one wonder, that notwithstanding the *outward gaiety* of the *sinner*, the *Spirit* thus describes the *inward condition* of his *soul*. As long as men retain the *belief* of a *God*, it is impossible they should wholly free themselves from the *fear* of him. They may indeed *forget* him in their *fits* of *lust* or *passion*: but in their *intermissions* his *terrors* will return upon them with *more violence*. Again, as long as men retain the common principles of *truth* and *justice*; if they acknowledge but the obligation of that universal law, *Tbou shalt do to others, as thou wouldest they should do unto thee*, 'tis impossible they should reflect on their *sins* without *regret* and *uneasiness*; for there is no *sin* but has, more or less,

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repugnancy in it to *truth, justice, and goodness*. Finally, As long as men are persuaded that there is such a faculty as *conscience*, that God has prescribed them a *law*, and that they are *accountable to him*; the *natural conscience* cannot chuse, but by *fits*, and upon *occasions*, to scourge and torture, lance and gash them. And 'tis a hard matter to wear out *these notions*: they are so *natural and obvious*; the *proofs* of them are so *clear*; their *reputation and authority* in the world is so well *established*; and the *providence of God* so frequently *inculcates* them. Men may easily wear out all sense of the *beauty*, and of their *obligations to the heights and perfections of virtue*: but they cannot so easily do this in reference to *virtue in general*; because 'tis tempered and accommodated to *human nature and society*; and necessary to the tolerable *well-doing* of the world. Men may soon, I confess, extinguish their *Christianity*, but not *humanity*: and while *this* remains, *sin* will leave a *stain and guilt* behind it; and *guilt* will be attended by *uneasiness and fear*. The very *pagans*, who had advanced so far in *wickedness*, as to be given up to all *dishonourable passions*, and to commit all *uncleanness with greediness*, had not yet so *mortified and stupified* their *conscience*, but that it gave much *disturbance*, Rom. i. ver. 32. 'tis said of them,

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that *they knew the judgment of God, that they which committed such things, were worthy of death.* And Rom. ii. 15. *Their consciences are said to accuse and condemn them.* And 'tis of *very wicked men*, that the author to the Hebrews affirms, that *through fear of death they were all their life-time subject to bondage.*

But are there not, will some say; many *ingenious and brave spirits*, who have dispersed those *vain spectres*, and burst those *superstitious fetters*, by which you labour to *scare and enslave* the world? I do not doubt, indeed, but that there are *too many* who have vigorously endeavoured to cashier all *principles* of natural and revealed religion, and utterly to extinguish all conscience of good and evil. But *this is such an attempt*, in which, I confess, I could never have *believed*, that the *most daring sinner* could have proved *successful*, had not the *scriptures* told me, that there are some *who are past feeling*, Eph. iv. 19. *of a seared conscience*, 2 Tim. iv. 2. *who are not ashamed when they have committed iniquity, neither can they blush*, Jer. vi. 15. *who call good evil, and evil good; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter*, Isai. v. 20. *Such sinners there are then: but what does this amount to? what can their sense or example weigh?* I am sure these

poor wretches are as far distant from any true happiness, as from sense; and deserve our pity, not imitation. As will easily appear from these following considerations.

I. 'Tis true, conscience depends upon opinion: but what if this opinion depend upon sense and truth? what if it be built upon the demonstration of the spirit and of power? in what a deplorable condition are these men of wit? the fear of an angry God, a judgment to come, and an hell, is no common or ordinary fear. 'Tis not the fear of a scratch or wound in the body; of a baffle in the pursuit of preferment, or a disappointment in that of pleasure; 'tis not the loss or the forfeiture of estate, in part, or whole: 'tis not a blot upon our reputation: 'tis not the death of a child, a brother, or, what is more, if he be such, a friend: 'tis not any thing of this kind that is the object of this fear; but misery pure and unallayed; complicated, accumulated misery; misery unalterable, incurable, and lasting as long as eternity. Methinks, before one should venture on a sin, which is threated with such a state as this; and much more, before one should resolve to continue in it, it were reasonable to be very sure, that the notion of a hell were false, and the doctrine of eternal punishment a mere bugbear. Nay, I protest, in a

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matter of this *importance*, I think one should scarce trust to a *demonstration*, unless it had pass'd the *test* of the most *solid* and *impartial* part of mankind, and stood the *shock* and *trial* of many *ages*. But, alas, after the utmost *efforts* of *wit* and *lust*, what has ever yet been produced that has been able to undergo the *examination* even of an *honest man*? what *arguments* have yet been started against a *judgment to come*, that have been able to work upon *any* who were truly *serious* in the point? and if a *judgment to come*, why not an *hell*? *Revelation* is plain; and *reason* can find no inconsistency in the *doctrine*. *Human laws* punish a *single offence* sometimes with *death* or *banishment*; with *loss of estate*: and by *this* and divers *other* ways, extend the punishment of the criminal to his *posterity*: that is, make it as *eternal* as they *can*. And shall it be thought *unjust* in *God* to punish the *repeated* provocations of an *impenitent* life; the *neglect* of that *great salvation* wrought by the *blood*, and *published* by the *mouth* of his *dearly beloved son*; and all this *wilfully* in *defiance* of the *light* of the *gospel*, and *solicitations* of the *spirit*; in *defiance* of *mercies* and *chastisements*; shall it, I say, be thought *unjust* in *God* to punish this by a *miserable eternity*? When *infinite goodness* has in *vain* tried all *imaginable means* to
reclaim

reclaim a sinner, what has he to complain of, if God leave him to the effects of his own choice? Sin, as it alienates our affections from God here, so must it certainly exclude us from his presence and his favour hereafter. And what can be the case of that wretched creature, who is banished for ever to those black and dismal regions, which no ray, no influence of divine goodness can ever reach? where shall those unhappy creatures dwell, which shall be chased by the presence and glory of God out of the new heaven and the new earth, (or which rather can never approach either) but in that outward darkness, which is parted from the world of the blessed by an unpassable gulph? Ah then! if this be so, what do wretched men gain by growing impudent in wickedness? Alas! the more insensible men are of the deformity and danger of sin, the more desperate their state, the more incurable their disease; and the nearer they to death and destruction: My spirit shall not always strive with man. This is indeed a blessed advantage, to stand upon the brink of damnation! 'tis a glorious victory, to have defeated all the means of grace and happiness! 'tis an heroick atchievement to be able to extinguish all true sense and reason, as well as religion, and become impregnable, impenetrable to all arguments, to all motives, which either the tenderest love

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or the profoundest *wisdom* of God and man can attack us by!

2. I cannot but think that those very men, who for the *most part* are *obdurate* and *insensible*, do suffer *some*, though *rare* returns of *anxiety* and *fear*. *Why* else are they such avowed *enemies* to *solitude* and *retirement*? to all serious and calm *reflections*; that they are ready to take up with a most trifling and contemptible *business* or *diversion*? nay, *tired* with a dull and tasteless *repetition* of a *jolly*, they chuse to *repeat* it to their *lives end*, rather than be *alone*, and *thoughtful*? what is this but to *confess* that there is something *within*, which they are afraid to *awaken*? that there is such a *brightness* in *divine truth*, that they dare not open their *eyes* upon it, lest it should fill their souls with the *terrors* of *God*? This *height* of *wickedness* then at best is a state fit only for *fortunate sinners*, who can *roll* and *tumble* from *jolly* to *jolly*, from *one* *impertinence* or *extravagance* to *another*, *endlessly*: and yet what becomes of those poor things, when a *disaster*, when a *disease*, nay, but a *wakeful* hour by night forces them to *retire* into *themselves*?

3. A *sinner* does not *soon* arrive at this state of *insensibility*. It costs him very *dear* to grow *impudent* in his lust. Many a *pang*, many a *torment* has he suffered first; often has he felt the *wounds* of *conscience*; often
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has he trembled and shrunk at the *menaces* of God. The *soul* can no more be reconciled to *sin*, than the *body* to *excess*, but by *passing* through many *painful* and *sickly* fits, many *uneasy* pangs and qualms. And is it not worth the *while* to *endure* so *much* in order to be *damned*? is it not an infallible *mark* of more than vulgar *wisdom*, to purchase *misery* at so *dear* a rate? To *endure* *hardship* as good *soldiers* of Christ Jesus, for a *crown*, a *never-fading* crown; *this* with them, is an undertaking that deserves to be *exposed* and *lashed* with the utmost *severity* of spight and confidence: but to *suffer*, as it were, *repeated* *martyrdoms* to gain an *hell*, this is what they think becomes men of *their parts* and *gallantry*. Blessed God! to what degree of *madness* and *stupidity* may men of the *finest* natural parts sink, when *abandoned* by thee? or rather, when *they* themselves *abandon* thee, and that *light* which thou hast set up in the *world*? Our *Lord* and *Master* thought the *profits* and *pleasures* of the *whole* world a *poor* compensation for the *loss* of the *soul*: *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, &c.* Matt. xvi. But *these* men, rather than it should not perish for ever, will charge through *shame* and *pain*, *remorse* and *sickness*, and *all* the *obstacles* that God has set before *us* and a desperate height of *wickedness*.

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4. Though a *sinner* may come to that pass, as to *suppress* his *conscience*, and *master* his *fears*; yet he must ever be *conscious* to himself of the *fruitlessness* and the *mean-ness* of a course of *sin*. He must needs be inwardly sensible, that he has *wearied* himself to commit iniquity to *no purpose*; that his *mind* has been *restless* and *tempestuous*, like a *troubled sea*, *casting up its own mire and dirt*: he must be conscious to himself, that *he is false and unjust, unconstant and ingrateful*, and in *bondage* to such *lusts* as are *mean and poor*, and *injurious* to his *repose*, and which he has often *wished* himself *free* from. And *this*, no doubt, must be a *blessed* condition, when a man's own *mind* does to his face assure him, that *he is that very thing* which *all the world condemns and scorns*, and which he cannot *endure* to be *charged* with, without *resenting* it as the highest *affront*! Certainly it were better that *all the world* should *call me fool and knave, and villain*, than that I should *call myself so*, and *know it to be true*. My *peace and happiness* depends upon my *own* opinion of *myself*, not *that* of *others*: 'tis the *inward* sentiments that I *have* of *myself*, that *raise or deject* me; any my *mind* can no more be pleased with any *sensation* but its *own*, than the *body*
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can be gratified by the relishes of another's palate.

5. The more *insensible* a sinner grows, the more *intolerable* is the *disorder* and *distracti*on which *sin* produces in his affairs. While men are under any little restraints of *conscience*; while they are held in by *scruples*, and *fears*, and *fits* of *regret*; while, in a word, they *sin* with any *modesty*, so long *sin* will tolerably comport with their *interest* and *reputation*; but as soon as they grow *insensible* and *impotent*, they pass all *bounds*, and there is nothing so *dear* and *considerable* to them, which they will not *sacrifice* to their *wickedness*. Now wife and children, friends, estate, laws, vows, compacts, oaths, are no *stronger ties* to them than *Sampson's* *witbes*, or *cords*. Such a one as *this* is very well described in the *prophet*; *Thou art a swift dromedary, traversing her ways; a wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away?* Jer. ii. 23. And again, he is fitly represented by an *horse rushing into the battle*. He has as much *contempt* for his *safety* and *happiness*, as for *reason* and *religion*; he defies *shame*, *ruin*, and *death*, as much as he does God and *providence*: in one word, with an *impudent* and *lewd stupidity* he makes all the *haste* he can to be *undone*; and since he *will* be so,

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so, it were *well* if he could be undone *alone*. I am sure we have too *many* instances at *this day* of the miserable and fatal *effects* of *atheism* and *deism*, to leave any room to doubt whether I have *strained* the point here or no.

Upon the whole it does appear, that *sin* is a *great evil*; and that the *evil* of it is not *lessened*, but *increased* by *obduration*. And from hence the *proposition* inferred does naturally *follow*, that *deliverance* from it is a *great good*; so *great*, that if we estimate it by the *evil* there is in *sin*, *health* to the *sick*, *liberty* to the *captive*, *day* to the benighted, weary and wandering *traveller*; a *calm*, a *port* to *passengers* in a *storm*; *pardon* to men *adjudged* to *death*, are but weak and imperfect *images* or *resemblances* of it. A *disease* will at worst terminate with the *body*, and *life* and *pain* will have an end *together*: but the *pain* that *sin* causes will endure to all *eternity*; for the *worm* *dies not*, and *the fire* *will not be quenched*. The *error* of the *traveller* will be corrected by the approaching *day*, and his *weariness* refreshed at the next *stage* he comes to; but he that errs impenitently from the *path of life*, is *lost for ever*: when the *day of grace* is once *set* upon him, no *light* shall e'er *recall* his wandering *feet* into the *path*
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of righteousness and peace; no ease, no refreshment shall e'er relieve his toil and misery. Whilst the feet of the captive are loaded with fetters, his soul may enjoy its truest liberty; and in the midst of dangers and dungeons, like Paul and Silas, he may sing songs of praise and triumph: but the captivity of sin defiles, oppresses, and enslaves the mind, and delivers up the miserable man to those intolerable and endless evils, which inexorable justice and almighty wrath inflicts upon ingratitude and obstinacy. A storm can but wreck the body, a frail and worthless bark; the soul will escape safe to shore, the blessed shore, where the happy inhabitants enjoy an undisturbed, an everlasting calm; but sin makes shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and he that perishes in it does but pass into a more miserable state; for on the wicked God will rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest; this shall be their portion for ever, Psa. xi. And, lastly, a pardon sends back a condemned criminal to life, that is, to sins and sufferings, to toils and troubles, which death, if death were the utmost he had to fear, would have freed him from: but he, that is once delivered from sin, is passed from death to life; and from this life of faith, of love, of hope, shall soon pass to another of fruition and glory.

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§. 2. A *second fruit of liberty is good works.* Here I will shew *two things*: *First*, and this but *briefly*, that the works of *righteousness* contribute mightily to our *happiness*; and that *immediately*. *Secondly*, That *deliverance from sin* removes the great *obstacles and impediments of righteousness*, and throws off that *weight* which would otherwise *encumber and tire us in our race*.

1. *Holiness* is no small *pleasure*, no small *advantage*, to him who is *exercised* therein. When *nature is renewed and restored*, the *works of righteousness* are properly and truly the *works of nature*: and to *do good to man*, and offer up our *praises and devotions to God*, is to gratify the *strongest and most delightful inclinations* we have. These indeed are at first *stifled and oppressed by original corruption, false principles, and vicious customs*: but when once *they have broke through these*, like *seeds through the earthly coats* they are enclosed and imprisoned in, and are impregnated, warmed, and cherished by an *heavenly influence*, they naturally shoot up into *good works*. *Virtue* has a *celestial original*, and a *celestial tendency*; from *God it comes*, and towards *God it moves*: and can it be *otherwise than amiable and pleasant*? *Virtue* is all *beauty*, all *harmony and order*; and therefore we may view and review, consider and reflect upon it

it with *delight*. It procures us the *favour* of God and *man*; it makes our *affairs* naturally run *smoothly* and *calmly* on; and fills our minds with *courage*, *cheerfulness*, and *good hopes*. In one word, *diversion* and *amusement* gives us a *fanciful* pleasure; an *animal sensitive* life, a *short* and *mean* one: *sin*, a *deceitful*, *false*, and *fatal* one: only *virtue*, a *pure*, a *rational*, a *glorious*, and *lasting* one. And this is *enough* to be said here: the *loveliness* of *holiness* being a *subject* which ever and anon I have *occasion* to engage in.

2. I am next to shew, that *deliverance* from *sin* removes the *impediment* of *virtue*. This will easily be made out, by examining what influence *selfishness*, *sensuality*, and the *love of this world*, which are the *three* great principles or sources of *wickedness*, have upon the *several parts* of evangelical *righteousness*. 1. The *first part* is that, which contains *those duties* that more immediately relate to *ourselves*. These are especially *two*, *sobriety* and *temperance*. By *sobriety*, I mean a serious and impartial examination of things; or such a state of mind as qualifies us for it. By *temperance*, I mean the moderation of our affections and enjoyments, even in lawful and allowed instances. From these proceed *vigilance*, *industry*, *prudence*, *fortitude*; or *patience* and *steadiness* of mind in the prosecution of what is best. Without
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these 'tis in vain to expect, either devotion towards God, or justice and charity towards man. Nay, nothing good or great can be accomplished without them: since without them we have no ground to hope for, either the assistance of divine grace, or the protection and concurrence of divine providence. Only, the pure and chaste soul is a fit temple for the residence of the Spirit: and the providence of God watches over none, or at least none have reason to expect it should, but such as are themselves vigilant and industrious. But now, how repugnant to, how inconsistent with those virtues, is that infatuation of mind, and that debauchery of affections, wherein sin consists? How incapable either of sobriety or temperance do selfishness, sensuality, and the love of this world render us? What a false estimate of things do they cause us to form? How insatiable do they render us in our desire of such things, as have but false and empty appearances of good? And how imperiously do they precipitate us into those sins, which are the pollution and dishonour of our nature? On the contrary, let man be but once enlightened by faith; let him but once come to believe, that his soul is himself, that he is a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, that heaven is his country, and that to do good works is to lay up his treasure in it; let him, I say, but

once

once believe *this*, and then how *sober*, how *temperate*, how *wise*, how *vigilant*, and *industrious* will he grow? And this he will soon be induced to *believe*, if he be not actually under the influence of vicious *principles* and vicious *customs*. When the *mind* is undeceived and disabused, and the *affections* disengaged, 'tis *natural* to man to think *calmly*, and to desire and enjoy with a *moderation*, suited to *just* and *sober* notions of worldly things: for *this* is to think and act as a *man*. A *second part* of *holiness* regards *God* as its immediate *object*, and consists in the *fear* and *love* of *him*, in *dependence* and *self-resignation*, in *contemplation* and *devotion*. As to this, 'tis plain, that whoever is under the *dominion* of any *sin*, must be an *enemy*, or at least a *stranger* to it. The *infidel* knows no *God*; and the *wicked* will not, or dares not, approach one. Their *guilt*, or their *aversion* keeps them from it. *Selfishness*, *sensuality*, and the *love of the world*, are inconsistent with the *love of the Father*, and all the several *duties* we owe him: they *alienate* the minds of men from *him*, and set up *other Gods* in his room. Hence the *covetous* are pronounced guilty of *idolatry*, Col. iii. 5. and the *luxurious* and *unclean* are said to make *their belly their god*, and to *glory in their shame*, Phil. iii. 19. But as soon as a poor man discerns

discerns that he has set his heart upon *false* goods; as soon as he finds himself *cheated* and *deceived* in all his expectations by the *world*, and is convinced that *God* is his proper and his sovereign *good*; how natural is it to *turn* his desires and hopes from the *creature* upon the *Creator*? How natural is it to *contemplate* his *greatness* and *goodness*, to *thirst* impatiently for his *favour*, and *dread* his *displeasure*? And *such* a man will certainly make the *worship* of *God* a great part, at least, of the *business* and *employment* of *life*. With *this* he will *begin*, and with *this* he will *end* the day: nor will he rest *here*; his soul will be ever and anon *mounting* towards *heaven*, in *ejaculations*; and there will be scarce any action, any event, that will not *excite* him to *praise* and *adore* *God*, or engage him in some wise *reflections* on his *attributes*. But all *this*, will the *loose* and *atheistical* say, may be well *spared*; 'tis only a vain and idle *amusement*. *War* and *peace*, *business* and *trade*, have no dependence upon it; *kingdoms* and *common-wealths* may *stand* and *flourish*, and sensible *men* may be *rich* and *happy* without it. But to this I *answer*, *religion* towards *God*, is the *foundation* of all true *virtue* towards our *neighbour*. *Laws* would want the better part of their *authority*, if they were not enforced by an *awe* of *God*: the wisest *counsels* would have

have no effect, did not *virtue* and *religion* help to execute them: *kingdoms* and *commonwealths* would be dissolved, and burst to pieces, if they were not united and held in by *these bonds*: and *wickedness* would reduce the world to one great solitude and ruin, were it not tempered and restrained, not only by the *virtues* and *examples*, but by the *supplications* and *intercessions* too, of devout men. Finally, This is an objection fit for none to make, but the *fottish* and the *ignorant*; men of *desperate confidence*, and *little knowledge*. For whoever is able to consider, by what *motives* mankind has ever been wont to be most strongly affected; by what *principles* the world has ever been led and governed; how great an interest even *superstition* has had, either in the *civilizing* and *reforming* barbarous nations, or the *martial* successes of the first *founders* of *monarchies*, and the like; whoever, I say, is able to reflect, though but slightly, on these things, can never be so silly, as to demand what the *use* of *religion* is; or to imagine it possible to root up its *authority* in the world.

The *third part* of *holiness* regards our neighbour; and consists in the exercise of *truth*, *justice*, and *charity*. And *no-where* is the ill influence of *selfishness*, *sensuality*, and the *love of the world*, more notorious than *here*: for these rendering us *impatient*

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and *insatiable* in our *desires*, *violent* in the *prosecution* of them, *extravagant* and *excessive* in our *enjoyments*, and the *things* of this *world* being *few* and *finite*, and unable to *satisfy* such *inordinate* appetites ; we stand in *one another's* light, in *one another's* way to *profit* and *pleasures*, or, too often at least, *seem* to do so : and this must unavoidably produce a thousand *wretched* consequences. Accordingly, we daily see that these *passions*, *selfishness*, *sensuality*, and the *love of the world*, are the *parents* of *envy* and *emulation*, *avarice*, *ambition*, *strife* and *contention*, *hypocrisy* and *corruption*, *lewdness*, *luxury*, and *prodigality*, but are utter *enemies* to *honour*, *truth* and *integrity* ; to *generosity* and *charity*. To obviate therefore the *mischievous effects* of these *vicious principles*, *religion* aims at *implanting* in the *world*, *others* of a *benign* and *beneficent* nature ; *opposing* against the *love of the world*, *hope* ; against *selfishness*, *charity* ; and against *sensuality*, *faith* : and to the end the *different tendency* of these *different principles* may be the more *conspicuous*, I will briefly compare the *effects* they have in reference to our *neighbour*. *Selfishness* makes a man look upon the *world* as made for *him* alone ; and upon *all* as his *enemies*, who do any way *interfere* with, or *obstruct* his *designs* : it *seals up* all our *treasures* : *confines* all our
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care and thoughts to our private interest, honour, or pleasure; employs all our parts, power, and wealth, and all our time too, in pursuit of our particular advantage. Sensuality tempts a man to abandon the care and concern for his country, his friends and relations, and neglect the duties of his station, that he may give himself to some sottish and dishonourable vice: it prevails with him to refuse alms to the poor, assistance to any publick or neighbourly good work, and even a decent, nay, sometimes a necessary allowance to his family, that he may waste and lavish out his fortune upon some vile and expensive lust. In a word, it makes him incapable of the fatigues of civil business; and much more of the hardships and hazards of war: so that instead of imitating the glorious example of Uriah, who would not suffer himself to be courted into the enjoyment even of allowed pleasures, nor indulge himself in the tenderesses and caresses of a wife and children, while Joab and the armies of Israel were in the field; he, on the contrary, dissolves and melts down his life and fortune in uncleanness and luxury, the shame and burden of his country and his family, at a time when not only the honour, but the safety of his country lies at stake, and prince and people defend it by their toil and blood.

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What should I mention the *love of the world*? Are not the *effects* of it as visible amongst us, as *deplorable*? Does not this, where-ever it reigns, fill all places with *bribery* and *corruption*, *falsehood*, *treachery*, and *cowardice*? Worse cannot be said on't, and more needs not: for what *societies* can thrive, or which way can *credit* and *reputation* be supported? What *treasures*, what *counsels*, what *armies*, what *conduct*, can save a people, where these *vices* prevail? Let us now, on the other side, suppose *selfishness*, *sensuality*, and the *love of the world*, cashiered; and *faith*, *hope*, and *charity* entertained in their room; what a blessed *change* will this effect in the world? How soon will *honour* and *integrity*, *truth* and *justice*, and a *publick spirit* revive? How serviceable and *eminent* will these render every man in his *charge*? These are the true *principles* of great and brave *actions*: these, these alone, can render our *duty* dearer to us than any *temporal* consideration: these will enable us to do *good works*, without an eye to the *return* they will make us: these will make it appear to us very reasonable, to *sacrifice* fortune, life, every thing, when the *honour* of God and *publick good* demand it of us. The *belief* and *hope* of heaven is a sufficient *encouragement* to *virtue*, when all others fail: the *love of God* as our *supreme good*,

good, will make us easily surmount the consideration of expence, difficulty or hazard, in such attempts as we are sure will please him; and the love of our neighbour as our selves will make us compassionate to his evils and wants, tender to his infirmities, and zealous of his good as of our own. How happy then would these principles make the world? And how much is it the interest of every one to encourage and propagate these, and to discountenance and suppress the contrary ones? I have done with the second effect of Christian Liberty; and will pass on to the third, as soon as I have made two remarks on this last paragraph. First, 'Tis very evident from what has been said in it, that solid virtue can be grafted on no stock, but that of religion: that universal righteousness can be raised on none but gospel principles; who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ? 1 John v. 5. I do not oppose this proposition against Jew or Gentile. God vouchsafed in sundry times and in divers manners, such revelations of his truth, and such communications of his grace, as he saw fit: and to these is their righteousness therefore, whatever it was, to be attributed; not to the law of nature or Moses. But I oppose it against the bold pretensions of libertines and atheists at this day. Honour

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and *justice* in their mouths is a *vain boast*; and the *natural power* they pretend to over their *own actions*, to *square* and *govern* them according to the rules of *right reason*, is only a *malicious* design to *supplant* the *honour* of *divine grace*; and is as *false* and *groundless* as *arrogant*. Alas! they talk of a *liberty* which they do not *understand*: for did they but once admit *purity* of heart into their *notion* of it, they would soon discern what *strangers* they are to it. How is it possible, but that *they* should be the *servants* of the *body*, who reject and disbelieve the *dignity* and *pre-eminence* of the *soul*? How is it possible, *they* should not be *lovers* of *pleasure* more than *lovers* of *God*, who either believe *no God*, or *none* that *concerns* himself much about us? And how can they chuse but be *selfish* and *sensual*, and doat upon this *world*, who expect *no better*, who believe *no other*? Take away *Providence* and a *life to come*, and what can *oblige* a man to any *action*, that shall *cross* his *temporal interest* or his *pleasure*? What shall *reward* his *espousing* *virtue*, when it has no *dowry*, but *losses*, *reproaches* and *persecutions*? What shall *curb* him in the career of a *lust*, when he may *commit* it, not only with *impunity*, but, as the world sometimes goes, with *honour* and *preferment* too? Though, therefore, such men

as these may possibly restrain their *outward actions*, yet are they all the while *enslaved* and *defiled* in their *affections*; and the very *liberty* they boast of in their *conduct* and *management* of *themselves* openly, springs from their *secret servitude* to some vile *passion* or other. Nor yet can I be so soft and easy as to grant, that *such men* as these either do or can *arrive* at the *liberty* they pretend to: I mean, that of *regulating* and *governing* all their *outward actions* by the rules of *virtue*. They too often throw off the *disguise*, which either *hypocrisy* or *enmity to religion* makes them put on; and *prove* too plainly to the world, that when they lay *restraints* on themselves in *this* or *that sin*, 'tis only to *indulge* themselves the more *freely* and *securely* in *others*. Secondly, My *next* remark is, that it is gross stupidity, or impudence, to *deny* a *providence* and *another world*, when the *belief* of *both* is so *indispensably necessary* to the well-being of *this*. The *frame* and *nature* of *man*, and the *necessities* of *this world* require *both*. Without these, *selfishness* must undoubtedly be the *predominant* principle. This would breed *unreasonable desires*; and these would fill us with *fears* and *jealousies*: so that a *state of nature* would indeed be a *state of war*; and our *enmity* against one another would *not* be *extinguished* by *civil society*; but only *concealed* and *restrained*, till a fit

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occasion for its breaking out should present itself: *laws* would want that *force*, *commonwealths* that *bond* or *cement*, *conversation* that *confidence*, and our *possessions* that *security* which is necessary to render them *blessings* to us.

§. 3. A *third fruit of Christian Liberty* is that *relation* which it creates between *God* and *us*. We are no longer *of the world*, but are *separated*, and *sanctified*, *devoted* and *dedicated to God*. Thus *St. Peter*, 1 Epist. ii. 9. *Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.* And thus *St. Paul*, Rom. viii. 15, 16. *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. God is our God; we are his people. He is our Father, and we are his children, we are ingrafted into his family.* The consequence of this is, his *dearly beloved and only begotten Son* is our *Advocate at his right hand*, the *Propitiation for our sin*, and *Intercessor* for us. His *Spirit* resides with us to *comfort* and *assist* us; his *angels* guard us, and minister to us; for we are no longer the *object* of his *wrath*, but of his *love* and *care*. How does

the apostle triumph on this argument, Heb. xii. 18, 19, &c. For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire; nor into blackness and darkness, and tempest: and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they who heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded; and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem: and to an innumerable company of angels: to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect: and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant: and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. And thus again, 1 Cor. iii. 2. Therefore let no man glory in men; for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. These are great and glorious things. What dignity and eminence does this adoption raise us to? What blessedness flows from commu-
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nion and fellowship with God? What can we want, or what can we fear, when we have so mighty an interest in the Sovereign of heaven and earth; when all his divine Perfections are employed to promote and secure our happiness? Now sure we may rejoice, now we may glory and triumph; for certainly all things must work together for our good. But as fallen angels envied the happiness of new-created man; so do apostate and debauched men envy that of the godly. And one of these will be apt to say, Hold, Sir, you run too fast; these glorious privileges are yet but in embryo, and all your happiness is yet but in the reversion: notwithstanding all these big words you must grant me that you are yet but in a state of probation; that you are to undergo hardships and difficulties, and to live upon the thin diet of hope and expectation: and so I think I might take you down from heirs of God, to servants at the best. Well, I will grant, that we yet live by faith, and wait for the hope of glory: nor will I at present contend about those pleasures that are but in the bud: I will for once quit all that preference both as to nobility and pleasure, which adoption and the full assurance of hope, gives a godly man above a sinner; and I will take the state of a child of God, to be as the objector would have it; I will suppose

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suppose him to be under age till he come to another life; and to differ nothing from a servant whilst he is so, though he be heir of all. Yet after all, if I can prove that 'tis our duty to serve God, it will be no contemptible fruit, no small commendation of liberty, that it enables us to do our duty. And that it is our duty to serve God, is plain: for is it not fit that he, who made and still upholds the world, should govern it? Ought we not to pay obedience to his laws, whose infinite Perfections and immense beneficence invest him with an absolute and uncontrollable sovereignty over us? Whom should we honour with our soul and body, but him who is the author of both? to whom should we devote and sacrifice what we have, but to him from whom we received all? whose praise should we shew forth, but his who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light? whom should we obey and adore, but him who has translated us out of bondage into liberty, out of the servitude of Satan into the kingdom of his dear Son; having redeemed us, by the blood of his Son, from that wrath to which our sins had deservedly subjected us? But this is not all; I shall prove it not only to be our duty, but our honour and our happiness, to serve God; even on the supposition on which the objection proceeds, and which I at present grant.

I. 'Tis

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1. 'Tis our honour to *serve him*, whom *angels serve, to whom all things in heaven and in earth do bow and obey.* 'Tis the highest *prerogative* we can derive from *grace or nature*, to be *capable of serving him.* His *divine Perfections* transcend the *conceptions of inferior creatures*, and can be *known, contemplated, and adored* by none, but such as are *made but a little lower than the angels*; such as are *endued*, not only with the *light of reason*, but with a far *brighter*, that of the *Spirit of God.* This is indeed our *utmost Perfection*, and must be our *utmost ambition*: this alone makes us *considerable*, who are in all *other respects but mean and contemptible*; for we draw but a *precarious and dependent breath*, and the *world we inhabit* is a *dark and tempestuous one*, full of *folly and misery.* But even *this* will serve for a further *confirmation* of what I *further contend for.* For being *indigent and needy*, standing at an *infinite distance from self-sufficiency*, 'tis plain that what we cannot find *within us*, we must seek *without us.* Some *all-sufficient good* we must *find out*; *something* we must *rest in*, and *repose* our selves upon; and *this will be our God*, *this we shall serve and adore.* And *what shall this be?* shall we *serve evil spirits?* these are our *avowed and inveterate enemies*, and go about like a *roaring lion seeking whom they*

they may devour. Shall we serve the good? this were to *dishonour* our nature, to serve our *fellow-creatures* and *fellow-servants*: besides, that *such* will never *sacrilegiously* usurp their *Maker's honour*, nor admit that *service* which is *due* to *him* alone. Shall we then serve *man*? alas! the *breath* of *great ones* is in *their nostrils*; their *life* is but a *vapour*, tossed to and fro with restless noise and motions; and then it *vanishes*; they *die*, and all their *thoughts* and *projects* *perish*. What then; shall we at length be reduced to serve our *lusts*? this is worse than *pagan idolatry*; *stocks* and *stones* indeed could not *help* or *reward* their *votaries*; but our *lusts*, like wild and *savage tyrants*, *destroy* where they *rule*, and oppress and overwhelm us with *ruins* and *mischiefs*, while we *servilely* court and flatter them. I have not done yet: I have proved it indeed to be our *duty* and *honour* to *serve God*; but these with *some* are *cold* and *lifeless* *topicks*: I will now prove it to be our *interest* and *happiness*; and this too, laying aside at *present*, as I promised, the consideration of a *future reward*, and the *joys* springing from it. To make good this *assertion*, it will be necessary briefly to examine *two* things: *First*, The *design* or *end*: and *secondly*, The *nature* of *this service*. If we enquire after the *end* of it, 'tis evidently
our

our own advantage and happiness. The *lusts* or the *humours*, the *wants* and *necessities* of man, may put him upon invading our *liberty*, or *purchasing* and *contracting* with us for our *servitude*: but God is *all-sufficient* to himself, and has no *need* of our *service*: when he will be *glorified* by us, 'tis that we may enjoy his *protection* and *bounty*: when he obliges us to obey his *commands*, 'tis in order to *perfect* our *natures*, and *purify* and *qualify* us for the enjoyment of *spiritual* and *divine pleasure*: when he enjoins us *prayer*, 'tis because it does *exalt* and *enlarge* our minds, and *fit* us for the *blessings* it obtains: when he prescribes us *self-resignation*, 'tis because he will *chuse* for us, and *manage* our affairs *better* than we can our *selves*. Let us in the *next* place consider the *nature* of this service. To *serve* God, what is it but to *love* what is *infinitely lovely*; to *follow* the conduct of *infinite wisdom*, and to repose our *confidence* in *that* being whose *goodness* is as *boundless* as his *power*? to *serve* God, 'tis to pursue the great end of our *creation*, to act consonant to the *dignity* of our *nature*, and to *govern* our *lives* by the dictates of an *enlightened reason*. How wisely has our *church* in one of her *colleets* expressed her *notion* of the *nature* of God's *service*? whose *service* is *perfect freedom*. The *devil* maintains

maintains *his* dominion over us, by *infatuating* our *understandings*, by *enseebing* and *fettering* our *wills*, by *deluding* and *corrupting* our *affections*: but on the quite *contrary*, the more *clear* and *impartial* our *understandings*, the more *free* and *absolute* our *wills*, the more *unbias'd* and *rational* our *affections*, the *fitter* are we to *worship* God; nay indeed, we *cannot* worship him at all as we *ought* to do, *unless* our souls be *thus* qualified. Therefore is the *service* of God called a *rational service*, λογικὴ λατρεία: and the *word* of God is called ἀδόλον γάλα, *sincere milk*; to signify to us, that in the *service* of God all is *real* and *solid* good. Such is the *Perfection* of our *natures*; the *might* and *joy* of the *Spirit*; the *protection* and *conduct* of *Providence*; and all the great and precious *promises* of God in *Christ* are *Yea* and *Amen*. But in the *service* of *sin* all is *cheat* and *imposture*; and under a pompous *shew* of good, the *present* is *vanity*, and the *future*, *repentance*; but such a *repentance* as does not *relieve*, but *increase* the *sinners* *misery*.

This is *enough* to be said of the *nature* of God's *service*: and by the *concessions* I made my *objeḱtor* about the *beginning* of this *head*, I am *restrained* from taking notice of the *more glorious effects* of it: yet *some* there are, very *great* and *good* ones, that fall *not* within the compass of the *objeḱtion*,

objection, which I will but just mention. The first is *rest*. While religion regulates the disorder, and reduces the extravagance of our affections, it does in effect lay a storm, and compose a mutiny in our bosoms. Whilst it enlightens our minds, and teaches us the true value, that is, at least the comparative worthlessness of worldly things, it extinguishes the troubles which present disappointments and losses, and prevents those fears which the prospect of future changes and revolutions is wont to create in us. A mind that is truly enlightened, and has no ambition but for immortality and glory, whose humility with reference to these temporal things is built upon a true notion of the nature of them; this soul has entered already into its rest. This is the doctrine of our Lord and Master, Matt. xi. 28, 29. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; this is, all ye that are oppressed by the weight of your own cares and fears, that are fatigued and toiled in the designs and projects of avarice and ambition, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. I need not, I think, here shew, that the more we fear and serve God, the more we love and admire him, the more clear is the understanding, and the more pure the heart: for the more we converse with solid and eternal good,

good, the more *insignificant* and *trifling* will *temporal* things appear to us; and, the more the mind *rejoices in the Lord*, the oftner 'tis rapt up into *heaven*, and, as it were, *transfigured* into a more *glorious* being, by the *joy of the spirit*, and the *ardor of divine love*; the more *flat* and *insipid* are all *earthly* and *carnal* satisfactions to it. Another effect that attends our *shaking off* the *dominion of sin*, and our *devoting* our selves to the *service of God*, is our being *purified* from *guilt*. The *stains* of the *past* life are washed off by *repentance* and the *blood of Jesus*; and the *servant of God* contracts no *new* ones by *wilful* and *presumptuous* sin. Now therefore he can *enter* into *himself*, and *commune* with his own *heart*, without any *uneasiness*; he can *reflect* upon his *actions*, and *review* each *day*, when it is *past*, without inward *regret* or *shame*. To *break off* a *vitious* course; to *vanquish* both *terrors* and *allurements*, when they persuade to that which is *mean* and *base*; to be *master* of one's *self*, and *entertain* no *affections*, but what are *wise*, and *regular*, and *such* as one has reason to *wish* should daily *increase* and grow *stronger*; these are things so far from meriting *reproach* and *reproof* from one's own *mind*, that they are sufficient to *support* it against all *reproaches* from *without*. Such is the *beauty*, such the *pleasure* of a well-established *habit*

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of righteousness, that it does more than compensate the difficulties to which either the attainment or the practice of it can expose a man. Lastly, He that is free from guilt, is free from fear too. And indeed this is the only way to get rid of all our fears, not by denying or renouncing God, with atheists; but by doing the things that please him. He that is truly religious, is the only man, who upon rational ground is raised above melancholy and fear: for what should he fear? God is his glory, his boast, his joy, his strength; and if God be for him, who can be against him? neither things present, nor to come; neither life, nor death, can separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus. There is nothing within the bounds of time or eternity that he needs fear. Man cannot hurt him; he is encompassed with the favour and loving-kindness of God, as with a shield. But if God permit him to suffer for righteousness sake, happy is he; this does but increase his present joy, and future glory. But what is most considerable, death itself cannot hurt him, devils cannot hurt him; the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. For there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. These considerations

siderations prove *the present* condition of a *servant of God* happy: happy in comparison of the *loose and wicked*; but in comparison with what he *shall be hereafter*, he is infinitely *short* of the *joy and glory* of his *end*. In *this* respect indeed he is yet in a *state of trial and trouble*, of *discipline and probation*; in this respect his *perfection and happiness* do but just *peep up* above the *ground*; the *fulness and maturity* of *both* he cannot enjoy till he come to *heaven*. And *this* is,

§. 4. *The last fruit of Christian liberty.* That *heaven* will consist of *all the blessings*, of *all the enjoyments* that *human nature*, when raised to an *equality* with *angels*, is *capable of*; that *beauties and glories, joys and pleasures*, will, as it were, like a *fruitful and ripe harvest* *here*, grow up *there* in *all the utmost plenty and perfection* that *Omnipotence* itself will ever produce, is not at all to be *controverted*. *Heaven* is the *master-piece* of *God*, the *accomplishment and consummation* of *all his wonderful designs*, the *last and most endearing* expression of *boundless love*. And hence it is, that the *Holy Spirit*, in *scripture*, describes it by the *most taking* and the *most admired* things upon *earth*; and yet we cannot but think that this *image*, though drawn by a *divine pencil*, must fall infinitely *short* of it: for what *temporal* things can yield *colours or metaphors* strong

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and *rich* enough to *paint* heaven to the life? One thing there is indeed, which seems to point us to a *just* and *adequate* notion of an heaven; it seems to excite us to *strive* and *attempt* for conceptions of what we cannot *grasp*, we cannot *comprehend*; and the *labouring* mind, the more it *discovers*, concludes still the more *behind*; and *that* is, the *beatific* vision. This is that, which, as *divines* generally *teach*, does *constitute* heaven; and *scripture* seems to *teach* so too. I confess, I have often *doubted* whether our *seeing* God in the *life to come*, did necessarily *imply* that God should be the *immediate* object of our *fruition*: or only, that we should *there*, as it were, *drink* at the *fountain-head*; and being *near* and *dear* to *him* in the *highest* degree, should ever *flourish* in his *favour*, and *enjoy* all good, *heap'd up*, *press'd down*, and *running over*. I thought the *scriptures* might be easily *reconciled* to *this* sense; and the *incomprehensible* glory of the *divine* Majesty inclined me to believe it the most *reasonable*, and most easily *accountable*. *Enjoyment*, and especially where an *intelligent* Being is the *object* of it, seemed to *imply* something of *proportion*, something of *equality*, something of *familiarity*. But ah! *what* proportion, thought I, *can* there ever be between *finite* and *Infinite*? *what* equality between a *poor* creature and his *incomprehensible* Creator? What

What eye shall gaze on the *splendors* of his *essential beauty*, when the very *light* he dwells in is *inaccessible*, and even the *brightness* he *veils* himself in, is too *dazzling* even for *cherubs* and *seraphs*, for aught I know, to behold? Ah! *what familiarity* can there be between this *eternal* and *inconceivable Majesty*, and *beings* which he has formed out of *nothing*? and when on this occasion I reflected on the *effects* which the *presence* of *angels* had upon the *prophets*, and saw *human nature* in *man* *sinking* and *dying* away, because unable to sustain the *glory* of one of their *fellow-creatures*, I thought myself in a manner obliged to *yield*, and stand out no longer against a *notion*, which, though *differing* from what was generally *received*, seemed to have *more reason* on its side, and to be *more intelligible*. But when I called to mind, that *God* does not disdain, even while we are in a *state of probation* and *humility*, of *infirmity* and *mortality*, to account us not only his *servants* and his *people*, but his *friends* and his *children*; I began to *question* the former opinion: and when I had survey'd the *nature* of *fruition*, and the various *ways* of it a little more *attentively*, I wholly *quitted* it. For I observed, that the *enjoyment* is *most transporting*, where *admiration* mingles with our *passion*: where the beloved *Object* stands not upon the same *level* with us, but *condescends* to

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meet a virtuous and aspiring, and ambitious affection. Thus the happy favourite enjoys a gracious master: and thus the child does with respectful love meet the tenderness of his parent: and the wisdom and virtue, which sometimes raises some one happy mortal above the common size and height of mankind, does not surely diminish but increase the affection and the pleasure of his friends that enjoy him. Again, the nature of enjoyment varies, according to the various faculties of the soul, and the sense of the body. One way we enjoy truth, and another goodness: one way beauty, and another harmony: and so on. These things considered, I saw there was no necessity, in order to make God the object of our fruition, either to bring him down to any thing unworthy of his glory, or to exalt ourselves to a height we are utterly incapable of. I easily saw, that we, who love and adore God here, should, when we enter into his presence, admire and love him infinitely more. For God being infinitely amiable, the more we contemplate, the more clearly we discern his divine perfections and beauties, the more must our souls be inflamed with a passion for him: And I have no reason to doubt, but that God will make us the most gracious returns of our love, and express his affections for us, in such condescensions, in such communications of himself, as will transport us to the utmost degree
that

that *created* beings are *capable* of. Will not *God*, that *sheds* abroad his *love* in our hearts by his *Spirit* here, fully *satisfy* it hereafter? Will not *God*, who *fills* us here with the *joy* of his *Spirit*, by I know not what *inconceivable* ways, *communicate* himself in a more *ravishing* and *ecstatick* manner to us, when we shall *behold* him as he is, and live for ever *incircled* in the arms of his *love* and *glory*? Upon the whole then, I cannot but believe, that the *beatifick* vision will be the *supreme* pleasure of *heaven*: yet I do not think that this is to *exclude* those of an *inferior* nature. *God* will be there, not only *all*, but *in all*. We shall see him as he is; and we shall see him *reflected*, in *angels*, and all the *inhabitants* of *heaven*; nay, in *all* the various *treasures* of that *happy* place: but in far more *bright* and *lovely* characters than in his *works* here below. This is a state, now, that answers *all ends*, and satisfies *all appetites*, let them be never so *various*, never so *boundless*. *Temporal* good, nay, a state *accumulated* with all *temporal* goods, has still something *defective*, something *empty* in it: That which is *crooked* cannot be made *straight*, and that which is *wanting* cannot be *numbered*. And therefore the *eye* is not *satisfied* with *seeing*, nor the *ear* with *hearing*: but *all things* are full of *labour*; man cannot utter it. And if this

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were *not* the *state* of *temporal* things, yet that *one* thought of *Solomon* that he must *leave* them, makes good the *charge* of *vanity* and *vexation*: and the *contrary* is that which compleats *heaven*; namely, that it is *eternal*. Were *heaven* to have an *end*, that *end* would make it *none*. That *death* would be as much *more intolerable* than *this* here, as the *joys* of *heaven* are *above* those of *earth*. For the *terror*, and the *evil* of it, would be to be estimated, by the *perfection* of that *nature* and *happiness* which it would put an *end* to. To *dye* in *paradise*, amidst a *crowd* of *satisfactions*, how much *more intolerable* were this, than to *dye* in those *accursed* regions that breed continually *briars* and *brambles*, *cares* and *sorrows*? And now, I doubt not, but every one will readily acknowledge, that an *heaven*, were it *believed*, were *such a fruit* of *Christian Liberty*, *such a motive* to it, as *none* could *resist*. Did I *believe* this, have I heard *one* say, I would *quit* my *trade*, and all *cares* and *thoughts* of *this* world; and *wholly* apply myself to get that *other* you talk of. There was no *need* of going *thus* far: but this shews *what* the *natural influence* of this doctrine of a *life to come* is; and that it is generally owing to *infidelity*, where 'tis *frustrated* and *defeated*. *What* is in *this* case to be *done*? *What proof*, *what evidences*, are sufficient to beget
faith

faith in him, who rejects Christianity and all divine revelation? He that bears not Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, neither will he believe though one rose from the dead. This doctrine of a life to come was generally believed by the Gentile world. It was indeed very much obscured, but never extinguished, by the addition of many fabulous and superstitious fancies; so strong was the tradition or reason, or rather both, on which 'twas built. The Jews universally embraced it. The general promises of God to Abraham and his seed, and the several shadows and types of it in the Mosaic institution, did confirm them in the belief of a doctrine, which, I do not doubt, had been transmitted to them even from Enoch, Noah, and all their pious ancestors. Nor must we look upon the Sadducees amongst the Jews, or the Epicureans amongst the Gentiles, to be any objection against this argument of a life to come, founded in tradition and the universal sense of mankind: because they were not only inconsiderable, compared to the body of the Jewish or Pagan world, but also deserters and apostates from the philosophy and religion received. To what end should I proceed from the Gentile and Jew to the Christian? Were Christianity entertained as it ought, the very supposal of any doubt concerning a life to come would be impertinent. Here we have numerous

demonstrations

demonstrations of it. Not only the *fortune* of *virtue* in *this* life, which is often very *calamitous*, but even the *origin* and *nature* of it, do plainly evince a *life to come*. For to *what* end can the *mortification* of the *body*, by *abstractions* and *meditations*, be enjoined, if there be *no life to come*? What *need* is there of *renovation*, or *regeneration*, by the *Word* and *Spirit of God*, were there *no life to come*? One would think, the *common* end of this *natural* life might be well enough *secured* upon the *common* foundation of *reason* and *human laws*. What should I here add, the *love of God*, and the *merits of Jesus*? From *both* which we may derive many *unanswerable* arguments of a *life to come*. For though, when we reflect upon it, it appears as much above our *merit*, as it is above our *comprehension*; yet when we consider, that *eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*; what less than an *heaven* can we expect from an *infinite merit* and *almighty love*? The *love of God* must be *perfect* as *himself*: and the *merits of Jesus* must be estimated by the *greatness* of his *Person* and his *sufferings*. He that cannot be *wrought upon* by *these* and the like *gospel arguments*, will be found, I doubt, *impenetrable* to all *others*. 'Tis in vain to argue with *such* a one from *natural topicks*: and therefore I will *stop* here.

I should now pass on to the *third* thing, the *attainment of Christian Liberty*: but this *chapter* is grown much too *big* already: and to the consideration of the *fruit of this liberty*, which I have so long insisted on, nothing *more* needs to be added, but the observation of those *rules*, which I shall lay down in the *following* chapters. For *whatever* advice will *secure* the several *parts* of our *liberty*, will consequently secure the *whole*. I will therefore *close* this *chapter* here, with a brief *exhortation*, to endeavour after *deliverance* from *sin*. How *many* and *powerful* motives have we to it? Would we free ourselves from the *evils* of *this* life? let us dam up the *source* of them, which is *sin*. Would we surmount the *fear* of *death*? let us *disarm* it of *its* *sting*, and that is *sin*. Would we *perfect* and *accomplish* our *natures* with all *excellent* qualities? 'tis *righteousness* wherein consists the *image* of *God*, and *participation* of the *divine* nature: 'tis the *cleaning* ourselves from all *filthiness* of the *flesh* and *spirit*, and the *perfecting* holiness in the *fear* of *God*, that must *transform* us from *glory* to *glory*. Would we be masters of the most *glorious* *fortunes*? 'tis *righteousness* that will make us *heirs* of *God*, and *joint-heirs* with *Christ*: 'tis the *conquest* of our *sins*, and the *abounding* in *good* works, that will make us *rich* towards *God*, and
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Of Christian Liberty in general.

lay up for us a good foundation for the life to come. Are we ambitious of honour? let us free our selves from the servitude of sin. 'Tis virtue only, that is truly honourable and praise-worthy: and nothing surely can entitle us to so noble a relation: for this allies us to God. For, as our Saviour speaks, they only are the children of Abraham, who do the works of Abraham; the children of God, who do the works of God. These are they, who are born again: not of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man; but of God. These are they, who are incorporated into the body of Christ; and being ruled and animated by his Spirit, are entitled to all the blessed effects of his merit and intercession. These are they, in a word, who have overcome, and will, one day, sit down with Christ in his throne; even as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father in his throne, Rev. iii. 21. Good God! how absurd and perverse all our desires and projects are! we complain of the evils of the world; and yet we bug the causes of them, and cherish those vices, whose fatal wombs are ever big with numerous and intolerable plagues. We fear death, and would get rid of this fear, not by disarming, but sharpening its sting; not by subduing, but forgetting it. We love wealth and treasure: but 'tis that which is temporal, not eternal. We receive
honour

honour of one another ; but we seek not that which comes from God only. We are fond of ease and pleasure ; and at the same time we wander from those paths of wisdom which alone can bring us to it. For, in a word, 'tis this Christian Liberty that makes men truly free : not the being in bondage to no man, but to no sin : not the doing what we list, but what we ought. 'Tis Christian Liberty that makes us truly great, and truly glorious : for this alone renders us serviceable to others, and easy to ourselves ; benefactors to the world, and delightful at home. 'Tis Christian Liberty makes us truly prosperous, truly fortunate ; because it makes us truly happy, filling us with joy and peace, and making us abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

C H A P. IV.

Of liberty, as it relates to original sin. The nature of which considered chiefly with respect to its corruption. How far this distemper of nature is curable. Which way this cure is to be effected.

WHatever difficulties the doctrine of original sin really be involved in, or seems at least to some to be so, they will not concern me, who am no further obliged
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to consider it, than as it is an impediment of Perfection ; for though there be much dispute about original sin, there is little or none about original *corruption* ; the *reality* of this is generally acknowledged, though the *guilt*, the sinfulness or immorality of it, be controverted. And though here be diversity of opinions concerning the effects of original *corruption* in eternity ; yet there is no doubt at all made but that it incites and instigates us to actual sin, and is the seed-plot of human folly, and wickedness. All men, I think, are agreed, that there is a byass and strong propension in our nature towards the things of the world, and the body : that the subordination of the body to the soul, and of the soul to God, wherein consists righteousness, is subverted and overthrown : that we have appetites which clash with, and oppose the commands of God ; not only when they threaten violence to our nature, as in the cases of confession and martyrdom, but also when they only prune its luxuriancy and extravagance : that we do not only desire sensitive pleasure, but even to that degree, that it hurries and transports us beyond the bounds that reason and religion set us : We have not only an aversion for pain, and toil, and death ; but to that excess, that it tempts us to renounce God, and
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our duty, for the sake of carnal ease, and temporal safety. And finally, that we are so backward to entertain the belief of revealed truths, so prone to terminate our thoughts on, and confine our desires within this visible world as our portion, and to look upon ourselves no other than the mortal and corruptible inhabitants of it; that this makes us selfish and sordid, proud and ambitious, false, subtle, and contentious, to the endless disturbance of mankind and our selves. That this, I say, is the state of nature; that this is the corruption we labour under, all men, I think, are agreed: and no wonder; for did a controversy arise about this, there would be no need to appeal any farther for the decision of it, than to one's own experience; this would tell every one that thus it is in fact; and reason, if we will consult it, will tell us why it is so: for what other than this can be the condition of man, who enters the world with a soul so dark and destitute of divine light, so deeply immersed and plunged into flesh and blood, so tenderly and intimately affected by bodily sensations; and with a body so adapted and suited to the things of this world, and fastened to it by the charms of pleasure, and the bonds of interest, convenience and necessity? This account of original corruption agrees

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very well with *that* St. Paul gives us of it, *Rom. vii.* and elsewhere: and with that assertion of our *Lord and Master*, on which he builds the necessity of *regeneration* by *water* and the *Holy Spirit*, John iii. 6. *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit.* Having thus briefly explained what I mean in this chapter by *original sin*, I am next to consider these two things.

1. How far this distemper of nature is curable.
2. Which way this cure is to be effected.

As to the first enquiry, I would not be understood to proceed in it with a regard to all the *regenerate* in general, but only to the *perfect*; for the strength of original sin cannot but be very different in new converts, or babes in grace, and in such as are advanced to an habit of righteousness. This being premised, I think, I may on good ground resolve, that original sin in the *perfect* man, may be so far reduced and mastered, as to give him but very *rare* and *slight* disturbance. This seems to me evident from the great change that must be wrought in him who is converted from a sinner into a saint: *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are*
past

past away, behold all things are become new, 2 Cor. v. 17. And it is hard to conceive this new nature, without new propensions and inclinations, not only different from, but repugnant to our former original and corrupt ones: or at least we must suppose this new creation so far to have reformed and corrected the man, that original corruption has lost the strength and force which before it had. This will be more clear yet, if we observe never so slightly, the several parts of this great change. First, The soul of an excellent person is filled with an unfeigned and habitual sorrow for, and detestation of all sin; *I hate*, saith the *Psalmist*, *every false way*. And how inconsistent is the strength and heat of corrupt propensions, with the tears and aversions of a true penitent? how tame is the body, how pure the mind, when the man is possessed with a firm and holy indignation against sin, when he dissolves in the pious tenderness of a contrite spirit! Next, the soul of a good man is possessed with an ardent love of *God*, and of *Jesus*; with a firm belief, and a steady hope of a blessed eternity; with enlightened eyes he beholds the vanity of all earthly things, and admires the solidity, the weight, and duration of heavenly glory: *He is risen with Christ*, and therefore *seeks those things that are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God*:

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He has set his affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; for he is dead, and his life is hid with Christ in God. And must we not now suppose such a one cleansed and purified from all corrupt affections, when the very bent of his soul is quite another way? must we not suppose the force and strength of depraved nature, overpowered and subdued by these heavenly affections? how mortified must such a man be to the world, and to the body? how feeble is the opposition, that inferior nature can raise against a mind invested with so absolute and sovereign authority, and endowed with light and strength from above? Lastly, The perfect man has not only crucified the inordinate and sinful lusts and affections of the body, but has also obtained a great mastery, even over the *natural appetites* of it; how else can it be that his *desires and hopes are in heaven*; that he *waits for the Lord from thence*; that he *desires to be dissolved and to be with Christ*; and *groans to be rid of the corruptible tabernacle of the body*? He that is thus above the *body*, may certainly be concluded to be in some degree above even the most *natural appetites*. He that has set himself free in a great measure even from his aversion to death, and in his affection at least very much loosened the bond, the knot, that unites soul and body, may certainly
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very reasonably be presumed to be much more above all covetous, ambitious, or wanton inclinations. These are the grounds, on which I attribute to the perfect man so high a degree of freedom from original sin as I do in the proposition laid down.

2dly, But yet I do not in the least think, that the most perfect man upon earth can so extinguish the sparks of original corruption, but that if he do not keep a watch and guard upon himself, they will gather strength and revive again: and the reason of this is plain; because it has a foundation in our very nature. The dispute concerning the existence of original corruption in us after baptism, or regeneration, is, methinks, a very needless one: for if it be about the notion we ought to entertain of it, that is, whether it be properly sin or not, this is a contention about words; for what signifies it by what name we call this remainder of original pravity, when all grant that the stain and guilt of it is washed off and pardoned? But if it be about the force and efficacy of it, this indeed is a controversy of some moment; but a very foolish one on one side: for to what purpose can it be, to say a great many subtil and puzzling things against a truth, that every man feels and experiments at one time or other? Upon the whole then, I may thus describe the

liberty of the perfect man with respect to original sin: he has *mortified* it, though not utterly *extirpated* it; he has *subdued* it, though not *exterminated* it; and therefore he is not only free from sinful and inordinate lusts and affections, but also, in a far greater measure than other men, from those infirmities and irregularities, which are, as it were, the strugglings and ebullitions of original sin, not yet sufficiently tamed. He has advanced his victory very far, even over his natural appetites; he has no stronger inclination for the body, or for the world, and the things of it, than such as becomes a man that is possessed with a deep sense of the vanity of this world, and the blessedness of another. The world is in a high degree crucified to him, and he counts all things but dung and dross in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. His sorrows and his joys, his desires and his fears, be the occasion never so just or lawful, pass not the modest bounds of a wise moderation. He desires without impatience, cares and contrives, hopes and pursues, without anxiety or solicitude; he is cautious without fear and pusillanimity; he is sad without dejection or despondency, and pleasant without vanity. All this indeed shews him, not only to have conquered

quered sin and folly, but in a great measure also his natural propension to them. But after all, this happy creature must remember, that he is still in the body; in the body, whose appetites will soon pass beyond their due bounds, if he be indulgent or careless: he must remember that he is not immutably holy; his understanding is not so clear and bright, but that it may be deceived; nor the bent of his affections so strongly set on good, but that they may be perverted; and therefore he must be sober and vigilant, and fear always. Thus have I stated the curableness of our original corruption. And as I think I have plainly the countenance of scripture; so I do not see, that I in the least clash with that clause in the ninth article of our church, which affirms concerning original sin thus: *And this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated, whereby the lust of the flesh, called in Greek $\Phi\rho\nu\eta\mu\alpha$ σαρκός, which some do expound the wisdom, some the sensuality, some the affection, some the desire of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God.* For this must not be understood surely, as if the flesh did always lust against the spirit in the regenerate, but only that the regenerate themselves are liable and obnoxious to these lustings; which, on supposal that the perfect man

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were here thought upon by the compilers of this article, imports no contradiction to any thing I have delivered. The truth is, I have asserted no more concerning the curableness of original corruption, than what is necessary to secure the *interest* of *holiness*, as well as the *honour* of the *Word* and *Spirit*. I have too often had occasion to observe, that the stating our obligation to reduce original corruption too laxly, ministers not a little to the carnal confidence of supine and careless persons. How greedily do some imbibe, and how fond are they of this notion, that the flesh, even in the regenerate, does always lust against the spirit? And the next thing is to look upon their darling errors, as unavoidable infirmities, flowing from the incurable distemper of original sin. To the end therefore, that under colour and pretence of the impossibility of a perfect cure and restitution of our nature to perfect innocence and unspotted purity, we may not sit down contented in an impure state, and never advance to those degrees of health and innocence, which we may, and ought actually to arrive at; I think fit here, to guard the doctrine of original sin with this one general caution.

That we be very careful not to mistake contracted, for natural corruption; not to
mistake

mistake a super-induced nature, defaced by all the slime and mud which popular errors and fashions leave upon it, for original nature, or nature in that state in which it enters the world. 'Tis, I doubt, a very hard thing to find but one arrived at any maturity of years, in whom nature is the same thing now that it was in the womb or the cradle; in whom there are no worse propensions than what necessarily flow from the frame and composition of his being. Alas! our original depravation, be it what it will, is very betimes improved by false principles and foolish customs; by a careless education, and by the blandishments and insinuations of the world: and every man is so partial to himself, that he is very willing to have his defects and errors pass under the name of natural and unavoidable ones, because this seems to carry in it its own apology. This is a fatal error, and continues men in their vices; nay, gives them peace in them too, to their lives end: for why should not a man forbear attempting what he despairs of effecting? To prevent which, I earnestly desire my reader to consider, that all who have treated this doctrine of original sin with any solidity or prudence, do carry the matter as far, at least, as I have done: they teach not only, that original

corruption may be *pruned* and *lopped*, but that it may be cut *down*, *mortified* and *dried up*. That, since no man can assure himself how far he may advance his conquest over his natural corruption, and the interest of every man's safety and glory obliges him to advance it as far as he can; he must never cease fighting against it, while it fights against him. That, since every sin is so far mortal as it is voluntary, and has as much guilt in it as freedom, every man ought to be extremely jealous, lest he be subject to any vicious inclination, that is in reality the product, not of nature, but of choice. And lastly, since though much less than habitual goodness may constitute a man in a state of grace; yet nothing less can produce Perfection, or a constant assurance of eternal happiness; therefore no man ought to acquiesce, while he sees himself short of this; and every man should remember, that his goodness ought to consist in a habit of those virtues to which he is by nature the most averse. I have now dispatched my first enquiry, and resolved how far original sin is curable. The next is,

§. 2. How this cure may be effected. And here 'tis plain what we are to aim at in general: for if original righteousness consists,

consists, as I think it cannot be doubted, in the subordination of the body to the soul, and the soul to God; and original corruption, in the subversion of this order; then the cure must consist in restoring this subordination, by the weakning and reducing the power of the body, and by quickning and strengthening the mind, and so re-establishing its sovereignty and authority. The scriptures accordingly let us know that this is the great design of religion, and the great business of man, 1 Cor. ix. 25. *And every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.* And this St. Paul illustrates and explains by his own example, in the following words: *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.* The preference given to the cares and appetites of the body, or the mind, is the distinguishing character which constitutes and demonstrates man either holy or wicked: *They that are of the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; and they that are of the Spirit, the things of the Spirit,* Rom. viii. 5. And the threats of the gospel belong to the servants of the flesh, its promises to the servants of the Spirit: *For if ye live after*
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the flesh, ye shall dye; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live, Rom. viii. 13. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, Gal. vi. 8. I grant that in these places and elsewhere very commonly as by the spirit is meant the mind enlightened and aided by the grace of God; so by the body or flesh is meant our inferior nature; not just such as it proceeds out of the womb, but as it is further depraved by a carnal and worldly conversation. However, since *original sin* is the seed or root of *voluntary* or customary corruption, these texts do properly and directly enough serve to the confirmation of the doctrine for which they are alledged. This then is the great duty of man, this is the great end which he is always to have in his eye, the mortifying the body, and entirely subjugating it to the reason of the mind. Here the Christian warfare must begin, and here end: for he, who has crucified the body with the lusts and affections thereof, has entered into rest, as far as this life is capable of it: he, that lays the foundation of morals here, does build upon a rock; and he, that here pushes his success to the utmost point, has reached the highest round in the scale of Perfection,

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and given the finishing strokes to holiness and virtue. This I say then; he that will be free, must lay down as a general rule to himself, from which he must resolve never to swerve, that he is by all rational and possible methods to diminish the strength and authority of the body, and increase that of the mind. By this we ought to judge of the conveniencies or inconveniencies of our worldly fortunes; by this we are to determine of the innocence or malignity of actions; by this we are to form and estimate our acquaintance and conversation, and by this we are to judge of the bent and tendency of our lives; by this we are to regulate our diversions; by this we may resolve of the nature and degree of our pleasures, whether lawful, whether expedient, or not: and in one word, by this we pass a true sentence upon the degrees and measures of our natural affections. There are many things that are in their own nature indifferent enough that prove not so to me; and there is such a latitude in the degrees and measures of duty and deviations from it, that it is a very hard matter in several cases to define nicely and strictly what is lawful or unlawful: but I am sure, in all cases this is a wise and safe rule, that we are to aim at the strengthening the authority of our minds,

minds, and the weakning the force and power of our carnal appetites. By consequence, every man ought to examine himself, by what arts, by what practices the light of his understanding comes to be obscured, the authority of his reason weakened, and the tenderness of his conscience to be so much blunted and worn off: and when he has discovered this, he must avoid these things as temptations and snares; he must shun these paths, as those that lead to danger and death; and whatever he finds to have a contrary tendency, these are the things that he must do, these are the things that he must study, contrive, and follow. How happy would a man be, how perfect would he soon grow, if he did conduct himself by this rule? How little need would he have of outward comforts; how little value would he have for power and honour, for the state and pride of life? How little would he hunt after the pleasures of sense? What peace should he maintain within, when he should do nothing that were repugnant to the reason of his mind? What joy and hope would he abound with, when he should have so many daily proofs of his integrity, as the living above the body would give him? And how would all this strengthen and exalt the mind? what flights would it take

towards heaven, and how invincible would it prove to all temptations? Happy and perfect that man, who has the kingdom of God thus within him, whose life is hid with Christ in God! when Christ, who is his life, shall appear, he also shall appear with him in glory. This is a comprehensive rule, and if well pursued, sufficient of itself to do the work I am here aiming at: but that it may be more easily reduced to practice, I think it not amiss to take a more particular view of it: and then it may be resolved into these two:

1. We must lay due restraints upon the body.

2. We must invigorate and fortify the mind, partly by the light of the gospel, and the grace of the Holy Spirit; and partly by accustoming it to retire and withdraw itself from the body.

§. 1. As to the restraints we are to lay upon the body, what they are, we easily learn from the scriptures: for first, these expressly forbid us to gratify the lusts and affections of the flesh; and that not only because they are injurious to our neighbour, and a dishonour to our holy profession, but also because they have an ill influence upon the strength and liberty, the
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power and authority of the mind. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 1 Pet. ii. 11.* And whoever enters into the account of things, will easily discern this to be true; there is a deceitfulness in sin, a sensuality in lust: who sees not that there is more attraction in the pride and ostentation of life, than in the simplicity and plainness of it? That there is more temptation and allurements in riot and luxury, than in frugality and a competency? That the imagination of a *Solomon* himself cannot but be wretchedly abused, if he give it leave to wander and wanton in variety? In a word, if the mind follow a carnal or worldly appetite and fancy in all its excesses and debauches, it will soon find itself miserably enslaved and intoxicated; it will be wholly in the interest of the body, and wholly given up to the pleasures of it. Secondly, Though the scripture do not prohibit some *states* or *conditions* of this life, which seems as it were more nearly *allied* to, or at leastwise at less distance from the *lusts of the flesh*, than others are; yet it forbids us to *covet* and *pursue* them. Thus *St. Paul*, *Rom. xii. 16.* *Mind not high things.* The apostle does not here oblige any man to degrade himself beneath his birth, or to fly from those
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those advantages which God's providence and his own merits give him a just title to; but certainly he does oblige the Christian not to aspire ambitiously to great things, nor fondly to pride himself in successes of this kind. So when a little after he commands us *in honour to prefer one another*, certainly he does not teach how to talk, but how to act; not how to court and compliment, but to deport ourselves consonant to those notions with which charity towards our neighbour, and humility towards our selves ought to inspire us. Thus again, we are not forbidden to be rich; no man is bound to strip himself of those possessions which he is born to, or to shut out that increase which God's blessing and his own diligence naturally bring in: but we are forbid to *thirst after riches*, or to *value* ourselves upon them, and commanded to be content with those things that we have; and if God bless us with wealth, to enjoy it with modesty and thankfulness, and dispence it with liberality, 1 Tim. vi. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. *Godliness with contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out; and having food and rayment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the*

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the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves thro' with many sorrows. Ver. 17, 18, 19. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate: laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. And to multiply no more instances of restraints of this or the like nature, thus we ought to stand affected towards praise and reputation, interest and power, beauty, strength, &c. We must neither be too intent upon them, nor enjoy them with too much gust and satisfaction; for this is that disposition which appears to me to suit best with the spirit and design of the gospel, and with the nature of such things as being of a middle sort, are equally capable of being either temptations or blessings, instruments of good or evil.

3dly, The scripture regulates and bounds our natural and necessary appetites, not so much by nicely defining the exact degrees and measures within which nature must be strictly contained, as by exalted examples of, and exhortations to a spiritual, pure, and heavenly disposition. Thus our Lord and Master seems to me to give some check

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check to the stream of natural affection, and to call off his disciples from it, to the consideration of a spiritual relation; *Mark* iii. 34, 35. *And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren: for whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.* To which words of our Lord, I may join those of *St. Paul*, *Henceforth know we no man after the flesh—yet now henceforth know we him no more,* *2 Cor.* v. 16. The answer of our Lord to a disciple who would have deferred his following him; till he had buried his father, *Matth.* viii. 21. and to him who begged leave to go and bid farewell first to his relations and domesticks, *Luke* ix. 61. does plainly countenance the doctrine I here advance; and so does *St. Paul*, *1 Cor.* vii. 29. so often cited by me. Not that our Saviour or his apostles did ever account our natural affections *vicious* and *impure*; for 'tis a vice to be without them, *Rom.* i. 31. Not that they went about to diminish or abate, much less to cancel the *duties* flowing from them: no; they only prune the *luxuriancy* of *untaught* nature, and correct the *fondnesses* and *infirmities* of *animal* inclinations. Our natural affections may entangle and enslave us, as well as unlawful and irregular ones, if we lay no restraint upon them. Religion indeed makes them

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the seeds of virtue, but without it they easily betray us into sin and folly. For this reason, I doubt not, lest under pretence of satisfying our most natural and importunate appetites, we should be ensnared into the love of this world, and entangled in the cares of it, our Saviour forbids us to take thought for to-morrow, even for the *necessaries* of to-morrow, *what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be cloathed*, Matth. vi. These are the restraints laid upon the body in scripture; which if any man observe, he will soon discern himself as far purified and freed from original corruption, as human nature in this life is capable of. And that he may,

§. 2. He must fortify and invigorate the mind. And this must be done two ways. First, By possessing it with the knowledge of the gospel, and the grace of the Spirit. Secondly, By withdrawing it often from the body. As to the former branch of this rule, the necessity of it is apparent: since the state of nature is such as has before been described, we stand in need not only of *revelation* to enlighten us, but also of *grace* to strengthen us; of the former to excite us to exert all the force and power we have; of the latter to enable us to do that which our natural force never can

can effect. It cannot be here expected that I should treat of the operation of the Spirit, and the ways of obtaining it, grieving, and quenching it; this would demand a peculiar treatise. I will here only observe, that it is the work of the Spirit to *repair*, in some degree at least, the *ruins* of the *fall*; to *rectify nature*; to *improve* our *faculties*, and to *imprint* in us the *divine image*: that meditation and prayer, and a careful conformity to the divine will, obtain and increase the grace of the Spirit: that negligence and presumptuous wickedness grieve and extinguish it. As to the knowledge of the gospel, I shall not need to say much here; I have considered this matter in the chapter of *Illumination*, and will only observe that the doctrines of the gospel are such, as, if they be thoroughly imbibed, do effectually raise us above a state of *nature*, and set us free from the *power* and *prevalence* of our original corruption. Were we but once persuaded, that we are strangers and pilgrims upon earth: that all carnal gratifications do war against the soul: that our souls are properly ourselves, and that our first cares are to be for them; that God is himself our sovereign good, and the fountain of all inferior good: that our perfection and happiness consist in the love and service of him: that we have a mighty Mediator, who

once died for us, and ever lives to make intercession for us: that a *kingdom incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is reserved in heaven for all meek, faithful, and holy souls*: were we, I say, but once thoroughly persuaded of these truths, with what vigour would they impregnate our minds? How clear would be the convictions of conscience? How uncontrollable the authority of reason? How strong the instincts and propensions of the mind towards righteousness and virtue? These would alienate the mind from the world and the body, and turn the bent of it another way; these would inspire it with other desires and hopes, and make it form different projects from what it had before; *old things are done away, and all things are become new.* The second branch of this second particular rule is, that we must accustom ourselves to retire frequently from the commerce and conversation of the body. Whether the eating the forbidden fruit did open to the mind new scenes of sensuality which it thought not of, and so called it down from the serenity and heights of a more pure and contemplative life, to participate the turbulent pleasures of sense, immersing it as it were by this means deeper into the body, I pretend not to judge. But 'tis certain a too intimate conjunction of the mind with the
body,

body, and the satisfactions of it, does very much debase it. 'Tis our great unhappiness, that the soul is always in the senses, and the senses are always upon the world; we converse with the world, we talk of the world, we think of the world, we project for the world; and what can this produce, but a carnal and worldly frame of spirit? We must meditate on heavenly things; we must have our conversation in heaven; we must accustom ourselves to inward and heavenly pleasures, if we will have heavenly minds; we must let no day pass, wherein we must not withdraw our selves from the body, and sequester our selves from the world, that we may converse with God and our souls. This will soon enable us to disdain the low and beggarly satisfactions of the outward man, and make us long to be set free from the weight of this corruptible body, to breathe in purer air, and take our fill of refined and spiritual pleasure. I have insisted thus long on the cure of original sin, not only because it is the *root* of all our *miser*y, but also because there is such an *affinity* between this and the sin of infirmity, which I am next to speak to, that the same remedies may be prescribed to both; so that I am already eased of a part of the labour which I must otherwise have undergone in the following chapter.

I am now by the laws of my own method obliged to consider the *effects* of this branch of *Christian Liberty* in the *perfect* man, and to shew what influence it has upon his happiness. But having, *sect. 1. chap. 4.* discoursed at large of the subserviency of Perfection to our happiness; and in *sect. 2. chap. 3.* of the happy effects of Christian liberty in general, I have the less need to say much here on this head: yet I cannot wholly forbear saying something of it. The conquest over original corruption, such as I have described it, raises man to the highest pitch of Perfection that our nature is capable of; makes him approach the nearest, that mortality can, to the life of angels, and plants him on the mount of God, where grace, and joy, and glory, shine always on him with more direct and strong rays. Now is virtue *truly lovely*, and *truly happy*; now the assurance of the mind is never interrupted, its joy never overcast; it enjoys a perpetual calm within, and sparkles with a peculiar lustre that cannot be counterfeited, cannot be equalled. Some faint and partial resemblance, I confess, of this virtue, or rather of this state or consummation of it, have I, though very rarely, seen in some masterly strokes of nature. I have observed in some, that sweetness of temper; in others, that coldness and absolute

solute command over themselves with respect to the pleasures; and in several that innate modesty and humility, that natural indifference for the power, honour, and grandeur of life, that I could scarce forbear pronouncing, that they had so far each of them escaped the *contagion* of original corruption, and could not but bless and love them. But, after all, there is a vast difference between these *creatures of nature*, and those of *grace*: the Perfection of the one is confined to this or that particular disposition; but that of the other is in its degree universal: the Perfection of the one has indeed as much charm in it as pure nature can have; but the other has a mixture of something divine in it; it has an heavenly tincture, which adds something of *sacredness* and *majesty* to it, that nature wants: the Perfection of the one is indeed easy to its self, and amiable to others; but the Perfection of the other is joy and glory within, and commands a veneration as well as love from all it converses with. Blessed state! when shall I attain thy lovely innocence! when shall I enter into thy divine rest! when shall I arrive at thy security, thy pleasure!

C H A P. V.

Of liberty, with respect to sins of infirmity:
 An enquiry into these three things. 1. Whether there be any such sins, viz. Sins in which the most perfect live and die. 2. If there are, what they be; or what distinguishes them from damnable or mortal sins. 3. How far we are to extend the liberty of the perfect man in relation to these sins.

THIS is a subject, wherein the very being of holiness or virtue, the salvation of man, and the honour of God, are deeply interested: for if we allow of such sins for venial, as really are not so, we destroy the notion, or evacuate the necessity of holiness; endanger the salvation of man, and bring a reflection upon God as a favourer of impiety. On the other hand, if we assert those sins damnable, which are not really so, we miserably perplex and disturb the minds of men, and are highly injurious to the goodness of God; representing him as a severe and intolerable master. But how important soever this subject be, there is no other, I think, in the compass of divinity, wherein so many writers have been so unfortunately engaged; so that it is overgrown with dispute and controversy, with confusion and obscurity, and numberless absurdities and contra-

contradictions. This I have thought necessary to observe in the entrance of my discourse, not to insult the performances of others, or to raise in the reader any great expectation for my own; but indeed for a quite contrary reason, namely, to dispose him to a favourable reception of what I here offer towards the rendering the doctrine of sins of infirmity, intelligible, and preventing the disservice which mistakes about it do to religion.

By sins of infirmity, both *ancients* and *moderns*, *papists* and *protestants*, do, I think, understand such sins as are consistent with a state of grace and favour; and from which the best men are never intirely freed in this life, though they be not imputed to them. This then being taken for granted, I shall enquire into these three things.

1. Whether there be any such sins, sins in which the most perfect live and die.

2. If there are, what these be. What it is that distinguishes them from *damnable* or *mortal* ones.

3. How far we are to extend the *liberty* of the perfect man in relation to *these*.

1. Whether there be any such. That the best men are not without errors, without defects and failings, and that not only in their past life, or unregenerate state, but their best, and most perfect one, is a truth
which

which cannot, one would think, be controverted: for what *understanding* is there, which is not liable to *error*? What *will*, that does not feel something of *impotence*, something of *irregularity*? What *affections*, that are merely human, are ever *constant*, ever *raised*? Where is the *faith*, that has no *scruple*, no *diffidence*? the *love* that has no *defect*, no *remission*? the *hope*, that has no *fear* in it? What is the *state*, which is not liable to *ignorance*, *inadvertency*, *surprize*, *infirmity*? Where is the *obedience*, that has no *reluctancy*, no *remissness*, no *deviation*? This is a truth, which, whether men will or no, they cannot chuse but feel; the confessions of the holiest of men bear witness to it. And the pretension of the *Quakers*, to a sinless and perfect state, is abundantly confuted by that answer one of the most eminent of them makes to an objection, which charges them with arrogating and assuming to themselves infallibility and perfection, *viz. That they were so far infallible and perfect, as they were led by the Spirit of God.* For what is this, but to desert and *betray*, not to defend their cause? 'Tis plain then, as to matter of fact, that the most *perfect* upon earth are not without frailties and infirmities; and such infirmities, as discover themselves in actual slips and errors. But the

the question is, whether these are to be accounted *sins*? I must confess, if we strictly follow the language of the scripture, we should rather call them by some other name; for this does so generally understand by sin, a deliberate transgression of the law of God, that it will be very difficult to produce *many* texts wherein the word *sin* is used in any other sense. As to *legal* pollutions, I have not much considered the matter. But as to *moral* ones, I am in some degree confident, that the word sin does generally signify such a transgression as by the gospel covenant is punishable with death, and *rarely* does it occur in any other sense: I say *rarely*; for if I be not much mistaken, the scripture does *sometimes* call those infirmities, I am now talking of, sins. But what if it did not? 'Tis plain, that every deviation from the law of God, if it has any concurrence of the will in it, in strict speaking is *sin*: and 'tis as plain that the scripture does frequently give us such descriptions and characters, and such names of these sins of infirmity, as do oblige us both to strive and watch against them and repent of them. For it calls them, spots, errors, defects, slips, and the like. But, what is, lastly, most to my purpose, it is plain, that this distinction of sins, into mortal and venial,

venial, or sins of infirmity, has its foundation in express texts of scripture. Numerous are the texts cited to this purpose: but he that will deal fairly must confess, that they are most of them improperly and impertinently urged, as relating either to falls into temporal calamity; or to mortal, not venial sins; or to the sins of an unregenerate state; or to a comparative impurity, I mean the impurity of man with respect to God, a form of expression frequent in *Job*. I will therefore content myself to cite three or four, which seem not liable to these exceptions. *Deut. xxxii.*

4. *They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.* Here two things seem to be pointed out to us plainly: *First*, that the children of God are not without their spots. *Secondly*, That these are not of the same nature with those of the wicked; in comparison with those wilful and perverse transgressions, the children of God are, elsewhere, pronounced blameless, without offence, without spot, *Psalms xix. 12, 13.* *Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults: keep back also thy servant from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.* Here again

again the *Pſalmiſt* ſeems to me to place uprightneſs in freedom from deliberate or mortal ſin, and to admit of another ſort of tranſgreſſions, in which even upright men ſlip ſometimes. Nor does the *Pſalmiſt* here only aſſert venial ſins; but he ſeems to me to ſuggeſt the ſprings and ſources of them, namely, ſome ſecret diſpoſitions in our nature to folly and error, which he prays God to cleanſe and free him from more and more; *Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults.* The word *fault* is not in the original; but ſomething of that kind muſt be ſupplied to render the ſenſe intire in our language. The words of *Solomon, Prov. xx. 9.* ſeem to relate to this corruption lurking in us, and never utterly to be extirpated; *Who can ſay I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my ſin?* For if this ſhould be applied to mortal ſin, every one ſees, that it will contradict an hundred places in ſcripture, which attribute to righteous men, purity of heart, and deliverance from ſin. Laſtly, *James iii. 2.* we are told plainly, that *in many things we offend all, πῶλομεν ἅπαντες,* not ſinners only, but righteous and upright men, have their defects and ſlips. And accordingly there is not any life which we have the hiſtory of in ſcripture, how excellent ſoever the perſon be, but we meet with ſome of theſe recorded;

recorded ; as will appear from those several instances I shall produce, when I come to describe the nature of these sins. And certainly, when *David* says of himself, *My sins are more in number than the hairs of my head*: he that shall interpret this place of mortal and presumptuous sins, will both contradict the scriptures, which acquit him, except in the matter of *Uriah*, and highly wrong the memory of *David*, making him a prodigy of wickedness, instead of a saint. Nor does *that* make any thing against me, which he adds in the next words, *My heart fails me* ; or that in the foregoing verse, *Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up*. For I do not affirm that the *Psalmist* here has regard only to sins of infirmity exclusively of others : no ; he reckons all together, and so discerns the one aggravated by the other ; and the guilt of all together, very far enhanced. Nor do I, *secondly*, interest myself here in that dispute between protestants and papists, whether sins of infirmity are not damnable in their own nature, though not imputed under the covenant of grace ? Nor do I, lastly, examine what a vast heap of sins of infirmity may amount to, though the guilt of this or that alone were not so fatal. I have then, I think, proved the matter in question ; having shewed,

shewed, both from the experience of mankind and the scripture, that the best men have their infirmities and defects; and that these may properly enough be called sins. I think it superfluous to prove, that they consist with a state of salvation; since 'tis not by any, that I know of, denied; and may be easily enough made out, from what I have already said. I am now to enquire,

§. 2. What these sins be; and how distinguished from mortal or damnable ones. To this purpose we may distinguish human actions (under which I comprise both internal and external) into three sorts: voluntary, involuntary, and mixt.

§. 1. There are actions properly and truly voluntary; such are those deliberate transgressions of a divine law, which man commits in opposition to the direct remonstrances of conscience; he knows the action is forbid; he sees the turpitude and obliquity of it; he is not ignorant of the punishment denounced against it, and yet he ventures upon it: this is plainly mortal, damnable sin; and I cannot think, that any circumstance or pretence whatever can render it venial. And therefore I must be pardoned, if I cannot be of their opinion, who suppose, that the smallness of the matter, the reluctancy of conscience, or the length and force of a temptation, can

so soften and mitigate a voluntary transgression, as to diminish it into a sin of Infirmity. 1. As to the smallness of the matter. Some cannot but think those transgressions venial, which are, for the matter of them, so slight and insignificant, that they seem to be attended by no mischievous consequence; nor to offer any dishonour to God, nor injustice to man. But I doubt this notion of venial sin has no solidity in it; for either men perform such actions deliberately, or indeliberately; knowing them to be sinful; or believing them to be innocent. Now, if we perform any action deliberately, and knowing it to be sinful, we never ought to look upon this as a *little* sin, much less a *venial* one. The reason of this is plain. The first notion that every man has of sin, is, that it is forbidden by, and displeasing to God; and then to do that deliberately, which we know will provoke God, is an argument of a fearless and irreligious heart, a heart destitute of the love of God, the love of righteousness, and heaven. But if a man transgress in a *trifling instance indeliberately*; this alters the case; for the matter not being of importance enough to excite the intention and application of the mind; and there being consequently no malignity of the will in an action, where there was no concurrence of the judgment, I cannot

cannot but think, this may very well pass for an human infirmity; for all that fault that can be here laid to the charge of man is, incogitancy or inadvertency; and that too as excusable a one as can be. Lastly, where the matter of an action is very trifling and inconsiderable; and draws after it no ill consequence, either with respect to God or Man; in this case; if a man judge it no sin, I cannot think it is any to him; though by a nice and scrupulous construction, it may fall within the compass of some divine prohibition. The distinction of the schoolmen is good enough here; it is besides the law, but not against it: or it is against the letter, but not the design and intention of the law of God. I cannot think that it is consistent with the infinite goodness of God, to punish such things as these with eternal misery, or that it can become a man of sense seriously to afflict his soul for them: I cannot for my life persuade my self, that I should provoke God, if passing through a field of my neighbour's corn or pease, I should pull off an ear or cod; or passing through his orchard, should eat an apple. The notion I have of God, and the great end and design of his laws, will not suffer me to entertain such trifling, weak, and superstitious fancies. And here I cannot but

take notice of two things, which very much perplex the minds of some good people; that is, an idle *word*, and *jesting*: concerning both which, 'tis very plain, that such are miserably mistaken; and that they are no sins at all, unless unreasonable and superstitious scruples make them so: this I say on supposition that by idle word, they mean *only* such talk, as does not tend to edification; and by jesting, only *that* which is innocent and divertive. By an idle word (*Matt. xii.*) our Saviour plainly means a blasphemous word, if that saying of our Saviour of every *idle word*, &c. be to be limited and confined by the sense of the context: for the occasion of the assertion of our Lord, was the blasphemy which the *Jews* belched out against his miracles. Or if our Lord here, on this occasion, advances a general doctrine, then, by an idle word, we must understand a wicked one, proceeding from a corrupt and naughty heart; and tending as directly to promote impiety, as gracious and wholesome discourse does to promote edification. This is evident from *ver. 25.* *A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things. And ver. 37.* *For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemn-*

ed. By *jesting*, *Eph. v. 4.* the apostle understands the *modish raillery* of the Greeks, which was generally made up of *prophaneness* and *wantonness*, or brisk and sharp ironies. This is plain, both from the company we find it in, *αἰσχροτης ἔ μωρολογία*, filthiness and foolish speaking; and from the character given it in common with the other two, *Τὰ ἐκ ἀνήλωνία*, being the very same that is given the most infamous and vilest lusts and passions. *Rom. i. 28.* *Things not convenient* is a diminutive expression, implying such things as contain much turpitude and wickedness in them. *Beza*, as appears by his notes, reads η not ϵ , in this place, foolish speaking, or, not and jesting; which (as he observes) makes jesting the same thing with foolish speaking or buffoonry: and justifies that jesting, which consists in a pleasant and divertive facetiousness, from *1 Kings xviii. 27.* *2 Kings iii. 23.* *Isai. xiv. 11.*

2. Some think that the mere reluctancy and opposition of conscience against sin, is sufficient to constitute a sin of Infirmary. And this has received no small countenance from such an interpretation of *Rom. vii.* as makes holiness to be nothing else but a vicissitude of desires and actions, repugnant to one another. But at this rate no man's sins would be damning

but his whose conscience was seared; and when one's heart did condemn one, God would be sure to acquit one: which agrees very ill with St. *John*, *If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things*, 1 *John* iii. 21. No man, unless arrived at a reprobate sense, can do that which is evil, without reluctancy; for his conscience will forbid him, as long as it has the least degree of tenderness in it; and restrain him as far as it has power. And as to *Rom.* vii. it has been abundantly considered; and, I think, sufficiently proved to belong to those, who are the servants of sin; as *Rom.* viii. does to those who are set free. St. *Austin* indeed tells us, that he understood that chapter at first as the *Pelagians* did, for a person under the law, and under the power of sin, but that he found himself constrained afterwards to understand it of St. *Paul* himself. I will not examine the solidity of his reasons: 'tis enough to me, that his change of opinion does religion no harm: for he is so far from making a state of holiness to consist with acts of deliberate sin against conscience, that he will not excuse so much as rebellious motions and appetites, if consented to. All that he contends for, in a good man, from this chapter is, that lapsed nature will sometimes exert itself, even in
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the best men, in disorderly and distempered appetites.

3. Others, lastly, will have those sins, into which we fall, either overpowered by the strength or wearied out by the assiduity or length of a temptation, pass for Infirmities. But this opinion has as little ground as the two former. I can find no scripture that countenances this notion. There are indeed some of great reputation, who have promoted it. But, I think, the words of St. Paul make against it, 1 Cor. x. 13. *There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape; that ye may be able to bear it.* The design of which words is certainly to encourage Christians against the biggest temptations by an assurance of relief from God, proportionable to our necessities; and consequently must imply, that if we yield to a temptation, 'tis our own fault. God expects we should stand firm under the highest trials. *Be thou faithful unto death; and I will give thee a crown of life,* Rev. ii. 10. *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my father in his throne,* Rev. iii. 21. *But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my*

Father which is in heaven, Matt. x. 33. If therefore, by sins of Infirmity; men mean, such as are consistent with the state of grace, *i. e.* such as good men may frequently fall into, without forfeiting the peace of conscience, and the favour of God, I cannot possibly think that any deliberate sin can be such, upon the score of the temptation; or that any of those sins, reckoned in the catalogue, *Gal. v.* and *Eph. v.* can be such on the account of the violence or perseverance with which they attack us. But, secondly, if by sins of Infirmity, they mean such sins as righteous men are liable to; I know not what they are from which they are exempted. But if, lastly, by sins of infirmity, they mean such, for which God is more easily intreated; then there is no question to be made, but that there is a difference in sins; which is to be estimated by the different measures of grace and knowledge; by the different degrees of deliberation and surprize; and by the force or weakness, the continuance or shortness, of a temptation: and, finally, by the different effects and tendency of sins. To all which, I do not question, but that the Spirit has regard in those directions, which it gives us for our behaviour towards such as fall, *Gal. vi. 1.* *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, we which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness;*

considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, Jude 22, 23.

§. 2. A second sort of actions are such as we call involuntary; that is, those wherein we exercise no deliberation, no choice. Some have reduced sins of infirmity to this head, but with what colour of reason any one may judge. For since actions truly *involuntary*, are neither the objects of the understanding nor will, 'tis hard to conceive what morality there can be in them. The grounds on which this opinion is built are such as these. First, the measure, say they, of good and evil is the law of God; but involuntary and unavoidable actions are not a proper subject of laws: for to what purpose is it to prescribe rules, or to propose rewards and punishments to such actions, as are no way subject to our choice? Secondly, They tell us, 'tis inconsistent with the goodness of God, and the riches of gospel grace, to impute those things to a man as damnable sins, which fall not within the compass of his power or deliberation. Now, I must confess, I am so far from denying any actions, that can lay a just claim to this apology, to be venial, that I cannot forbear thinking, that they are

not sinful : for *where there is no law, there is no transgression*. But how does this way of arguing for the excusableness of involuntary transgressions, consist with those other doctrines which they maintain concerning them ; namely, that we are bound to repentance for them ; that these sins are not venial in their own nature, but only through the favour of God ? For the law, taken in its rigour, denounces death against all sin in general, without limitation or exception ; so that if God should judge rigorously, even involuntary sin would fall under that sentence, *The wages of sin is death*. This, I must confess, seems to me very incoherent. For if an action be of that nature, that it cannot properly be the matter or subject of a law, how can it fall under the condemnation of law ? If it be of that nature that it is incapable of any moral regulation, nor subject to the influence of reward or punishment, how can it be mere matter of grace that a man is not damned for it ? In a word, if an action be truly and properly involuntary, it can by no means be sin ; and if it be voluntary, it is subject to the regulation of laws : 'tis a proper instance of deliberation and freedom, and capable of rewards and punishments. And the truth is, the one needs no apology, and the other is not capable of any ; the one is a mortal

sin,

fin; and the other no fin at all. And therefore we must look for venial fin in some other species of action.

§. 3. The last class of actions are those which are of a mixt nature; partly voluntary, and partly involuntary: and here, I think, we must place sins of Infirmity, by whatever names we may call them. For these surely, if they are to be ranked (as by all they are) amongst actual sins, must be such actions as have in them, something of voluntary, something of involuntary, much of human frailty, and something of sinful; much of unavoidable, and something of moral obliquity. These are the transgressions which the scripture seems to me, to intend by errors, defects, slips, motes, the spots of God's children; and these certainly, if any, must be the sins that consist with a state of grace. For these do not imply a deliberate wickedness in the will, much less an habitual one; nay, they do not include in them, any *wickedness* at all, strictly speaking, but are truly the effects of human frailty, and the unhappy circumstances of this mortal life. Thus then I describe a venial fin; it has in it so much of voluntary as to make it fin, so much of involuntary as to make it frailty; it has so much of the will in it,
that

that it is capable of being reduced; and yet so much of necessity in it, it is never utterly to be extirpated: it has something in it criminal enough to oblige us to watch against it, and repent of it; and yet so much in it pitiable and excusable, as to intitle us to pardon under the covenant of grace. And thus I distinguish venial from mortal sin: mortal sin proceeds from a heart, either habitually corrupted, or deceived and captivated for the time; but venial sin results from the imperfections and infelicities of our nature, and our state. Mortal sin is truly voluntary and deliberate in the rise and birth of it, and mischievous and injurious in its consequence: but venial sin is very far indeliberate in its beginning, and, if not indulged, almost harmless in its effects: deficiency is as it were the essence of the one, malignity of the other; in the one we see more of frailty, in the other more of wickedness: in the one something nearly allied to necessity, in the other to presumption: the one is the transgression of the law of perfection, the other of the law of sincerity: the one is repugnant to the letter, the other to the design and end of the law: the one is a violation of God's commands, taken in the most favourable construction, the other a violation of them in a rigorous one. That
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this was the notion of St. *Austin*, St. *Jerome*, and others, who impugned the sinless Perfection of the *Pelagians*, is very plain. 1. From the distinction they made between *Kαρία* and *ἀμαρτία*, *Crimen* and *Peccatum*, i. e. between wickedness and defects, between crimes and faults; for this is plainly the sense wherein they used these words: And next from those very clear and lively descriptions of venial sin, which occur frequently in St. *Austin*, after whom 'tis well known, others writ. Such is that * *through ignorance or infirmity, for want of exerting our utmost strength against concupiscence, we are drawn away by it to some unlawful things; and the worse we are, so much the more and the oftner; but the better we are, so much the less and the seldomer we do give way to it.* And thus † St. *Jerome* imputes venial sin to our not making use of our utmost strength and diligence. I might content myself with having given this general description of sins of infirmity, did I not know how ill a talent some people have at applications

* ——— *Fit per Ignorantiam vel Infirmatē, non exerts adversus eam totis viribus voluntatis, eidem ad illicita etiam nonnulla cedamus, tanto magis & crebrius quanto deteriores, tanto minus & rarius quanto meliores sumus.* Tom. 7. De Peccat. Rem. p. 689.

† *Hoc & nos dicimus, posse Hominem non peccare, si velit, pro tempore, pro loco, pro imbecillitate corporea, quamdiu intentus est Animus, quamdiu chorda nullo vitio laxatur in Cithara, Dial. 3. adv. Pelag. p. 201.*

of generals to any particular case; and how little satisfactory such account is to the weak and scrupulous. For the sake of these therefore, I think fit to be a little more distinct and particular on this argument. In venial sins then, two things must be considered,

1. The matter of it.
2. The manner of committing it.

i. As to the matter, I conceive it ought to be *slight* and *inconsiderable*. There is no room for a venial sin in things of a crying, provoking nature; as in adultery, idolatry, murder; for in these, the injustice and wickedness, with respect to God and man, is palpable and formidable; and can never, for aught I see, be extenuated by any circumstances into sins of infirmity. But when I say the matter of the sin of infirmity must not be detestable and crying provocation, I do not mean to extend this to the first *tendencies* and *dispositions* even towards such sins. Thus, tho' adultery cannot be a venial sin, yet the first fallies of the desire, the first glances and wandrings of the eye, may. And the same thing may be said of the first motions towards any other sin.

2. As to the next thing to be considered in a venial sin, that is, the *manner* of committing it, it must proceed from *ignorance*, *frailty*, or *surprize*.

1. From *ignorance*. By *ignorance* I do not mean that which is utterly *invincible*, but that which has some *defect*, some *frailty*, some *degree of negligence* in it. Of this kind, I take those errors to be, against which *David* prays, *Psalms* xix. 12. *Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults*. He that considers human nature, and the power of education, the influences and prejudices which we suck in betimes, and such like, will easily acknowledge, that there may be such errors. When we have used a *moral diligence* in examining our lives, and trying our own hearts; yet considering the vast variety of duties we are to run through, no humble man can be confident, that he has omitted nothing, that he is mistaken in nothing. This I take to be the sense of *Solomon*, *Prov.* xx. 9. *Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?* And this I take to be the sense of *St. Paul*, *I Cor.* iv. 4. *For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord*. There are mistakes and errors, which might indeed have been prevented or removed, by the *strictest impartiality*, and the *strictest diligence*. But, alas! how often do good men fall short of both these? How common is it for good men to be too far transported by the best of principles, even *zeal*? How often

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do good men mix their errors in reproof and reprehension, and in one and the other, they discern it not?

2. *Surprize* and *inadvertency* is another thing that renders sin *venial*. The multitude of affairs and temptations, the suddenness and unexpectedness of some unusual temptation, or something of this kind, may betray a good man into some slips or errors, in a word or deed. This I take to be the case of *Sarah*, when she said *I laughed not*: of *Jonah*, when he replied upon God, *I do well to be angry*, *Jon. iii.* Of *David*, when he pronounced rashly, *do thou and Zibah divide the Land.* 2 *Sam. xvi. 4.* Of *Saul* and *Barnabas*, when they broke out into heat and anger. But that which was a sin of *infirmity* in the beginning, became, I doubt, a *deliberate* one in the end, when they parted from one another. Some extend this circumstance of surprize to excuse sins, which imply notorious wickedness, and are of very ill consequence; but, I think, very erroneously. 'Tis true, these sins of surprize, whatever the matter of them be, are generally conceived to be much extenuated through want of opportunity to summon our strength, and to make use of mature and sober deliberation; especially where the temptation is not *only sudden* but *violent* too. For in this case, the soldier of Christ, taken, as it were, in an ambush,

ambush, or blown up with a mine, seems to be lost and defeated before he discerns his danger: I do not doubt then, but this suddenness of a temptation does very much diminish the guilt of a sin. But we ought to remember too, that there are many things that do abate and take off from this excuse: as first, it is not easy to conceive how any thing that is a direct wickedness, that is a sin of a deeper dye than ordinary, on the account of its mischievous consequences, should make its approach so silently, and so suddenly, that we should fall into it undiscernibly. Secondly, The Christian is bound to shun not only every evil, but every *appearance* of it; and 'tis hard to imagine, that a sincere man, who does indeed strain at a *gnat*, should swallow a *camel*. He that preserves the tenderness of conscience, as he will have an *aversion* for *small sins*; so will he have an *horror* for *great ones*. Thirdly, The mind of a Christian ought to be possessed and awed by the fear of God; and *that* not a slight and transient, but a deep and lasting one. The *Psalmist* was not content to say, *I am afraid of thy judgments*; but to express how thoroughly this fear had seized him, he adds, *my flesh trembleth for fear of thee*, Psal. cxix. And certainly this fear is a sort of impenetrable armour, which
extinguishes

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extinguishes all the fiery darts of the devil. In vain is the suddenness, or the briskness of a temptation, unless we first lay aside this shield. Fourthly, We are bound to be always on our watch and guard; and therefore, if we relax our discipline, if we live secure and careless, if we rashly cast our selves upon dangers; our sin then will be but the consequence of our folly; and therefore, one error cannot be an excuse, or an apology for another. I think therefore the apology of surprize should be confined and limited to *slight offences*; it cannot properly have room in *great ones*, or if it have, it may be urged in *mitigation* of our punishment; but never, I doubt, for *total impunity*.

3. Lastly, Venial sin has its rise from the defects and imperfections of our *nature*, and the disadvantageous circumstances of our *state*. Here come in the failures and defects in the *measures* and *degrees* of duty; if these can be properly reckoned for sins: I say, if they can; for I do not see that this is good argument: we are bound to the highest degree of love by that law, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*; therefore whatsoever falls short of the highest and most absolute degree of love, is a *sin*: for at this rate, whatever were short of

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Perfection, would be sin. We must love nothing better than God, nothing equal to him: this will constitute us in a state of sincerity. What is farther required is, that we are bound to *aim* at, and *pursue* after the highest and most perfect degrees of love; but we are not bound under pain of *damnation* to *attain* them. But on the other hand, I readily grant, that our falling short in the degrees of faith, love, hope, and the like, may be properly reckoned amongst sins, when they spring from the defects of vigilance and industry: and if these defects be such as can consist with sincerity, then are the imperfections, or the abatements of our virtues, pardonable; and then only. Here again fall in *omissions*, *wandering thoughts*, *dulness* and *heaviness* in duty, the short *titillations* of some *irregular fancies*, *forgetfulness*, slight and short *fits* of *envy*, *discontent*, *anger*, *ambition*, *gaiety* of mind. Thus we find the disciples falling asleep when they should have prayed, *Matt.* xxvi. and *David* praying *quicken thou me*, *Psal.* cxix. Thus his soul too was often cast down, and disquieted within him, *Psal.* xlii. *2 Chron.* xxx. 18, 19. *Job* cursed the day of his birth. In short, our natures are *human*, not *angelical*; and our state is so full of variety of accidents, that they are too apt to discompose the mind, and divert it from its great end. The

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ebbs and flows of blood and spirits, and an unlucky constitution, or a distemper; the multitude or confusion of affairs; the violence or the length of trials; the ease and flattery of prosperity; the weariness of the body, or of the mind; the incommodiousness of fortune, roughness of conversation; these, and a thousand other things are apt to produce defects and failures in our obedience, short disorders in our affections; and such emotions and eruptions as abundantly prove the best to be but men; and the highest Perfection, if it be but human, to be wanting and defective. I think I have now omitted nothing necessary to form a true notion of the sin of infirmity. My next business therefore is, to consider,

§. 3. How far the *liberty* of the perfect man, in respect of *venial sin*, ought to be extended. There is great affinity between venial and original sin; and therefore the perfect man's liberty, as it relates to the one and the other, consists in much the same degrees, and is to be attained by the same method; so that I might well enough dismiss this subject, and pass on to mortal sin. But reflecting on the nature of man, how prone we are to sin, and yet how apt we are to think well of our selves, I judge it necessary to guard the doctrine of venial
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fin by some few rules, which may at once serve to secure our sincerity, and point out the Perfection we are to aspire to. *1st*, then, if we would prevent any fatal event of sins flowing from *ignorance*, we must take care, that our ignorance it self be not *criminal*: and that it will not be, if our hearts be sincerely disposed to do our duty, and if we use moral diligence to know it: if we be impartial, humble, and honest, and have that concern for the knowledge and practice of our duty, that is in some sort proportionable to the importance of it. The ignorance that arises from natural incapacity, or want of sufficient revelation, is *invincible*, and therefore *innocent*, John ix. 41. *Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth:* and xv. 22. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sins.* This rule must be understood of *necessary* knowledge in general; and more *legible* and *conspicuous* lines of duty: both which notwithstanding, there may be room for sins of infirmity to enter, where mortal ones cannot; there may be imperfect dispositions of mind and latent prejudices; there may be instances of duty of a slighter moment; there may be several circumstances, and small emergencies, that may either be without

the aim, or escape the discovery of a moral search, that is, of a human one; which, though it be without *hypocrisy*, is not yet without more or less *frailty*. As to Perfection; it differs in this, as it does in other cases, from sincerity, only in the degrees by which it is advanced above it. He that will be perfect, must search for wisdom as for hid treasures: his delight must be in the law of the Lord, and in his law must he meditate day and night: his thirst of truth must be more eager and impatient, his diligence more wakeful, more circumspect, more particular, more steady and constant, than that of the beginner, or of one who is no farther advanced, than such measures of faith and love, as are indispensably necessary to sincerity, will carry him. *2dly*, Sins that are occasioned by *surprize* and *inadvertency*, will not prove destructive, if the *inadvertency* itself be in a manner *innocent*: that is, first, there is no room for inadvertency in compleat acts of crying sins. Secondly, there is no pretence for inadvertency, if we had any misgivings within, or warnings without, concerning that particular sin, into which we fell afterwards; much less if we cherish ill motions till they grow too strong for us. And last of all, if we repeat the same sin frequently and contemptuously. And to this I may add; he cannot be said

to sin thro' surprize, who throws himself into the way of temptation, even though he be conscious of his own infirmity. 3^{dly}, As to those moral defects which flow from *natural infirmity*; they will not destroy us if the infirmity it self be pardonable. There are infirmities, which we acquire; infirmities, which grow stronger by indulgence; infirmities, which continue merely because we do not take pains to subdue them: our moral defects must not flow from these kinds of infirmities; but from such as, considering human nature, and the state of this world, 'tis impossible utterly to root out. These moral defects will do us no harm; if, first, we take care to settle in our minds the habits of those virtues that are directly opposite to them. Secondly, If we watch and fight against our natural infirmities, and endeavour to reduce our appetites, even our natural appetites, within strict and narrow bounds. Thirdly, If we wash off the stains of our slips and defects by a general repentance: for upon the notion I have here given of venial sin, repentance appears to be very necessary: for I require in them something of voluntary, something of freedom; enough to make an action sinful, though not to prove the heart corrupt or wicked. And because the degrees of voluntary and involuntary are not so easily distinguishable

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from one another, 'tis plain our best security against any ill consequences of our defects and frailties, is a godly sorrow, And therefore I wonder not if *David* charge himself more severely than God does, *My sins are more in number than the hairs of my head.* This was a confession that became the humility and solicitude of a penitent; that became the reflections of a wise and perfect man, and the corruption of human nature; the alloy of human performances; the slips and defects, the interruptions, neglect, and deviations of the best life.

C H A P. VI.

Of liberty, as it imports freedom or deliverance from mortal sin. What mortal sin is. How the perfect man must be free from it. And which way this liberty may be best attained; with some rules for the attainment of it.

HERE I will inquire into three things;

1. What mortal sin is; or what kind of sins they be, which are on all hands acknowledged to be inconsistent with a state of grace and favour.

2. How

2. How far the perfect man must be set free or delivered from this kind of sins; or how remote he is from the guilt of them.

3. Which way this liberty may be best attained.

§. 1. The first thing necessary is, to state the notion of that sin, which passes under the name of *mortal, wilful, presumptuous, or deliberate sin*: for these in writers are equivalent terms, and promiscuously used to signify one and the same thing. *Sin* (saith St. *John*, 1 *Ep.* iii. 4.) is the *transgression of the law*. This is a plain and full definition too of sin: for the law of God is the rule of moral actions; 'tis the standard and measure of right and wrong, of moral good and evil. Whatever is not within the compass of the law, is not within the compass of morality neither: Whatever cannot be comprehended within this definition, cannot have in it the entire and compleat notion of sin; or, which is all one, it cannot be sin, in a strict, proper, and adequate sense of the word. Hence St. *John* in the same verse tells us, that *whosoever sinneth, transgresseth the law*. And St. *Paul*, Rom. iv. 15. *Where there is no law, there is no transgression*. Sin then must always suppose a law; without which there

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can be neither vice nor virtue, rightcoufness nor wickedness : for these are nothing else but the violation or observacion of the law of God ; or habits and states resulting from the one or the other. But this is not all : two things more must be remarked, to render this definition, which the apostle gives us of sin, clear and full. First, The law must be *sufficiently revealed*. Secondly, The transgression of it must be truly *voluntary*.

1. By sufficient revelation of a divine law, every one understands, that the law must be so published to the man who is to be governed by it, that the *authority* and *sense* of it may be, if it be not his own fault, rendered evident to him. If the divine authority of any rule or precept be doubtful and uncertain, the obligation of it will be so too : and it is as necessary, that the sense of the law should be evident, as its authority. The law that is penned in dark and ambiguous terms, is, properly speaking, no law at all ; since the mind of the Lawgiver is not sufficiently made known by it. Whatever is necessarily to be forborn or done by us, must be fully and clearly prescribed in the law of God ; and if it be not, it can never be necessary. Men thro' weakness or design may enact laws that are but a heap of letters,

letters, a croud of dubious *Delphick* sentences: but God can never do so, because this is repugnant both to his wisdom and goodness, and to the very end of a law too, which is to be a rule, not a snare; 'tis to give understanding to the simple; to be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths; not like an *Ignis fatuus*, to betray us into brakes and precipices, and ruin, and death.

2. The transgression must be a *voluntary* one. And this imports two things: 1. A knowledge of the law. 2. Consent to the breach of it. First, As to the knowledge of the law. All that I have to say here in a few words, is, that ignorance of the law excuses a transgression, when it is itself excusable; but if the ignorance itself be criminal, the effect of it must be so too. We must never think of excusing our sins, by alledging an ignorance, into which, not our own incapacity, or any other reasonable cause, but neglect or contempt of the truth, or some other vicious lust or passion, has betrayed us. Secondly, As to the consent of the will; this is necessary to demonstrate any action sinful or virtuous; without this the mind will be no partner in the sin, and by consequence cannot be involved in the guilt of it. Whatever we cannot help, is our misfortune, not our fault; actions merely natural,

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or merely forced, can neither be good nor evil. The concurrence of reason and choice is indispensably necessary to the morality of an action. All this is plainly taught us by St. James i. 14, 15. *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* Which words do certainly imply, that the spring and principle of sin is within our selves; that 'tis our natural corruption that entices and allures us; and 'tis our consent to its enticements that gives being to sin, and defiles us with guilt.

From all this now put together, 'tis easy to conclude what sort of a description we are to form of *mortal sin*: 'tis such a transgression of the law of God, as is *vicious* in its *original*, *deliberate* in its *commission*, and *mischievous* in its *tendencies* or *effects*: the heart is corrupted and misled by some lust or other, and so consents to the breach of the moral law of God, a law of eternal and immutable goodness: or if the sin consists in the breach of any positive law, it must yet imply in it some moral obliquity in the will, or in the tendency of the action, or both. So that presumptuous, or mortal sin, call it by what name we will, is a *deliberate* transgression of a *known* law of God, tending to the *dishonour*

of God, the injury of our neighbour, or the depravation of our nature. Such are those sins which the prophet *Isaiab* exhorts those who will repent, to cease from. And such are those we have a catalogue of, *Eph. v. Gal. v.* and elsewhere: *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.* These are the sins, of which, as of so many members, the body of sin consists: these constitute the old man: these are sometimes called, *the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, ungodliness, wickedness, iniquity, the lusts of the flesh, worldly lusts,* and such like. These and the like sins have, as I said, in them very apparent symptoms of malignity and mortality: they are always the effect of some carnal and worldly lusts, prevailing over the law of the mind; and they imply a contempt of God, injustice to our neighbour, and some kind of defilement and pollution of our nature. And that these are the plain indications of such a guilt as excludes a man from heaven and the favour of God, is very plain from the account which the scripture gives us both of the origin and influence of sin; from the care it takes to fortify the heart against all infection;

infection; from the constant representations it makes us of the shamefulneſs and the miſchief of ſin, even in reference to this world as well as the other. I cannot ſee any thing further neceſſary to the explication of deliberate or preſumptuous ſin, unleſs it be here fit to add, that it is mortal, though it proceed no further than the heart: there is no need at all that it ſhould be brought forth into action, to render it fatal and damnable. This is evident, not only from the nature of divine worſhip, which muſt be entire, ſincere, and ſpiritual; and therefore can no more be reconciled to the wickedneſs of our hearts, than of our actions; but alſo from the expreſs words of our Saviour, *Out of the heart proceed fornication, adultery, theft, &c.* And elſewhere he pronounces the adultery of the *heart damnable*, as well as that of the *body*, Mat. v. 28. *But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever looketh upon a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.*

§. 2. I am next to give ſome account of the liberty of the perfect man, in reference to the ſin I have been diſcourſing of. I ſhall not need to ſtop at any general or preliminary obſervations; as, that abſtinenſe from ſin regards all the commandments of God alike; and to do otherwiſe,

were to mutilate and maim religion, and to dishonour God, while we pretend to worship and obey him: for the breach of any single commandment is a manifest violation of the majesty and authority of God, whatever observance we may pay all the rest: *For he that said, Do not commit adultery; said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law,* Jam. ii. 11. That the restraints man is to lay upon himself, relate no less to the *lusts* of the *soul* than the *actions* of the *body*: *Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven,* Matth. v. 10. That to begin well will avail us little, unless we finish well too. Universality, sincerity and perseverance are generally acknowledged to be essential and indispensable properties of saving, justifying faith. These things therefore being but just mentioned, I proceed to the point to be enquired into and resolved.

1. To be free from the *dominion* and *power* of mortal sin, is the first and lowest step; this is indispensable to sincerity, and absolutely necessary to salvation: *Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies, to fulfil the lusts thereof,* Rom. vi. 12. And the advancing thus far does, I acknowledge, constitute man in a state of grace: for in
 scripture

scripture men are denominated righteous or wicked, not from single acts of vice or virtue, but from the prevalence and dominion, from the habit or custom of the one or the other: *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield your selves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?* Rom. vi. 16. But then I must here add two remarks, by way of caution.

1. We must not presume too soon of victory over an habitual sin. An evil habit is not soon broken off; nor is it an easy matter to resolve, when we have set our selves free from the power of it. Sometimes the temptation does not present itself as often as it was wont, or not with the same advantage; sometimes one vice restrains us from another; sometimes worldly considerations, or some little change in our temper, without any thorough change in our minds, put us out of humour for a little while with a darling sin; and sometimes the force and clearness of conviction produces some pious fits, which, though they do not utterly vanquish a lust, do yet force it to give way, and retreat for a while, and *interrupt* that love which they do not *extinguish*: all this may be, and the work not yet be done, nor our liberty yet gained. If therefore we fall, though but now and then, and tho' at some distance
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of time, into the same sin, we have great reason to be jealous of its power and our safety: nay, though we restrain ourselves from the outward commission of it; if yet we feel a strong propension to it; we discern our selves ready to take fire on the appearance of a temptation; if we are fond of approaching as near as we can, and are pleased with those indulgencies which are very near a-kin to it, we have reason to doubt that our conquest is not yet entire. Nay, the truth is, we cannot be on good grounds assured that we are masters of our selves, till we have a settled aversion for the sin which before we doated on, and shun the occasions which before we courted, till we be possessed of a habit of that virtue which is a direct contradiction to it; and take as much pleasure in the obedience, as ever we did in the transgression of a divine command.

2dly, There are some sins of that provoking nature, so criminal in their birth, and mischievous in their consequences, that one single *act* or *commission* of one of these is equivalent to a *habit* of others; such is murder, idolatry, perjury, adultery; these cannot be committed without renouncing *humanity* as well as *Christianity*; without resisting the instincts and impulse of nature, as well as the light of the gospel, and the
grace

grace of the Spirit. We must break thro' a great many difficulties and terrors, ere we can come at these sins; we must commit *many* other, in order to commit one of these; we must deliberate long, resolve desperately, and in defiance of God and conscience; and what is the *effect* of habit in other instances, is a necessary *preparative* in these, that is, *obduration*. In this case, therefore, the unhappy man, that has been guilty of any one of these, must not look upon himself as set free, when he is come to a resolution of never repeating it again; but then when he loaths and abhors himself in dust and ashes; when he has made the utmost reparations of the wrong he is capable of; when, if the interest of virtue require it, he is content to be oppressed with shame and sufferings; when, in one word, a long and constant course of mortification, prayers, tears and good works have washed off the stain and guilt.

2. We must be free, not only from a *habit*, but from single *acts* of deliberate presumptuous sin. The reason is plain; mortal sin cannot be committed without wounding the conscience, grieving the spirit, and renouncing our hopes in God through Christ for the time at least. *The wages of sin is death*, is true, not only of habits, but single acts of deliberate sin.

Death

Death is the penalty; the sanction of every commandment; and the commandment does not prohibit habits only, but single acts too. Nor is there indeed any room to doubt or dispute here, but in one case; which is, if a righteous man should be taken off in the very commission of a sin, which he has fallen into. Here, indeed, much may be said, and with much uncertainty. But the resolution of this point does not, as far as I can see, minister to any good or necessary end; and therefore I will leave it to God. In all other cases, every thing is clear and plain; for if the servant of God fall into a presumptuous sin, 'tis universally acknowledged, that he cannot recover his station but by repentance. If he repent presently, he is safe; but if he continue in his sin, if he repeat it, he passes into a state of wickedness, widens the breach between God and his soul, declines insensibly into a habit of sin, and renders his wound more and more incurable. 'Tis to little purpose, I think, here to consider the vast difference there is in the commission, even of the same sin, between a child of God, and a child of wrath; because a child of God must not commit it at all: if he do, tho' it be with reluctancy; tho' it be, as it were, with an imperfect consent, and with a divided soul; tho' the awe of religion and conscience seems not utterly to

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have forsaken him, even in the midst of his sin ; tho' his heart smite him the very minute it is finished, and repentance and remorse take off the relish of the unhappy draught ; yet still 'tis sin ; 'tis in its nature damnable ; and nothing but the blood of Jesus can purge the guilt.

3. The perfect man may be supposed, not only actually to abstain from mortal sin, but to be advanced so far in the mortification of all his inordinate affections, as to do it with *ease* and *pleasure*, with *constancy* and *delight*. For it must reasonably be presumed, that his victory over ungodly and worldly lusts, is more confirmed and absolute ; his abhorrence of them, more deep and sensible, more fixt and lasting, than that of a beginner or babe in Christ. The regenerate first fears the consequence of sin ; but by degrees he hates the sin itself. The purity of his soul renders him now incapable of finding any pleasure in what he doated on before ; and the love of God and virtue raiseth him above the temptations which he was wont to fall by : *Old things are past away, and all things are become new.*

4. Lastly, The perfect man's abstinence is not only more *easy* and *steady*, but more *entire* and *compleat* also than that of others : he has a regard to the end and design of the law ; to the perfection of his nature ;

to the purity and elevation of his soul; and therefore he expounds the prohibitions of the law in the most enlarged sense, and interprets them by a spirit of faith and love. He is not content to refrain from actions directly criminal, but shuns every appearance of evil; and labours to mortify all the dispositions and tendencies of his nature towards it; and to decline whatever circumstances of life are apt to betray the soul into a love of this world, or the body: he has crucified the world, and the body too. That pleasure, that honour, that power, that profit, which captivates the sinner, tempts, and tries, and disquiets the novice, is but a burthen, a trouble to him: he finds no gust, no relish in these things. He is so far from intemperance, so far from wantonness, so far from pride and vanity, that could he without any disadvantage to the interest of religion, he would imitate the meanness, the plainness, the laboriousness, the self-denial of our Saviour's life; not only in the disposition and affection of his soul, but even in his outward state and deportment; and would prefer it far above the pomp and shew of life. In one word, he inquires not how far he may *enjoy* and be *safe*, but how far he may *deny* himself and be *wise*: he is so far from desiring forbidden satisfactions, that he is unwilling

and afraid to find too much satisfaction in the natural and necessary actions of an animal life. I need not prove this to any one, who has read the foregoing chapters: for it is what I have been doing throughout this treatise. It is nothing, but what is consonant to the whole tenour of the scripture; and to the example of the best times. And 'tis conformable to what the best authors have writ, who have any thing of life and spirit in their works; or have any true notion of the great design of the Christian religion, which is an heavenly conversation. Let any one but cast his eyes on St. *Basil*, or any other after him, who aimed at the same thing I now do, the promoting holiness in the world in the beauty and perfection of it; and he will acknowledge, that I am far from having carried this matter too high. I will quote but one or two passages of St. *Basil*; (*) his description of the perfect man with regard to his self-denial runs thus. He is one that consults the *necessities*, not the *pleasure* of his nature; and seems to grudge the time which he bestows on the support and nourishment of a corruptible body. He is so far from looking upon eating and drinking, &c. as an enjoyment, that he

* Μόλις καὶ κατὰ μικρὸν τῶν ἀναγκασιῶν ἀπλόμενον. Καὶ ὡς λιτῆργίαν ἐπαχθῆ ὑποτελόντα τῇ φύσει, καὶ δυσχεραίνοντα μὲν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς περὶ ταῦτα διατρέψεως. "Οροι κατὰ Πλάτωνα. p. 454.

rather accounts it a task or troublesome service which the frailty of his nature demands at his hands. Nor was this great man more severe against the lusts of the flesh than against those other branches of the love of the world, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. (†) All vanity and affectation of praise and respect; all the ostentation (*saitb be*) and shew of life, is utterly unlawful for a Christian. And all this is directly consonant to his gloss (‡) on those words of St. Paul, *They that use the world as not abusing it*. Whatever is beyond *use* is *abuse*; directly consonant to his definition of temperance: (§) That it is the extirpation of sin; the extermination of unruly passions, and the mortification of the body, extending even to the *natural* appetites and affections of it.

I know not what scruples or mistakes the doctrine I here advance concerning this part of my perfect man's liberty, may be encountred with: but I am confident, I have given no just occasion for any. I do not say of the perfect, with *Jovinian*, that they cannot fall; but I say, that they may, and ought to stand; and if it be

† Η κενοδοξία, και η ανθρωπαρέσκεια, και το προς επίδειξιν τι ποιείν, όλως επί πασιδος πραγμάτῳ Χριστιανοῖς ἀπηγόρευται. p. 456.

‡ Παραχρησις δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ ὑπὲρ τὴν χρειαυ δαπανη. p. 457.

§ Ἐστὶν ἐν ἡ Ἐγκράτεια, ἀμαρτίας, ἀναιρεσις, πάθων ἀπαλλοτριώσις, σώματος νεκρωσις, μέχρι και αὐτῶν φυσικῶν παθημάτων τε και ἐπιθυμιῶν. p. 445.

Of Liberty, as it relates

not their own fault, will do so. I do not affirm of them, as the hereticks in *Vincentius Lyrinensis* did of their party, that they are privileged from sin by a peculiar grace and transcendent favour; but I affirm, that they shall not want grace to preserve them from it, unless they be wanting to themselves. I do not go about to maintain, that God sees no sin in his children; but I maintain, that mortal sin is not the sport of his children. But do not I in this fall in with the *Papists*, who assert the possibility of keeping the commands of God? I answer, that taking them in the sense, in which they themselves in the conference at *Ratisbonne* defend this doctrine, I do. They there tell us, that, when they talk thus, they take the law or commands of God, not in a strict and rigid, but in a favourable and equitable, *i. e.* a gospel construction: and this is so far from being heterodox, that *Davenant* accounts it a plain giving up the question in controversy. But am I not run into the error of the *Pelagians* and *Quakers*? I answer, if the one or the other assert, that the perfect man passes thorough the whole course of life without falling into any sin; or, that in the best part of life, he is impeccable, and not subject to sin (as in the heat of disputation their adversaries seem sometimes to fasten on them) I am at a wide distance from

from them. But if they teach, that the perfect man has grace and strength enough to forbear wilful sin, and that many actually do so, I am, I must confess, exactly of their mind. But then I am, at the same time, of the same mind with St. *Austin* and St. *Jerome* too; for they teach the very same doctrine: for they never contended about the possibility of freedom or deliverance from *mortal* sin, but only from *venial*. St. *Jerome* * shall explain his own sense, *Etenim absque vitio, quod græce dicitur* *Κακία, hominem posse esse aio: Ἀναμάρτητοι, id est, sine Peccato, esse nego.* Which is the same thing that St. *Austin* commonly admits; that man may be *sine Crimine*, but not *sine Peccato*; without mortal, but not without venial sin. And in this, they are certainly of the mind of the scripture; which every-where represents the perfect man, as holy, blameless, undefiled, without spot, walking with God: and, in one word, as free from sin. If any man can reconcile these texts, which are very numerous, with mortal sin, I will not say in the best state of the best men, but a state of sincerity and regeneration, I will acknowledge my mistake. But till then I cannot but think the doctrine I advance necessary to establish the true notion of holiness, and convince us of our obligation

* *Dial. Secund. ad Pelag. P. 189.*

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to it. This doctrine is again necessary to wipe off those aspersions and calumnies the *Quakers* cast upon our Church; as if it held, that the regenerate themselves may continue in their sins; nay, cannot be freed from them. Our Church teaches indeed (*Artic. 4.*) that the most perfect men are never utterly exempt from defects, failings, and human infirmities; and I believe they themselves are not confident enough to teach otherwise: only they will not call these infirmities sins: and then the whole controversy is reduced to this; we agree in the thing, but differ in the name: and in this difference, we are not only on the humbler, but the safer side too: for acknowledging them sins, we shall be the better disposed sure, to be sorry for them, to beg pardon for them, and watch against them.

The fruit of this liberty has been sufficiently accounted for in *chap. 3.* And therefore I proceed,

§. 3. To propose some rules for the attainment of it.

1. The mind must be grounded and rooted in the faith; it must be thoroughly convinced and persuaded of these great articles of the Christian religion, That there is a God, and such a God, a holy, just, omniscient,

omniscient, and omnipotent one; the incarnation, suffering and glory of the blessed Jesus; a judgment to come, and the eternal rewards and punishments of another life. The firm belief of these things does naturally promote these two effects.

1. It will awaken a sinner out of his lethargy and security; it will disturb him in his sinful enjoyments, and fill his mind with guilty fears, and uneasy reflections. And when the man finds no rest, no security in his sins, this will naturally oblige him to endeavour the conquest of them. But then we must not stifle and suppress these thoughts; we must give conscience full liberty; we must hear the dictates of our own minds patiently; and consider seriously those terrible truths, which they lay before us; till we go from this exercise deeply impressed with such notions as these: that our sins, sooner or later, will certainly bring upon us temporal and eternal misery: that nothing but sincere righteousness can produce true and lasting happiness: that it is a dreadful danger to dally too long with indignation, or presume too far on the mercy of a just, and holy, and almighty God: that the neglecting the great salvation, tendered by the gospel, and procured by the blessed Jesus; the slighting the blood of the covenant, and grieving the Holy Spirit (all which we do by wilful sin)

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is a guilt, that will sink down the obstinate sinner into the lowest hell; and render his condition more intolerable than that of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*.

2. The second effect of the firm belief of these gospel truths, is, that it begets in us a contempt of this world, and all the things of it. To him that believes, how short is time compared to eternity? how false, how empty are the pleasures of sin, compared with those of heaven? how insignificant the esteem or love of man to that of God? how worthless are all our worldly hopes and pretensions in respect of an interest in Jesus? Now the soul, that is once thoroughly possessed with these notions, what will it not do, what will it not suffer, rather than fall short of, or forfeit its crown? In what state will it not be contented; nay, in what state will it not abound in joy, whilst it holds fast the steadfastness of its hope, and is secure of the love of Jesus? Here begins that purity of heart, which is the fountain of true Epicurism: that greatness of mind, which alone is true honour and fortitude. But, that faith may have these effects upon us, it must not be only a *true*, but a *lively* faith: therefore my

2. Second Rule, or, if you please, another branch of the former rule, shall be this. They that will be free indeed, must not

not only believe the great truths of the gospel, but must frequently and seriously ponder them, till they have imprinted in themselves as clear, distinct and perfect *ideas* of them as we are capable of. This will soon mortify the appetites of the body, correct our false opinions of worldly things, and baffle all the sophistry and confidence of lust. A lively faith, is a faith that imports the most clear and natural, the most full and enlarged notions of its objects; a faith, that not only looks upon the articles of our creed as true, but beholds them in a manner as present; and so represented and drawn to the life, that they fill the soul with great and moving considerations. This faith does not only believe that there is a God; but it beholds him, and walks before him as present; it sees him arrayed in all his glory, and in all his majesty. in all the power, and all the terrors, in all the beauties, and all the graces of the divine Nature: it does not only believe, that there are rewards and punishments; but is extremely sensible of the terrors of the one, and attractions of the other; and it looks upon both as at the door. It does not only acknowledge a Mediator, but takes a full view of the misery of that state, wherein we lay through sin; and of the blessedness of that, into which we are translated by the redemption, which is in *Jesus*. It

contemplates this Mediator in all the several steps of condescension and humiliation; in all the tenderness and transports of his passion; in all the melancholy scenes of his sufferings, and the bright and cheerful ones of his glory. This is the faith that sets us free.

3. We must not stop in faith, till it be made perfect in love. We must meditate divine truths till they have fired our souls; till they have enkindled our affections; till we be possessed by an ardent love of God, of *Jesus*, of righteousness, and of heaven; till all our other desires and passions be converted into, and swallowed up of love; till God becomes the centre of our souls; and in him we rest, in him we glory, and in him we rejoice. O love! how great and glorious are the things that are said of thee! 'tis thou who dost impregnate and animate faith itself: 'tis thou, who dost surmount the difficulties of duty, and make the yoke of Christ easy, and his burthen light: 'tis thou, who dost cast out fear, and make religion full of pleasure: 'tis thou that dost make us watchful against temptations, and impatient under the interruptions of duty: 'tis thou, that dost make us disrelish the pleasures of this world, and long to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Here is the liberty of the sons of God.

Blessed

Blessed are they, even in this world, who attain it. But one caution I must here add, that our love must not be a *flash*, a *fit*; but a steady and well-settled affection; an affection that has the *warmth* of *passion*, and the *firmness* of *habit*. We must therefore, by repeated meditations and prayers, daily nourish this flame of the altar, and not suffer it to go out.

4. We must never be at rest, till we have possessed our minds with a perfect *hatred* of the sin which we are most subject to. The love of God, his long-suffering and forbearance, the sufferings of Jesus, the strugglings of the spirit, the peace and pleasure of holiness, the guilt and vexation, the shame and punishment of sin, its ill influence on our present perfection and happiness, on our peace and hopes, are proper topicks to effect this. A thorough hatred of sin, once settled and rooted in us, will produce that sorrow, that indignation, that watchfulness, that zeal, which will remove us far enough, not only from the sin, but also from the ordinary temptations to it; and place us almost without the danger of a relapse.

To this fourth rule, I should add this other: that when once a man has resolved upon a new course of life, whatever difficulties he finds in his way, whatever baffles he meets with, he must never quit the design

sign of virtue and life; he must never give over fighting till he conquer: the reason is plain, for he must either *conquer* or *die*. But this belonging rather to perseverance in virtue, than the beginning of it, therefore I but just mention it.

5. It will not be imprudent in this moral, as in physical cures, to observe diligently, and follow the motions and tendencies of nature. Where there are seeds of generosity and honour; the turpitude and shame of sin, the baseness and ingratitude of it, the love of God, and of Jesus, and such like, are fit topicks to dwell upon. Where fear is more apt to prevail, there the terrors of the Lord are the most powerful motives: and so whatever the frame and constitution of nature be, it will not be difficult to find arguments in the gospel adapted to it, which will be so much the more *prevalent*, as they are the more *natural*.

6. *Lastly*, We must use all means to obtain the spirit of God, and to increase and cherish his influence: we must ask, and seek, and knock, *i. e.* we must pray and meditate, and travel with patience, and with importunity, that our heavenly Father may give us his Holy Spirit: and when we have it, we must not grieve it by any deliberate sin, nor quench it by security or negligence, by sensual freedoms
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and presumption; but we must cherish every motion, improve every desire and passion that it works in us; we must shun every appearance of evil; we must press on towards perfection; we must watch unto prayer; we must spend the time of our sojourning here in fear; we must rejoice and glory in the Lord; and we must wait for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Christ Jesus. And now I have finished what I had to say on this subject of the perfect man's liberty, as it relates to mortal or wilful sin: I have shewed what this sin is; and how far man may be freed from it, referring the reader to *chap. 4.* for the fruit of this freedom. I have here, lastly, given that advice which I thought most serviceable to the attainment of it. And through this whole chapter, I have had regard not only to perfection, but sincerity; it being indeed improper to do otherwise, since we cannot arrive at the one, but through the other. For sincerity is Perfection in its infancy or non-age! and Perfection is nothing else but sincerity cultivated by meditation and discipline, and cherished by the influence of heaven. And now let no man's heart fail him, while he contemplates the difficulties which block up the way to his liberty. The way indeed is steep, and the top is high; but
serenity

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serenity and happiness, security and glory dwell there. Many indeed are the temptations which would forbid our ascent, and thrust us down; but we are armed all over; they cannot hurt us; the Spirit supports and encourages us; and nothing but our cowardise and inconstancy can prevent our success: *Watch ye, stand fast, quit ye like men, be strong*; and then you shall be sure to conquer and enter into rest.

C H A P. VII.

Of unfruitfulness, as it consists in idleness. Idleness, either habitual or accidental. Considerations to deter men from the sin of idleness.

UNfruitfulness is a fit subject to conclude a discourse of *liberty* with, or begin one of *zeal*; for lying, like a tract of ground, between two bordering kingdoms, it may indifferently be laid to either. As it implies a direct opposition to spiritual life and sincerity, it naturally falls in under the consideration of *zeal*: as it implies a servile subjection to some vile lust or other, it naturally falls in under the consideration of *liberty*: so that by allotting it this place, I shall at once compleat my reflections on the argument of *liberty*.

Barrenness, or unfruitfulness, may in general best be understood by comparing it with a state of *wickedness*: from which, as it is usually distinguished in the notion of the vulgar, so does it really differ on many accounts. The one has in it an air of *defiance*, the other of *unconcernment* for religion: the one *forgets* God, the other *contemns* him; the one has no *relish* nor *savour* of that which is *good*, the other finds too much *gust* and *pleasure* in that which is *evil*; the one makes us by degrees *enemies*, the other *strangers* to God. In short, there is little doubt to be made, but that the *omission* of a *duty*, and the *commission* of a *crime*; *lukewarmness* in that which is *good*, and *eagerness* and *confidence* in that which is *evil*, may, and generally do, differ very widely in the degrees of guilt: from hence it is (the sinner being always a partial and indulgent judge of himself) that it is not unusual for many, who seem to have some abhorrence of wickedness, to be far enough from apprehending much evil, or much danger in unfruitfulness. This is a fatal error; it frustrates the great design of religion, and robs it of its truest honour, good works. For what can religion effect by that man, who retains nothing of it but the bare form and profession, and dares promise

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himself not only impunity, but a heaven, in an useless and unprofitable life?

Unfruitfulness, if more particularly enquired into, consists in two things; a *neglect* of duty; or a *lifeless* and *unprofitable* performance of it. The former I will call *idleness*; the latter *lukewarmness*, *coldness*, *formality*; and treat of each in order; of the former in this, and of the latter in the following chapter. And because each of them are encumbered with mistakes and errors, which arise not only from self-love and partiality, but also from shallowness of judgment, joined with tenderness of conscience; I shall endeavour so to manage this subject, as neither to discourage the weak, nor embolden the careless.

§. I. Of idleness. The omission of a duty may be either *habitual*, or *occasional* and *accidental*: and accordingly the case of omission may be very different.

I. An *habitual omission* of duty cannot consist with sincerity: a general neglect of duty defeats the main end of religion, which is to honour God, adorn our holy profession, and promote the good of human society; all which can never be attained but by following after righteousness, and abounding in the fruits of it. By this rule,

rule, an *idle*, though *innocent* life, must necessarily be accounted *irreligious* and *vicious*, being a flat contradiction to our excellent profession. He who does not pray, nor meditate, nor pursue any end of charity, though he be otherwise civil and regular in his life; yet because he does not work righteousness, because he is so far from imitating the zeal and charity of the blessed Jesus, that he acts directly repugnant to both; therefore must he not be looked upon as a disciple of Jesus, but as an alien and a stranger. He, whose life is spent in *vanity* or *drudgery*, in pleasure or business, though his pleasure be not *impure*, nor his business *unjust*; yet is he, before God, a criminal, because unprofitable; he has received the grace of God in vain; the light of the gospel has risen upon him in vain: and he has served no interest of virtue or religion in his generation; and therefore he will be excluded heaven, with the *slothful servant, who hid his Master's talent in a napkin*, Luke xix. 20.

2. The case of an *accidental* or *occasional* omission of duty, is very different from that of *habitual* neglect of it; an *occasional omission* may be, not only *lawful*, but *necessary*; but the *neglect* of duty never can be either. The circumstances of positive duty,

and the measures and degrees of moral good, are not strictly fixed and settled; and therefore a single omission, either in the one or the other, where-ever there is a sufficient reason for it, can neither grieve the spirit, nor frustrate the design of religion; nor consequently imply any corruption in the heart. But then we must take care,

1. That our omission be not too frequent. We must always have regard, in this matter of duty, to the great end and designs of its injunction; we must take care that our omissions in moral duties be not so often, that either the honour of our religion, or the welfare of our neighbour, suffer by it. Nor must we so often omit instrumental duties, prayers, reading, the sacrament, and the like, as thereby to *abate*, or much less *extinguish*, our spiritual gust and fervour. Omissions of duty too often repeated, breed a kind of indifference; or lukewarmness; and lukewarmness soon passes into coldness and insensibleness; and this often ends in a reprobate mind, and an utter aversion for religion.

2^{dly}, We must endeavour some way or other to compensate the omission of a duty; to make up by charity, what we have defalked from devotion; or to supply by short ejaculations, what we have been forced to

to retrench from fixed and regular offices of prayer. And he that watches for opportunities, either of *improvement*, or *doing good*, will, I believe, never have reason to complain of the want of them: God will put into his hands either the one or the other; and for the choice, he cannot do better than follow God's.

3dly, A single omission must never proceed from a *sinful motive*; from a love of the world or indulgence to the body; *necessity* or *charity* is the only just and proper apology for it. *Instrumental* or positive duties may give way to *moral* ones; the religion of the *means*, to the religion of the *end*; and in moral duties, the less may give way to the greater. But *duty* must never give way to *sin*, nor *religion* to *interest* or *pleasure*.

Having thus briefly given an account, what omission of duty is, and what is not sinful; and consequently so settled the notion of idleness, that neither the careless nor the scrupulous can easily mistake their case; I will now propose such *considerations* as I judge most likely to deter men from it, and such *advice* as may be the best guard and preservative against it.

1. The first thing I would have every one lay to heart is, that a state of idleness is a state of damnable sin. Idleness is directly repugnant to the great ends of God,

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both in our creation and redemption. As to our *creation*; can we imagine that God, who created not any thing but for some excellent end, should create man for none, or for a silly one? The spirit within us is an active and vivacious principle; our rational faculties capacitate and qualify us for doing good; this is the proper work of reason, the truest and most natural pleasure of a rational soul. Who can think now, that our wise Creator lighted this candle within us, that we might oppress and stifle it by negligence and idleness? that he contrived and destined such a mind to squander and fool away its talents in vanity and impertinence? As to our *redemption*, 'tis evident both what the design of it is, and how opposite idleness is to it. Christ gave himself for us, *to redeem us from all iniquity; and to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. And this is what our regeneration or sanctification aims at: *We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them*, Ephes. ii. 10. How little then can a useless and barren life answer the expectations of God? What a miserable return must it be to the blood of his Son; and how utterly must it disappoint all the purposes of his Word and Spirit? But what need I argue further?
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the truth I contend for is the express and constant doctrine of the scriptures: is not *idleness* and *fulness of bread* reckoned amongst the sins of *Sodom*? What means the sentence against the *barren fig-tree*, *Luke* xiii. 7. but the destruction and damnation of the idle and the sluggish? The indignation of God is not enkindled against the barrenness of *trees*, but *men*. What can be plainer than the condemnation of the unprofitable servant, who perished because he had not improv'd his talent? *Mat.* xxv. 38. And how frequently does the apostle declare himself against the *idle* and *disorderly*? And all this proceeds upon plain and necessary grounds: our Lord was an example of virtue, as well as innocence; and he did not only refrain from *doing evil*, but he *went about doing good*. We can never satisfy the intention of divine precepts by *negative* righteousness: when God prohibits the *filthiness of the flesh and spirit*, he enjoins *the perfecting holiness in his fear*: when he forbids us *to do evil*, he at the same time prescribes *the learning to do well*. What need I multiply more words? Idleness is a flat contradiction to faith, hope, charity; to fear, vigilance, mortification; and therefore certainly must be a damning sin: *These* are all active and vigorous principles; but idleness enfeebles and dis-spirits, manacles and fetters us.

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These are pure, strict and self-denying principles; but idleness is soft and indulgent: *these* conquer the world and the body, raise and exalt the mind; but idleness is far from enterprizing any thing, from attempting any thing that is good; it pampers the body, and effeminates and dissolves the mind; and finally, whatever innocence or inoffensiveness it may pretend to, it does not only terminate in sin, but has its beginning from it; from stupidity and ignorance, from vanity and levity, from softness and sensuality, from some prevailing lust or other.

2. Next after the *nature*, the *consequences* of idleness are to be considered; and if it be taken in the utmost latitude, there is scarce any sin which is more justly liable to so many tragical accusations; for it is the parent of *dishonour* and *poverty*, and of most of the *sins* and *calamities* of this mortal life. But at present I view it only as it is drawn with half a face, and that the much less deformed of the two: I consider it here as pretending to *innocence*, and flattering itself with the hopes of happiness; and yet even thus, supposing it as harmless and inoffensive as it can be, yet still these will be miserable effects of it: it will rob religion, and the world, of the service due to both: it will bereave us of the pleasure of life, and the comfort of death;

death ; and send us down at last to a cursed eternity. For where are the virtues that should maintain the order and beauty of human society ; that should relieve and redress the miseries of the world ? Where are the virtues that should vindicate the honour of religion, and demonstrate its divinity as effectually as predictions or miracles can do ? Where are the bright examples that should convert the unbelieving part of mankind, and inflame the believing part with a generous emulation ? Certainly the lazy Christian, the slothful servant, can pretend to nothing of this kind. As to the *pleasure* of life, if true and lasting, if pure and spiritual, 'tis easy to discern from what fountains it must be drawn. Nothing but poverty of spirit can procure our peace, nothing but purity of heart our pleasure. But ah ! how far are the idle and unactive from these virtues ? Faith, love, and hope, are the seeds of them : victories and triumphs, devotion, alms, and good works are the fruits of them : but what a stranger to these is the drone and sluggard ? Then for the *comfort of death*, it must proceed from a well-spent life : he that sees nothing but a vast solitude and wilderness behind him, will never, like the *Israelites*, see a *Canaan* before him. Life must be filled with good works, or else death will look but dark

dark and gloomy : when the conscience inquires every where after the effects of the Word, and the Spirit, and the blood of Jesus, and can discover in all the parts, in all the paths of life, no tracks of any thing but *fancy* and *fortune*, *humour* and *indulgence* ; how will it shrink, and faint, and tremble ! what pensive, melancholy doubts will damp and choak its hope ! and how can it be otherwise ? Alas ! the mind of a Christian is sufficiently informed that every man shall receive according to what he has done in the body ; God will judge every man according to his works ; what then must become of him who has none to shew ? If immortality and glory, if life and peace be the reward of *well-doing* ; nay, of *patient continuance* in well-doing, what will become of the drowsy, the supine, and careless, the sot and the sluggish, who have slept and fooled, and trifled away life ?

3. I might aggravate the guilt of idleness, by taking an estimate of the *talents* it wastes, the obligations it slights, and the *hopes* it forfeits. I might render man more jealous and apprehensive of falling into it, by observing how generally it prevails ; which is a plain proof, either of the strength of the temptation, or of our propension ; a plain proof either that there is I know not what secret magick in the sin, or else
that

that the cheat it imposes upon the world is a very clever, a very dextrous one. But I have said enough; and where the former considerations fail, these will hardly succeed: therefore I will now pass on from arguments to advice, which was the next thing proposed to be done.

And here my advice must have regard to two different sorts of persons. 1. To such as are born to plentiful or competent fortunes. 2. To such as are to raise their own, or to provide for the support and maintenance of themselves and their families, by their labour and industry in some calling or profession. To the former the best directions I can give, are these:

1. He that is master of his time, ought to devote the more to religion: *To whom God hath given much, of him much will be required*: Nor has such an one any excuse left, either for omission, or a hasty and cursory performance of duty, but one, one that will encrease his guilt, *i. e.* laziness, pleasure, or some sin or other. Such an one therefore ought to be constant and diligent in frequenting the publick assemblies of the church; his attendance upon prayers, sacraments, sermons, must be such as becomes a man, who, as it has pleased God, seems born not to provide for life, but only to live, only to improve and enjoy life, and carry on the noble design of it; and as

becomes a man whose good or ill example is of such vast importance to the service or disservice of religion. Nor must such an one's attendance on the publick excuse him from the religious offices of the closet, or his family; he ought to abound in each: he may be more frequent in meditation and prayer, in reading and instruction, and perform each with more justness and solemnity than others can.

2. Persons of fortune ought to be careful in the choice of intimates and friends. Conversation is not always a loss, but sometimes a gain of time: we often need to have our forgetfulness relieved, our drowsiness awakened by the discourses and reflections of our friends. If discourse were generally seasoned with grace, conversation would be the greatest blessing; if with sense and reason, innocence and prudence, it would be the most agreeable entertainment of human life. But how mischievous is the acquaintance which infects us with vanity and lightness of spirit, which shews us nothing but a gaudy outside and a frothy soul! whose example binds men in civility to be foolish, and makes confidence, and vice, and mis-spence of time, a fashion.

3. It were to be wished, that persons of the best rank, were ever bred up to something; to something that might improve, to something that might amuse and inno-

cently engage their minds ; to something that might employ life, without incumbering it. And yet, alas ! what need I wish this ? How many excellent qualities are necessary to render a gentleman worthy of the station where God has placed him ? Let him pursue *these*. How many are the virtues, how many the duties to which a Christian is obliged ? Let him attend *these*. There is a great deal requisite to make a good master, a good husband, a good father, a good son, a good neighbour, a good parishioner, an excellent subject, and an excellent friend ; and yet there are many other relations besides these. In a word, there is no man, who, when he shall appear before God, will not be found to have omitted many duties ; and to have performed many other with less care and diligence than he ought : and surely such a one cannot justly complain for want of business. I doubt rather on the contrary, that whoever takes a just and full view of things, will have reason to complain, that life is short, and our work great ; that let us use all the diligence we can, and be as frugal of our time as we will, we arrive much sooner at a maturity of years, of knowledge and virtue.

4. The diversions of persons of this quality ought to be well regulated ; such as become the character of a *gentleman*, and the dignity of a *Christian* ; that is, they
must

must be neither *mean* nor *vicious*. But I have treated this and the foregoing heads more copiously in *human life*; to which I refer my reader.

As to such, in the next place, who are engaged in a profession, I have particularly considered their state in several places, and find little to add here, but only to remind them, that they may be guilty of idleness too, that their idleness is the more criminal, the less temptation they have to it. They may neglect the duties of their calling, I mean their secular calling; and if they be unfaithful and negligent in their temporal concern, it is not to be expected that they should be more solicitous and industrious about their spiritual one. They may again suffer the cares of this life to thrust out those of another; and then they are truly idle and slothful servants to God, how industrious and faithful soever they are to the world: for life is but wasted and mis-spent, if it makes not provision for *eternity*; and it matters little whether it be wasted in *pleasure* or in *drudgery*.

C H A P. VIII.

Of Unfruitfulness, as it consists in Lukewarmness or formality. The causes from which Lukewarmness proceeds. The folly, guilt, and danger of a Laodicean state.

IN the former chapter I considered that part of Unfruitfulness which consists in the *omission* of duty: I am now to consider another part of it; which consists in too *perfunctory* a performance of it. Besides those who are truly unprofitable, because they slight or neglect the duties of religion; there is another sort of men, who at the last day will fall under the same character and condemnation; not because they perform no duties, but because their performance of them is depreciated by coldness and formality: men, who make a fair appearance of religion, and yet have no inward spiritual life: men, who do generally observe the external duties of religion, but with so little gust, with such indifference and Lukewarmness, that they are neither acceptable to God, nor useful to themselves. This state of deadness may be considered either more *generally*, as it runs through the whole course of our lives and actions; or more *particularly*, in this or that instance of religion.

I. When

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I. When 'tis so general, that the bent and course of our lives is, for want of relish of the things of God, perverted and depraved; when we have no designs, drive on no ends, that are suitable to the *excellency* and *dignity* of our nature; to the *holiness* of our profession, and to the great and manifest *obligations* of God: when we have no joys or pleasures, no thirsts or appetites; that do truly become a Christian; when we make no progress, no advance towards our great end; when our discourses and employment have no tincture of the Spirit, and no tendency to edification: I think we may then boldly conclude, that this is a state of *carnality* and *death*; and that this want of relish, in the general course of our lives, proceeds from a real want of a sincere faith, and true illumination. For were the mind once truly enlightened; were it once clearly convinced, firmly and habitually persuaded, of the beauty and excellence of the things of God, as we should have notions different from those of worldly carnal men; so would there consequently be a difference in the nature of our hopes and fears, of our desires and designs, of our joys and sorrows; and as necessarily in the main scope and tendency of our conversation. Whoever therefore finds this general stupidity in the
course

course of his life, let him not flatter himself in the performance of any of the duties of religion : he has a corrupt, carnal, and blind heart ; his performances proceed not from true principles, and have not that life and vigour in them that they ought ; they are as different from the performances of a man truly regenerate and sanctified, as the civilities and compliments of a well-bred acquaintance, from the substantial offices of a sincere and affectionate friend. Nor can any man, who will take the least pains to examine himself, be ignorant of, or mistaken in the condition of his soul, if this be it. For whoever will act honestly and impartially, ought not to pass a sentence of absolution on himself, upon the bare performance of some relative, or instrumental duties of religion ; but he ought to enquire, first, what virtues he practises, which put him upon *expence, hazard, or travail* ; what works of piety or charity he performs ; and what proportion they bear to his ability. Next, he ought to consider the *design* and *end* he proposes to himself in all his religious performances ; whether he seek the honour of God, the welfare of man, and his own improvement and growth in goodness ; or whether he does this merely to acquit himself of a task, and discharge himself of what he takes

for granted as a duty, though he finds no pleasure, no advantage in it. Thirdly, He must reflect upon the *frame* and *temper* of his mind in reference to these duties; what hunger and thirst he has for righteousness; what warmth, ardor, elevation, or earnestness of mind accompanies his performances; what peace and pleasure his reflection on them; or whether religion be not a burthen to him, or something to which custom only reconciles him. Lastly, He ought to examine what operation, what *influence* his religious performances have upon him. Prayer, hearing, reading, and such-like duties, do naturally tend to enlighten the mind, purify the heart, increase our love, strengthen our faith, and confirm our hope; and therefore, where this is not the effect of them, we may conclude, that they are not discharged in that manner and with that sincerity they ought. He therefore, that will examine himself aright, must not ask himself how often he reads, how often he hears, &c. and then rest there; but must ask himself what *effect* these performances have had upon his mind; which he will soon discern, if he demand of himself, what the bent and scope of his life is; how much he advances and improves in the conquest of any vice, and the attainment

ment of any virtue; what he loves, or what he hates; what esteem he has for the things of God, and what for the things of men. And, in a word, how he follows after universal righteousness; and how he increases in purity of heart, and poverty of spirit.

2. *Lukewarmness* and *coldness* may be considered more *particularly*, as it discovers itself in the performance of this or that duty; in hearing, reading, prayer, and participation of the Lord's Supper. Now, 'tis certain, that there is a deadness in these duties, which proceeds from a *carnal* and *unsanctified* heart, and is a plain symptom of a *state of sin*: and yet it is too common, that they, that are subject to it, make little reflection upon it, and are little concerned for it. On the other hand, many complain of lifelessness in duty, where there is no just ground for this complaint; and there is no small evil to such; for it disturbs the peace of their minds, damps the cheerfulness and alacrity of their service, and clogs and encumbers their religion with needless doubts and scruples. Some have gone about to set this matter right very unskilfully; and whilst they have, as as they thought, shunned *enthusiastic* raptures, and *irregular* heats, have really betrayed the cause of *true* and *solid* fervency.

Of Unfruitfulness, as it consists of spirit; and talked of prayer, and such other duties, in such a manner, as cannot but reflect disadvantageously on themselves, amongst such, as are moderately versed in the scriptures, and have any experience of the power of God's Word and Spirit upon their souls. But what surprizes me most is, that some of very deserved repute, have taught, that the *seeking spiritual pleasure in prayer*, is an *enemy to Perfection*: that *heat and ardor* of spirit in prayer, does often happen to the *weakest* Christians; and very seldom to the *perfect*. But my business not being to combat the opinions of men, but to advance truths in the most charitable, and in the most effectual manner that I can; therefore, without taking notice of the motives or reasons which have byassed any on this subject, I will lay down two or three propositions, which will, I hope, clear this matter, and promote the design I am now carrying on.

1. Then, *Lifeliness* or lukewarmness in these duties must never *be constant*. There is a vast difference between *habitual* and *accidental* coldness in duty; the former is the symptom of worldly, carnal, and unregenerate minds; but not the latter. Many are the accidents which disturb and indispose the body; many are the things which

which distract and clog the mind: from both which because we shall never be utterly free in this world; therefore our devotion will never be so constant and uniform, but that it will have its *interruptions* and *allays*; and dulness and lifelessness will sometimes seize upon the best of Christians. But then, if this spiritual deadness in religious exercises be *fixed, constant, and habitual*, it must needs be a proof of a corrupt mind: for 'tis impossible that there should be a true principle of grace within, which should never, or very rarely, shew itself in the sincerity and fervency of our devotion. How is it possible that that man, who is generally slight and superficial in his confession, should have a true compunction and sincere contrition for sin? How is it possible that he, who is generally indifferent, formal, and cold in his petitions, should have a just sense either of his wants or dangers; or a true value for the grace and favour of God? The sum is, deadness in duty is either general or rare, common or accidental: if it befalls us *commonly*, 'tis an argument of an unregenerate heart; if rarely, 'tis not. But if the returns of life and deadness in duty be so frequent and unconstant, that 'tis impossible to determine whether the one or the other prevail

most; then 'tis plain, that the state also of such a man is very dubious.

2. Duty must never be destitute of *sincerity*, though it may be of *pleasure* and transport; it must never be without *seriousness* and concernment, though it may be very defective in the *degrees* of *love* and *ardency*. Thus in prayer the tenderness and contrition of the soul, dissolved in love and sorrow, is a frame of spirit much above what the penitent commonly arrives at. But an aversion for sin, a firm resolution to forsake it, and a hearty desire to be enabled by the grace of God so to do, is what he must not want. So again, joy and transport, the ardor and exultancy of mind, is the effect of a clear understanding, an assured conscience, an heart inflamed with love, and a strict life: whoever therefore falls short in the one, will generally fall short in the other too. But every Christian that is truly such, must have a true sense of his wants, a hearty desire to please God, a true notion of his goodness, and a steady dependence upon it through Christ. And these things are sufficient to unite our hearts and our lips in the same petitions; to make us in earnest in all the duties we perform, and careful to intend the main end of them.

3. The

3. The prayer of the *perfect* man is generally offered up with the *tenderest* and most *exalted* passion; and a holy pleasure mingles itself in every part of his office: his petitions and praises; his confessions, deprecations and confidences, are all of them expressions of warm and delightful passions. And how can we well conceive it otherwise? Must not those *praises* and *Magnificats* be full of joy and transport which flow from a full assurance of the divine favour, from a long experience of his love, and from the glorious prospect of a blessed eternity? Can those *deprecations* and *confidences* want a heavenly calm and tranquillity of spirit, which rest upon the Mediation of Jesus, the promises of an immutable God, and the pledge of his Spirit? Can those *confessions* want contrition, that have all the tenderness that holy zeal and the humblest reflections can inspire them with? which are poured forth by a soul enlightened, purified, strong in the faith, rooted and grounded in love; by a soul consequently that has the liveliest sense of deformity, and danger of sin, of the beauty and pleasure of holiness, of the infinite goodness of God, and of that love of Christ that passeth knowledge? Can, finally, those *petitions* want desire and flame,

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which are offered up by a soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, that counts all things but dung and dross in comparison of Jesus, that pants after God, that longs to be dissolved and to be with Christ? And as we may thus, from the nature of things, collect what kind of prayers those of the perfect man generally are; so may we, from the example of the royal *Psalmist*, and others, demonstrate all this to be no vain speculation, but real matter of fact. 'Tis true, *weight and dignity of matter, gravity and significancy of expression*, are the character most conspicuous in *publick* offices in the best and most ancient prayers, and particularly in the Lord's prayer. We find in them few or no figures of speech, no vehemence of expression. But it is true too, that the devotion of a soul disengaged, as it were, from the body, retired from the world, collected within itself, raised by daily contemplation, and accustomed to converse with heaven, flows naturally and easily. Those great *ideas*, which such a prayer as that of our Lord's composition presents to the mind, inflame the desire, awaken all the passions of the holy man, without any labour of imagination, or artifice of words.

Thus

Thus I have considered the nature of lukewarmness, and shewed how far the perfect man is removed from it. My next business is, to persuade and exhort men to quit it, and become sincere and zealous. Only I must, first, take notice by the way, that besides idleness and lukewarmness, there is sometimes a third cause or occasion of unfruitfulness; which deserves never to be slighted: that is *sickleness, unsteadiness, or inconstancy*. Many there are, who often propose, project, and resolve great matters; but never bring forth any fruit to perfection: what they build one day, they throw down another. They put on as many various moral forms, as *Proteus* in the poets does natural ones: sometimes they are in a fit of zeal; at other times nothing but coldness and bare form: sometimes they are in the camp of virtue; sometimes in that of vice. In a word, they halt, like the *Israelites*, between *God* and *Baal*; and are divided and distracted between a *sense of duty* and the *love of the world* and the *body*; between the *checks* and incitements of *conscience* on the one hand, and some foolish *inclinations* on the other. This state I have had an eye to very often, nor shall I forget it here; but shall propose such a method for the cure of lukewarmness and formality, as may be also of very good use to all such, as
fall

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fall short of the main end of religion; being not truly and thoroughly changed; but are only *almost persuaded to be Christians*, and only not altogether *so far from the kingdom of heaven* as others. This being premised, I proceed, and,

1. I will enquire into the causes from whence lukewarmness, and all abortive attempts after virtue, flow.

2. I will shew the *folly, guilt, and danger* of a *Laodicean* state.

§. 1. Of the causes, &c. These are generally four.

1. Men finding themselves under great difficulties in coming up to holiness, in the true genuine and gospel-notion of it, have endeavoured to enlarge the way, and widen the gate that leads to life; and have therefore formed to themselves more soft and pliant notions of vice and virtue; such as may be more easily accommodated, either to their particular *inclinations*, or to the *modes and fashions* of the world, than those of Christ and the apostles can. Hence it is, that amongst such as pretend to some regard for religion, humility, poverty of spirit, self-denial, abstinence and mortification, are so far from being visible in their practice, that we seem

to have almost lost the notion of them. And the pride of life, and the lust of the eyes, are so universally practised, that tho' we know, that these in *St. John* are the names of vices, we scarce know what the things themselves are. We have confounded the means and bounds of vice and virtue; and such are the freedoms, I will not say of those who profess debauchery, but Christianity, that if they be consistent with the sanctity and purity of the gospel, it will be hard to determine what excess is. And, in a word, how many are there who, making a profession of living by faith, and looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of Christ, do yet live, as if all the business of life were to get and enjoy as much of this world as they can; who professing themselves the disciples of Christ, whose heart was lowly, his fortune mean, and his appearance humble, do yet lay out their time, their labour, their wealth, on this one design, to make such a shew, such a figure in the world, as may render them the gaze and envy of their neighbours? And as our indulgence to ourselves in these things, which relate to the pride and vanity of life, and the ease and appetites of the body, is very great; so on the same ground, and for the same reason, is our zeal for the interest of virtue,

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virtue, and the honour of God, very little, faint, and remiss. Conversation has very little favour, very little grace in it; and we are so far from being resolute and industrious to awe or shame vice abroad, that we ourselves should be almost out of countenance, if we should be observed to pay any particular respect to religion or virtue in company. The government of our families is so lax and easy, that it favours more of coldness and indifferency, than fervency of spirit. 'Tis true, indeed, these I am speaking of do generally frequent the house of God: *and they sit before him as his people; and delight to hear his word*: But so did the Jews, when God tells them, in the prophet Ezek. xxxiii. 31. *that their hearts went after their covetousness*: And in the prophet *Isaiab*, we have but an odd character of the morals of these people; of whom God saith, *Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways*: Nay, further, *they delight in approaching to God*, Isa. lviii. 2. Now though such, as I am speaking of, may not be guilty to this degree, so as to be chargeable with open wickedness; yet I am very much afraid, that even in this duty they but promote the cheat and imposture they put upon themselves, and make their diligence in this point minister to quiet their consciences in their *Laodicean*

cean state ; for 'twere easy to prove, that such as these do more generally aim at the entertainment of the ear, than the reformation of the heart. And we may say of preachers now, as God did of *Ezekiel*: *And lo, thou art unto them as a lovely song, of one that has a very pleasant voice, Ezek. xxxiii.*

32. The musick of the voice ; the gracefulness of delivery ; a flow of words ; the surprize of novelty, and notion ; the beauty of sentences ; and the sparkling of wit and fancy, or an appearance of learning : these are, I doubt, too often the things that draw together and charm an auditory : and so all are pleased, but none converted or edified ; for who sweats or blushes, who trembles or grows pale at these sermons ? Who goes away from them wounded or struck through, serious and pensive, full of pious fears and devout desires ?

2. A *Laodicean* state springs from sloth and pusillanimity, or the want of a thorough and well-grounded resolution. This was one cause of the *Israelites* fluctuation and uncertainty ; they were indeed desirous of a *Canaan*, but were not forward to purchase it, by tedious marches, hazardous encounters, and the hardship of hunger and thirst, and such like ; they were ever and anon willing to have preferred

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ferred the dishonour and servitude of *Egypt*, with security and fulness, before a *Canaan* on these terms. And thus it is, this day, with Christians of a *Laodicean* spirit, and a doubtful staggering allegiance. An heaven they would have, but would not purchase it at too dear a rate; they would be accounted the disciples of Christ, and share in the merits of his sufferings, but they would not take up his cross, in any sense, and follow him. But, alas! *Israel* might as well have gained their liberty, without going out of *Egypt*; or a *Canaan*, without travel, and hardship, and blood; as these, virtue, and heaven, without watchfulness and industry; we may as well hope to support and encrease the health and strength of the body, without food or exercise; as that of the soul, without meditation and prayer; we may as soon conquer our enemies without discipline, expence, and blows; as master our corruptions, and become virtuous, without spiritual watchfulness, travail or contention. There is indeed force and efficacy enough in the word of God, to enlighten the mind, and purify the heart; if we would but frequently and seriously read and meditate it. The grace of the Spirit is sufficient to conquer our corruptions, and strengthen and establish us in faith and obedience, if we did but earnestly

earnestly and frequently pray for it; and cherish and improve it, when obtained. The means which God has prescribed are undoubtedly proper and suitable, powerful and effectual, to the attainment, preservation, and increase of holiness; and all his ordinances have a divine virtue and energy in them, if they be but duly and conscientiously made use of. But if we do not watch, if we do not meditate, if we do not pray; if we expose ourselves to a vain and trifling conversation; if we indulge the body in all the ease it is inclined to, and put ourselves upon no duties, practise no discipline that we have any reluctance for; 'tis not to be wondered at, if our virtue be crazy and sickly, if our performances be cold and unedifying, our faith weak, our affections low and grovelling, our life unsteady and unprofitable, our religion destitute of true pleasure, and our latter end of any rational comfort, or well-grounded confidence. 'Tis naturally to be expected that the soul of the sluggard should be like his field. *Prov. xxiv. 30. I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down:* This is one plain cause, and commonly the first, of our

halting between *God* and *Baal*; namely, our idleness and sloth in religion, joined with pusillanimity and cowardice, which moves us to decline all difficulties, and disables us to make a bold resistance against temptations: how criminal and guilty this must render us in the sight of *God*, 'tis no difficulty to guess. Is this the zeal, the revenge of an humble and active penitent? Is this to redeem the time, and efface the memory of our past sins and provocations? Is this the conversation, that becomes the children of the light, and of the day? Is this our hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is this our ambition, our passion for an heaven? Finally, is it thus we requite the mercies and obligations of *God*, and the love of *Jesus*, that passeth knowledge? Shall such halting trimming Christians as these, think ye, ever be judged endued with a true and living faith, who express in the whole tenour of their lives, so much coldness and indifference for their salvation, which the Son of *God* thought worth the purchasing, by so much travail and so much sorrow, so much shame and so much blood?

3. A third cause of our halting between *God* and *Baal* is some degrees of infidelity. This was the case of *Israel* too.

They were ever prone to idolatry ; partly trained up to it in *Egypt*, and elsewhere ; partly being more capable of forming an *idea* of a finite and topical God, than of an infinite and universal one, *Jer.* xxiii. 23. partly being fond of following the fashions of other nations. And, lastly, moved partly by that great and long prosperity, which *Egypt* and other idolatrous nations enjoyed ; and no doubt comparing it too with the variety and uncertainty of their own fortune, and the frequent disappointment of their expectations, *Hosea* ii. never laying it to heart all the while, that the way to secure their prosperity, was to change, not their God, but their manners. I would to God, this were not too lively a description of the state of too many Christians ; and that we could not trace our lukewarmness and fickleness in religion too plainly back to the same source or origin ; namely, some degrees of infidelity. I wish the prosperity of the wicked do not somewhat undermine the belief of a providence : I wish, whatever we talk of a treasure in another world, we do not now and then think it wisest to have our portion in this. I am afraid, that the decays and dissolutions of our nature in death, the rottenness and corruption of the grave, and the variety of changes and fortunes our very dust undergoes, may tempt

us to some scruples and jealousies about a posthumous life. But however it be in these points, I am too well assured, that we do often doubt, whether virtue be the true blessedness of life: whether there be that pleasure in righteousness the scripture affirms there is. I am confident, the notions of righteousness and holiness, with which the scripture furnishes us, are often blurred and blotted by the maxims and customs of the world; and persuade myself, that there is scarcely one of those, that are *Laodiceans* and trimmers in religion, that do not flatter themselves that God will not be as severe as his threats; and that he will receive them into heaven upon milder and softer terms than the gospel proposes. Some such kind of infidelity as this must possess the heart, where-ever the life is so infinitely below our profession. When *the word preached doth not profit*, it is because it is not mingled with a due measure of *faith in those that hear it*. If we did truly believe the revelations of God; if we did see the promises of God as evident and present by faith, tho' distant in themselves, 'twere impossible but they must move, but they must take us; 'twere impossible but they must enkindle in us another sort of desire; and this desire would soon produce another sort of endeavours,

another sort of life. When *Moses* beheld *Canaan* from *Pisga*, how passionately did he desire to enter into *that* good land! When the disciples had seen *Jesus* ascend up into heaven, how were they transported with a desire of following him! how unspeakable was their joy! how fervent their prayers! how lasting and enlarged their gratitude! *They returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.* How does a prospect of gain captivate the covetous! How does the fancy or expectation of pleasure inflame the voluptuary! How does the sight of vanity and grandeur infect the proud! and the hope of glory fire the ambitious? What, hath the beauty and pleasure of holiness no attraction? Has heaven no charms in it? Has the favour and love of God, and of *Jesus*, no force, no power in them? Surely we have not the face to deny, but that the promises of God are great and precious ones; and if they raise no passion in us, it must not be through want of *excellence* and *loveliness* in *them*, but want of *faith* in *us*. And then judge you, how acceptable this kind of infidelity must render us to God: what value can God have for a people whom no kindness can oblige, no arguments convince; with whom no miracles can gain belief; no assurances or

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promises find credit? Hell is the portion of the *fearful* and *unbeliever*. Rev. xxi. 8. And what dreadful judgments did overwhelm *Israel*, as often as they thus halted between God and idols! It did not excuse them, that they had some sort of *veneration* for the memory of *Moses* and his *miracles*; since this was not able to over-rule their *prejudice* and *superstition*; that they retained some honour for *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and that *God* which was the *fear* of their *fathers*, since they had as much, or more, for the nations round about them, and their *gods* too. And whatever power they did acknowledge in the God of heaven, or whatever benefit they did own themselves to have derived from him, as I can hardly think the memory of either was utterly extinguished amongst them; all this availed them nothing, while they made their court to other gods too, and put their trust in their patronage and protection. Though this be sufficient to make us sensible of the guilt of a *Laodicean* virtue and uncertain halting faith; yet I must advance on, and observe unto you a worse principle, if worse can be, of this deportment yet, which is,

4. The fourth fountain of this unsteadiness and remisness in religion is, some remains of corruption; the prevalency of
some

some vicious passion or other. Men's actions are the plainest indications of their affections. If the life looks two ways, we need not doubt but that the heart does so too. This was that made the young man in the gospel fluctuate so between *Christ* and *mammon*; this was the case of *Herod*: he had yielded, no doubt, to the power and force of the *Baptist's reasons*, if he had not been drawn back by the charms of his *Herodias*. And this is the case of every man who is but *almost* a Christian; he is under the ascendant of some silly or vile lust or other; this is that which spoils the taste of the hidden *manna*, and diminisheth the price of *Canaan*. Without doubt men would apply themselves more vigorously to spiritual things, were they not too fond of the body and the pleasures of it; they would certainly seek the kingdom of heaven more earnestly, and make a better provision than they do for the other world, were they not too much taken with this, and therefore too apt to set up their rest on this side *Jordan*. Now if this be so, what can we expect? They only who *conquer*, are crowned; they that *sow* to the *flesh* and to the *world*, can reap nothing from these but *corruption*. These kind of Christians, though peradventure they are not slaves to any *infamous* and *scandalous* lusts, are yet entangled by some other, not much less injurious,

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though not to *réputation*, yet to *purity of heart*; they are captivated to the world and flesh, though their chains seem better polished, and of a finer metal; they cannot mount upwards, they cannot conquer, being retarded and kept under, if not by the *strength of temptation*, yet by their own *softness and weakness*; and yet, why should I doubt but these are conquered by temptation? The more *innocent* the object of any one's passions is, generally the more *fatal*, because we are the more apt to *indulge* ourselves in it. The causes of lukewarmness being thus pointed out, 'tis evident what the cure of it consists in, namely, in forming just and correct notions of virtue and vice; in strengthening and forming our faith, and in perfecting and compleating our reformation. I will now endeavour to possess the minds of men with an aversion and dread of this state of lukewarmness, by shewing,

1. The folly;
2. The guilt; and,
3. The danger of it.

1. The folly. How reasonably may I here address myself to the lukewarm in the words of *Elijah* to the *Israelites*: *How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Bâal, then fol-*

low him. 1 Kings xviii. 21. If you do indeed believe, that your safety and happiness depends upon God, then serve him in good earnest ; but if you think this depends upon the world, the flesh, and the devil, then serve these ; if you really think that virtue and religion are the most solid and stable treasure, then strive sincerely and vigorously to possess yourselves of them ; but if you really think that the ease and pleasure of the body, respect, and pomp, and state, is the proper portion, and sovereign good of man, then devote and offer up yourselves to these. For what a folly is that life, which will neither procure us the happiness of this world, nor of another ? To what purpose is it to listen only so much to conscience, as to damp and chill our pleasure ; and so much to pleasure, as to disturb the peace and repose of conscience ? But, indeed, as the words of *Elijah* were rather an *irony* than any real doubt, whether *Baal* or the Lord were God ; rather a scornful derision of their folly and stupidity, than a serious exhortation to deliberate, whether idolatry or the worship of the true God were to be chosen ; I doubt not, but mine will seem to you to carry no other sound in them. The disparity is so vast between God and the world, between religion and sensuality, covetousness and ambition ; between those hopes and

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enjoyments we may reap from the one, and those we can fancy in the other; that there is no place for doubting what choice we are to make, or to which side we are to adhere; nay, in this we are more criminal than the *Israelites*, being self-condemned. The *Israelites*, indeed, seemed to be at a loss, whether the Lord or *Baal* were God; they doubted under whose protection they might thrive best. But at this day whoever believes a God, knows very well there is none besides him. Whatever passion we have for the world, and the things of it; whatever spiritual idolatry we are guilty of, our opinions are not yet so far corrupted, as to attribute to them in reality any thing like divinity. Whilst we dote on wealth, we at the same time know that it makes itself wings and flies away: whilst on greatness and power, we know that 'tis but a piece of empty and toilsome pageantry, and often the subject of misery and dismal tragedies, not incident to a lower state: whilst we dote on pleasure, we are well assured that 'tis dishonourable and short, and intermixed with fears and shame, and torment; we know that nothing here below is able to free our state and fortune from calamity, our mind from guilt, the body from death, much less the whole man from a miserable eternity. In one word, we know that what we admire is
vanity,

vanity, and what we worship is indeed an idol. This being so, I will insist no longer on this topick; for since the world bears no competition with God in our opinion, though it often rivals him in our affections, we are not to impute the halting of a *Laodicean* Christian to any persuasion of omnipotence or all-sufficiency, or any thing like Divinity, in the things he dotes on, serves, and worships, but we must find out some other reason of it. And that is generally this: we are willing to believe, that our fondness for the world, and our indulgence to the body, is consistent enough with religion; that it is no violation of our faith, nor provocation to God; nor consequently prejudice to our eternal interest; and then 'tis no wonder if we blend and compound religion and sensuality; and stand divided in our affections; and consequently halt in our service between God and the world. To prevent this, I will shew,

2. That this is a great *sin*; which is sufficiently evident from this single consideration, that it frustrates the efficacy of the gospel, and the Spirit, and entirely defeats the great design of the Christian religion. For, 1. Religion has
no

Of Unfruitfulness, as it consists

no effectual influence upon the lukewarm himself; the gospel works no thorough change in him. The sinner is not converted into a saint; nor human nature perfected by participation of a divine one.

2. The *Laodiceans* can never offer up to God, any gift, any sacrifice worthy of him; nor render him any service acceptable to him: *the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, Rom. xiv. *He that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God and approved of men.* But alas! these men

are almost utter strangers to these things; a few faint and irresolute wishes, formal and customary prayers, niggardly and grumbling alms, and an attendance upon God's word, rather out of spiritual wantonness than devotion; these are the offerings they can make God; and will God be better pleased with these, than he was with those of *Israel*, that were deformed with maims and blemishes? *Mal. i. 8.*

Offer now these to thy governour; will he be pleased with thee, or accept of thy person? saith the Lord of hosts. The *Magi*, indeed, left their country, and offered gold, frankincense and myrrh to our Saviour, *Mat. ii.* *David* would not sacrifice to God, of that which cost him nothing, *2 Sam. xxiv.*

24. The primitive Christians offered up

to

to God prayers and tears, labours and travels; nay, their honours, their fortunes, their lives, their blood. But, alas! what have these men to offer? They have not love enough to put them upon any expence, nor faith enough to put them upon any hardships, for the sake of God and virtue. *For though they think themselves rich and increased in goods, and to have need of nothing, yet are they poor, wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, Rev. iii. 17.* And shall these receive a crown of righteousness? Shall these share in the kingdom of Jesus? Shall these partake in the triumph of the last day? It can never be: they do nothing worthy of the gospel, nothing worthy of the Spirit of God; nothing that can entitle them to the benefit of the cross of Christ.

3. The life of the *Laodicean* Christian will never do any credit to religion, or reflect any honour on the gospel. No man will be ever able to discern the beauty of holiness, or the power and efficacy of divine truths, from the practice and conversation of such an one. Ah! had the carriage of the primitive times been such as his, I know not what *miracles* might have done; I am sure *examples* would never have

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have made any profelytes. But the Christians then acted those virtues, which the *Pagans* only pretended to; and faith in Jesus atchieved those victories over the world, which the *Jews* (so debauched and stupid were they grown) did in the declension of that state neither understand nor pretend to: this was that which made the world admire and love Christianity. After thus much said of the effects of this sort of carriage; I need scarcely put any one in mind, what will be the last and saddest effect of it; for if our Christianity be such, that it neither truly sets us free from our bondage to the world and flesh; nor enriches our soul with true and solid virtues; if it neither promote the honour of God, nor the good of man, it must unavoidably follow, that having no true title to God's favour, nor any rational ground, on which to build an assurance of it, we can reap no true comfort or pleasure from religion here, or any reward from it hereafter. Alas! what talk I of comfort and reward? *Distress and anguish must take hold of the sinners in Sion, and fearfulness must surprize the hypocrite:* and from the troubles and miseries of *this* life, they must go down into the everlasting torments of *another*. The scripture is plain; God will spue them out of his mouth,

mouth, as he did the *Laodicean*: he will shut the *gate of heaven* against them, as against the *foolish virgins* that had no *oil* in their *lamps*: and their hell will have one torment in it, which is incident to no others, that they had once the hopes of heaven; and it is no small aggravation of misery to fall into it, even from the expectation of happiness.

This is not, as I observed above, to be applied to accidental dulness or deadness in duty; nor are the decays and abatements of love, which good men sometimes suffer, immediately to be pronounced damnable. But yet *these* are to be put in mind of the danger they are in; and recalled to their former zeal, in the words of the Spirit to the Church of *Ephesus*; *Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent, Rev. ii. 4, 5.*

C H A P. IX.

Of Zeal. What in general is meant by Zeal; and what is that perfection of holiness in which it consists. Whether the perfect man must be adorned with a confluence of all virtues; and to what degree of holiness he may be supposed to arrive.

I Am arrived at the *last state* of perfection, which I chuse to call a state of *zeal*; not only because the *scripture* seems to direct me to this expression, but also because it seems to me more full and proper than others, that *may be or are* made use of for the same end. A state of *union* is an expression that better suits *another* life than *this*. For the lesson the *perfect* man is ever and anon to revolve in his mind, is, that the present life is a life of labour, and travel, and sufferings; the future one, of rewards, and crowns, and enjoyments. Then as to that other expression, the state of *love*, it suits my purpose well enough; but does not come up so justly and exactly to it, as the state of *zeal*; for I take *zeal* to be *love*, in the utmost elevation and vivacity that it is capable of.

And now, what a noble, what a fruitful *argument* am I entering upon? Methinks I feel my soul grow *warm*, and *in-*
kindle

kindle upon my approaching it; and my first views or contemplations of it inspire me with desires of the same nature with itself. I am concerned to see myself confined and limited by the laws of *method*; and find myself inclined to wish, that I were now to write, rather a just *volume*, than a few *pages*. Here the heroic *aëts*, or, what is more, the heroic *lives* of saints, martyrs, and confessors, present themselves to my thoughts; here *human* nature, enriched, adorned, and elevated to the utmost degree, by a participation of the *divine* one; here the power of *God's Word*, the energy of the *Holy Ghost*, the triumphs of *faith*, and the extasies of *love*, would be described; here the different excellencies of different *virtues*, and the different value of *good works*, should be stated and settled, and the various paths, in which men pursue the *heights* of virtue and the noblest designs, be examined, and solid piety and true wisdom be refined from the alloys and mixtures of enthusiasm, superstition, fancy, or whatever else they are disfigured and debased by. But this cannot *now* be done, and it may be it could not at all be done by *me*: no measure of the *Spirit*, peradventure, below that with which the *apostles* were inspired, is sufficient to treat this argument as it requires. Besides, accord-
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ing to my capacity, I have been all along making this point. When, in the *first* section, I stated the *notion* of *perfection*, shewed by what steps we advanced to it, what *means* we are to make use of, and what would be the *fruit* of it, I did in effect describe to my reader, the state of *zeal*, and marked out the path that leads to it. When, in the *second*, I laboured to establish the true *liberty* of man, upon the overthrow and extirpation not only of *mortal sin*, and of *idleness* and *lukewarmness*, but also, as far as it might be, even of *sin of infirmity*, and *original corruption*; what else was I doing, but prosecuting this one design, namely, the implanting and propagating in the world the state of *zeal*? However, something there seems to me yet wanting to *complete* my undertaking: and that I am to endeavour now. To which end I will here discourse of three things:

1. What it is in general I mean by *zeal*:
2. What is that *Perfection* of *holiness* or *righteousness*, wherein it consists. And,
3. Of the *efficacy* or *force* of this *holiness*, as it exerts itself in *good works*. Of these, the *two former* shall be the argument of *this*; the *third* of the *following* chapter.

§. 1. Of *zeal* in general, what it is. I do not exclude some degrees of *zeal* from every period of the Christian's life; sincerity cannot subsist wholly without it. *The hunger and thirst after righteousness*, which is the subject of one of our Saviour's *Beatitudes*, must be more or less in every child of God. But it may signify one thing in the *infant*, another in the *adult* Christian: in the one, the conquest of sin, or rather of the reliques and remains of former sinful habits, and the attainment of habitual goodness, is the *object* of this *hunger and thirst*: in the other, it imports a vehement desire of whatever is yet wanting to a farther accomplishment and consummation of righteousness *already* fixed and established; the entire and ultimate perfection of it in *heaven*; and in the *mean* time, the promoting the divine glory upon *earth*, whatever it cost him to do so. By a state of *zeal* then, I here mean virtue or holiness, not in the bud, or in the blossom, but in its full strength and stature, grown up, and ripe, and loaded with blessed fruits: I mean *that* holiness that is the result of illumination, or clearness of judgment, of the strength and force of holy resolution, and the vigour and energy of holy passions. In a word, I mean that solid, spiritual, and operative religion, which

Of Zeal.

may be felt and enjoyed by us ourselves, in the serenity and tranquillity of conscience, the longings and breathings of pious desires, the joys and pleasures of a rational assurance; discerned by the world in our lives and actions, in the modesty of our garb, in the plainness and humility of all things else that pertain to the *port* of life; in the temperance of our meals, the purity and heavenliness of conversation, the moderation of our designs and enjoyments, the instruction of our families, with a tender and indefatigable watchfulness over them; the constancy of our attendance *upon*, and the devoutness of our deportment *in*, the publick worship of God; and finally, in the activity and generosity of our charity: or, to speak my thoughts in the language of St. Paul, a state of *zeal*, is that perfection or maturity of holiness, which abounds in *the works of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, and our Father, 1 Thess. i. 3.* Now the end of all this is, the advancing the glory of God: and therefore *zeal* is well enough described or defined, by an ardent or vehement desire of doing so. Now this is advanced two ways: *first*, by our *personal and inherent holiness*: and, *secondly*, by the fruit of it,
good

good works. Of both which I will now speak a little more particularly.

§. 2. Of that *perfection of holiness* which constitutes the state of *zeal*. Here I will inquire into *two* things.

1. Whether the *perfect* man must be possessed of all the treasures of goodness; whether he must be adorned by a confluence, and an accumulation of *all* virtues.

2. What *height* of virtue, what *degree* of holiness, he may be supposed to arrive at.

1. Of the *extent* of righteousness. It is generally thought that universality is as essential and necessary a property of gospel-righteousness, as sincerity and perseverance: that there is an inseparable connexion and union between *all* Christian virtues; so that he, who wants *any*, must be concluded to have *none*: this *want* being, not like a blemish that diminishes the beauty, or a maim that weakens the strength; but like a wound that dissolves the frame and contexture of the natural body. This opinion is partly built upon *reason*, which tells us, that there is a native lustre and beauty in all virtues; and therefore there is no one in the whole system of morality,

but must be lovely and amiable to a good man. Partly upon *scripture*, in which we find the Christian represented, *as holy in all manner of conversation*, 1 Pet. i. 15. *Perfect in every good work*, Heb. xiii. 21. *As filled with all the fulness of God*, Eph. iii. 19. *As fruitful in every good work*, Col. i. 10. and exhorted, in the most comprehensive terms imaginable, to the practice of every virtue. Finally, brethren, *whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.* To which may be added numerous texts, importing, that faith is a principle of *universal* righteousness; and that the fear and love of God do equally oblige us to *all* his commandments; and that the violation of *one* involves us in the guilt of *all*. And the result of all this seems to be plainly this, that the whole *chain* of graces is dissolved and lost, if there be but one *link* wanting. But at this rate, as the *sincere* man must be endowed with *all* manner of virtues, so must the *perfect* excell in *all*: but the one and the other assertion, if we consider things closely, seems to have in them insuperable difficulties. There is a vast *variety* in the natures of men, in the states and conditions

ditions of life, and in the kinds and degrees, as well of the sanctifying, as of the miraculous gifts of God. St. Paul tells us, *every man has his proper gift of God*, 1 Cor. vii. 7. From whence it seems naturally to be inferred, that every man is not capable of attaining to an excellence and eminence in *every* virtue. Experience tells us, that there are different kinds of *natures*, as well as *soils*; and that some kinds of *virtues*, like some kinds of *seed*, will thrive better in *one* than *another*. Nor does *grace* alter the matter much; since it generally accommodates it self to *nature*. Lastly, it seems very hard, that every man should have the virtues of all men, of all states, of all capacities; every particular member, the virtues of the whole Church: the beauty and strength of the church, as well as that of the natural body, or commonwealth, consisting, not in the all-sufficiency of every member, but in that variety of gifts and graces, that cements and unites, enriches and supports the whole. To come to the matter of *fact*; I read of the *faith* of *Abraham*, the *meekness* of *Moses*, the *patience* of *Job*, the *love* of *Mary Magdalen*, the *zeal* of *St. Paul*, and the *labours* and *travels* of *St. Peter*; which firmness and constancy is too mean a name for. These virtues seem, therefore, to have been the *peculiar* excellencies of these per-

sons; and to have shone in *them* with more transcendent lustre, than any *other*: these seem to have been the virtues, for which grace and nature eminently qualified them; and to which the providence of God more immediately and directly called them. All this considered, seems it not enough to come up to the *perfection* of these great men? May it not suffice to excel in these virtues, which nature, grace, and providence prescribed? May not the *perfect* be allowed to want what he does not need? Would not one think, that, in many respects, it were enough for him to be free from this or that vice, rather than to expect that he should be adorned with this or that virtue, which he has no use for? especially, if by virtue we understand strictly, such a habit as enables us to act easily and delightfully? To adjust this matter;

1. The *perfect* man must, as I have proved before, not only be set free from the dominion of sin, but also abstain even from a single act of presumptuous wickedness: he must neither criminally *omit* a duty, nor deliberately *commit* any thing repugnant to it.

2dly, He must be endowed with spiritual wisdom and understanding, with faith,
 5 hope,

hope, charity, with the graces which I will call *universal*, because necessary and indispensable to all as Christians, abstracting from their particular capacities and relations; and *that* too in an *eminent* degree, so as to be *strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. ii. 1. This will render him *holy in all manner of conversation, and thoroughly furnished to all good works*. These two things constitute *universal* righteousness, compleat the *perfect* man, and fully satisfy the texts alledged; or, if *not*, what follows *will*.

3dly, He must excel in those virtues which are most *natural*. I call those virtues *natural*, to which grace and nature most powerfully dispose and incline him; for *these* he seems to be designed by God; these will soon grow up to maturity; and much will be their fruit, and great their beauty. I do not all this while suppose, that the *perfect* man ought not so far to subdue and rectify his temper, as not only to overcome the sin of his *constitution*, but in some degrees possess the virtue that is most repugnant to it. But to expect him to be eminent *here*, is, I doubt, too hard and unreasonable. For *here*, when he has bestowed much pains and travel, much care and cost, his progress may not be so much, as where he bestowed *least*. But here I

must add *two* cautions; the *one* is, that no man mistake contracted *habits* for *nature*, and then conclude, that it will be impossible for him to attain the *perfection* of this or that virtue, through a natural incapacity. In the next place, let no man satisfy and content himself, in a weak and imperfect state of *that* virtue, which is directly opposed to the sin of his *constitution*; but let him think, that *here*, if any where, his virtue must be always *growing*; and let him not doubt, but that our Saviour's promise, as far as it can be accomplished on earth, belongs to his sincere endeavours here; *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled*, Matth. v. 6.

4. The *perfect* man must be eminent in those virtues, which are most *necessary*: such are those which his particular station and calling, or any other dispensation of providence he is under, requires of him. Whatever virtues may be more *delightful*, these are more *important*; others may be more *natural*, these are more of *use* and more of *merit*. A man may fall short of *perfection* in others, without either *disparagement* or *guilt*; but deficiency in these can hardly escape *both*. Besides, every thing is lovely in its *place*, and in its *time*. There is a *peculiar* grace and lustre, that attends

attends the virtues of a man's *station*, that is scarcely to be found in any other. I would, therefore, have my *perfect* man truly great in his *own* business, and shine with a dazzling lustre in his *own* sphere. To this purpose, surely, speaks the advice of St. Paul, Rom. xii. 6, 7, 8. *Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith: or ministry, let us wait on our ministring: or he that teacheth, on teaching: or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity: he that ruleth, with diligence: he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

5. Lastly, As there is different *guilt* in sins, so there is different *merit* in virtues: as amongst miraculous, so amongst sanctifying gifts, some are more *excellent* than others; and he is the *most perfect man*, who is enriched with the *most perfect gifts*. The three heroic virtues of the gospel are *faith, love, humility*. Nor do I presumptuously, contrary to the apostle, exclude *hope*; but comprehend it under *faith*. Of *faith* I have often had occasion to speak. *Humility* will make the *last* chapter of *this* section; and therefore I will only exhort to *love*. *Love* is the noblest fruit of illumination and faith, the true source and parent of
joy

joy and peace. *Love* is the most pregnant seed of a divine life ; 'tis the principle that animates, moves, and forms the whole body of righteousness : *love* is the bond of union and *communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus* through the *Spirit*. And 'tis but fit, that what renders us most like to God, should render us most *dear* to him too : and this *love* does ; *for God is love*. In short, *love is the fulfilling of the law* ; 'tis the beauty and perfection of a disciple of Jesus, and the great subject of praise and glory in the day of judgment. *Love* is the last round in the scale of *Perfection* ; and therefore my *perfect* man must abound in this. What degrees of *love*, of *desire* or *complacency* for the things of this *present* life, may consist with sincerity, what with *Perfection*, may be easily learned from several parts of this work. There is no doubt but the *perfect* man must *love God* to that *degree*, that he must always cleave to him ; walk as always before him ; ever meditate and contemplate on him and his works ; contrive and study, labour and contend to please him : it must be an affliction to him to be divided from him but for a little while ; and he must, ever and anon, by day and night, break out into his praises, and rejoice and glory in him. 2. He must love God to that degree, as that all things,

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in comparison of him, must appear blasted and withered, empty and contemptible, without pleasure, without beauty: and consequently he must so thirst after the *beatific vision*, after the presence and fruition of God, that he must earnestly *desire to be dissolved*, and pant and long to be dismissed from the *pilgrimage* of this world, and from the corruptible *tabernacle* of the body. Nor do I, lastly, doubt, but that this *love* is often sensibly *transporting*: 'tis a fire within, that strives to break out, and exert itself in the fruitions of heaven: 'tis a rich and mighty cordial that raises nature above itself, and makes it all purity or glory.

Thus have I considered the *extent* or compass of the *perfect* man's *virtues*. And the *sum* total is: in some he must excel, because natural and easy; in others, because necessary. Universal ones he *cannot* want; they are essential to Christianity; others of a peculiar nature he *may*, unless his circumstances exact them: nor is this any diminution of his *perfection*. Patience, fortitude, moderation, vigilance, &c. are the virtues of earth, not heaven; and yet none think the blessed inhabitants of that place imperfect, because not endowed with habits which they do not want. Above
all,

all, he that will be *perfect*, must abound in those graces which are of the most *heroic* nature; faith, love, and humility: for these are they, which most effectually exalt man above *himself*, and above the *world*; which enflame him with a *zeal* for the honour of God, and the good of man; and enable him to surmount the difficulties which he meets with in prosecuting this glorious design. I am next to enquire,

§. 2. To what *height*, to what *degrees* of virtue, the *perfect* man may advance. I have in part anticipated this enquiry already; yet cannot forbear adding here *two* observations. *First*, That reason and scripture seem to press us on toward an endless progress in virtue. And yet, *secondly*, That both seem to propose to us such a *state* of *perfection* as attainable, beyond which we cannot go; that so the *beginner* may not *despair* of perfection, nor the *perfect* abate any thing of their vigilance, and their industry. Such a degree of excellence, to which nothing can be added; such a height, above which there is no room to soar, if applied to man and this world, is surely but an imaginary notion. To dream of *such a perfection*, were to forget our nature, and our state: no sagacity

city of judgment, no strength of resolution, no felicity of circumstances, can ever advance us to *this* height. Such a *perfection* as this, that is incapable of any increase, belongs, I believe, to *God* alone: or, if we may allow it to *angels*, we must certainly deny it to *man*: in *whom*, one would think, the appetites of the body can never be so entirely subdued, that there should be no place to extend his conquest, or render his victory more entire and compleat: and in *whom*, one would think, the Spirit of God should never reside in that measure, that there should be nothing to be added to his fulness. 'Tis hard to conceive, how we should study the system of divine faith, how we should daily reflect upon our lives and actions, without *growing* in spiritual wisdom and understanding: 'tis hard to conceive how we should give God, the world, and our selves, repeated proofs of our integrity in the day of trial, without *increasing* our strength and assurance: and love must naturally increase with these. Whence it is, that St. *Paul*, acknowledging himself not yet *perfect*, resolves, *that forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forward to those things that are before, he would press on towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus*, Phil. iii. 13, 14. And St. *Austin* resolves, *Plenissima charitas, quam-*
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diu hic homo vivit, in nemine est: An absolute plenitude of charity is in no mortal upon earth.

And yet, if we come to *fact* and *practice*, one would be tempted to think, that the *disciples* of our Lord and Master had arrived at that state, wherein their business was not to climb higher, but rather to make good the ground they had gained. What could render St. Paul's victory over the body more compleat, who assures us, *I am crucified with Christ?* And again, *I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me?* What could render the authority and dominion of *his* mind more absolute, or its graces more consummate and entire, who could say with truth, *'Tis not I who live, but Christ who lives in me?* What would you have *added* to that faith and love, which made *him* ready, *not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem*, which made *him* long to be dissolved and to be with Christ? As to *those* words of *his*, Phil. iii. 13. *forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forwards, &c.* they relate to his trials and performances, to his perils and conflicts; not to his attainments: he does not here deny himself to be *perfect*, though that might well enough have become his modesty and humility; but only, that he was not to look upon himself as already at his goal, a conqueror and crown-

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ed; there being much yet behind to do and suffer, notwithstanding all that he had passed through. This is the sense of his ἔχ ὅτι ἤδη τέλειώμαι, which we render, *not as though I were already perfect*. As to St. *Austin*, I am wholly of his mind; for he speaks *comparatively*, and does in effect no more than affirm, that no man living is as *perfect* in *this* world, as he will be in *another*, which no man sure can ever doubt. —If we consult *reason*, will it not be apt to tell us, that as every *being* has its *bounds* set it, so has every *perfection* too? That there is a *stature*, as of the *natural*, so of the *spiritual* man, beyond which it cannot grow? That as to *grace*, no more can be infused, than our *natures* are capable of? Otherwise, like too rich a cordial, it will not strengthen, but fire our natures; or, like too dazzling a light, it will not assist, but oppress our faculties. And does not the *parable* of our *Master* countenance this, *Matth.* xxv. 2. wherein he tells us, that God gave to one five talents, to another two, to another one, to every man according to his *ability*? By which one would think our Lord insinuates, that the measures of *grace* are usually distributed in *proportion* to the capacities of *nature*; and that *he*, who improved his *two* talents into *four*, arrived at his proper *perfection*, as well

well as *he*, who improved his *five* into *ten*; it being as absurd to expect, that the *perfection* of every man should be the same, as to expect, that all men's *bodies* should be of the same height, or their *minds* of the same capacity.

Reflecting on all this together, I cannot but be of opinion, that some have actually arrived at that *strength* of faith, at *that* ardour of love, that they seemed to have been incapable of any considerable *accessions* in this life. But yet new occasions may still demand new virtues; which were indeed before contained and included in faith and love; but no otherwise, than as fruits and trees are in their seeds. And some degree of original corruption may still be lurking in the most sanctified nature; and some venial defects and imperfections or other, may still leave room for the greatest of saints to extend his conquest. Besides, 'tis hard to determine or fix the bounds of knowledge: and every new degree of light seems to make way for more. So that, after all, nothing hinders, but that the *path of the perfect man* may, as well with respect to his *righteousness* as his *fortunes*, be like the *shining light*, which *shineth more and more unto the perfect day*; I mean, the day of a blessed eternity.

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The *motives* to *perfection*, the *fruit* of it, the *means* and *methods* of attaining it, laid down in the *first* section, will all serve here: therefore I have nothing to offer of *this* sort; only, if I forgot to pay that deference to the *institutions* of *our church*, which they justly deserve, I do it *now*: and do earnestly persuade my *reader* to a strict observance of them. I do not only think *this* necessary to maintain a *face* of *religion* amongst us, but also highly conducive to true *perfection*. I am fully satisfied, that there is a *peculiar* presence of God in his *publick* ordinances; that the devotion of good men does mutually enflame and enkindle one another; that there is an holy awe and reverence seizes the minds of good men, when they draw near to God in publick worship; and finally, that if the *offices* of our *liturgy* do not affect our *hearts*, 'tis because *they* are very much indisposed, and very poorly qualified for the true and spiritual worship of God.

C H A P. X.

Of Zeal, as it consists in Good Works. That our own security demands a Zeal in these good works; so likewise do the good of our neighbour, and the glory of God, which are much promoted by good works.

AND now let not any one think, that I have taken pains to advance the illumination of a sinner, to knock off his chains and fetters, to raise him as far as might be above the corruption of nature, and the defects and infirmities of life; to scatter those lazy fogs and mists which hung upon his spirits, and to enrich him with heroic virtues; let no man, I say, fancy that I have laboured to do all *this*, that after all, my *perfect* man might sit down like an *Epicurean* God, and enjoy himself; might talk finely of solitary shades and gardens, and spend a precious life, fitted for the noblest designs, in a sluggish retirement. No, no; as *virtue* is the perfection of human life, so is *action* the perfection of *virtue*: and *zeal* is that principle of *action*, which I require in a saint of God. Accordingly, the scriptures describe this great, this happy man, as *full of the Holy Ghost, fervent in spirit, zealous of good works.*

works. Such an one was *Moses*, mighty in word and deed, as well as learned in all the knowledge of the *Egyptians*: such an one was *St. Stephen*, as full of a divine ardour and irresistible fervency of spirit, as of an irresistible wisdom; and such an one was the excellent *Cornelius*, a devout man, one that had transfused and derived the fear of God from his own bosom, throughout his family, and relations, and friends too; one that gave much alms, and prayed to God always. What need I multiply instances? This is that which distinguishes the perfect man from all others; the victories of faith, the labours of charity, the constancy and patience of hope, and the ardors of devotion.

Need I here distinguish a *zeal* of God, from the fierceness of faction, the cruelty of superstition, from the wakeful and indefatigable activity of avarice and ambition, from the unruly heats of pride and passion, and from the implacable fury of revenge? It needs not; no foolish, no false, fantastick, earthly, or devilish principle can counterfeit a divine *zeal*. 'Tis a perfection that shines with such a peculiar lustre, with such a heavenly majesty and sweetness, that nothing else can imitate it; 'tis always pursuing good, the honour of God, and the happiness of man: it contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the

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saints;

Of Zeal, as it consists

saints; but it contends as earnestly too, to root out wickedness, and implant the righteousness of the gospel in the world. It is not eager for the *articles* of a *sect* or *party*, and unconcerned for *catholick* ones. When it presses for *reformation*, it begins *at home*, and sets a bright *example* of what it would recommend to others. 'Tis meek and gentle under its *own* affronts, but warm and bold against *those* which are offered to *God*. In a word, though love fills its *sails*, divine wisdom and prudence give it *ballast*; and it has no heat, but what is tempered and refracted by charity and humility.

Need I, in the *next* place, fix or state the various *degrees* of *zeal*? Alas! it is not requisite; *zeal* being nothing else but an ardent thirst of promoting the divine *glory* by the *best* works. 'Tis plain the more excellent the *work*, and the more it cost, the more perfect, the more exalted the *zeal* that performs it. When, like *Mary*, we quit the cumber and distraction of this world, and chuse religion for our portion, then do we love it in good earnest. When with the *disciples* we can say, *Lord, we have forsaken all and followed thee*, or are ready to do so; when we are continually blessing and praising God; when, if the necessities of Christ's church require it, we are ready

to call *nothing our own*; when we are prepared, if the will of God be so, to *resist even unto blood*; when nothing is dear, nothing delightful to us, but God and holiness; *then* have we reached the *height of zeal*. In a word, *zeal* is nothing else but the *love of God* made *perfect* in us. And if we would see it drawn to the life, we must contemplate it in the blessed *Jesus*, who is the perfect pattern of heroick love. How *boundless* was *his love*, when the whole world, and how *transcendent* when a world of enemies, was the object of it! how indefatigable was *his zeal*! how wakeful! how meek! how humble! how firm and resolved! His labours and travels, his self denial, prayers and tears, his silence and patience, his agony and blood, and charitable prayers poured out with it for his persecutors, instruct us fully, what divine *love*, what divine *zeal* is. And now, even at this time, *love* reigns in *him*, as *he* reigns in *heaven*: *love* is still the predominant, the darling passion of *his* soul. Worthy art thou, O *Jesus*! to receive honour, and glory, and dominion! worthy art thou to sit down with thy Father on his throne: worthy art thou to judge the world, because thou hast *loved*, because thou hast been *zealous* unto death, because thou hast *overcome*! Some there are in-

Of Zeal, as it consists

deed, who have *followed* thy bright example, though at a great distance. First, martyrs and confessors: next, those beloved and admired princes, who have governed their kingdoms in righteousness; to whom the honour of God, and the good of the world, has been far dearer than pleasure, than empire, than absolute power, or that ominous blaze that is now called glory. And next follow,—Hold! this is the work of angels; they must marshal the field of glory in the end of all things. O my God, may I at least be one, to fill the train of this triumphant procession of that blessed day, when thou shalt crown the zeal and patience of thy saints! Thus have I given a short account of *zeal*. I will now endeavour to kindle it in every breast by some few considerations; which will at once evince the *necessity*, and declare the *fruit* of it.

1. Our *own* security and happiness demand of us *zeal* fruitful in *good works*.
2. It is indispensable to the welfare and good of our *neighbour*.
3. It ministers most effectually to the *glory of God*.

1. Our *own* salvation and happiness depend upon it. For without *this* we reject,

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or at least frustrate the councils of God against our own souls; 'twas for this Christ died, that he might purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. This is the great end of our election; God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, Eph. i. 4. which is to be explained by Eph. ii. 10. where God is said to have before ordained that we should walk in good works. And the beginning of the verse minds us, that 'tis for this end God imparts the light of his Word, and the vigour of his Spirit; and for this end he sanctifies and renews our nature: *We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good Works.* St. Peter tells us, that this is that which all the great and precious promises of God immediately aim at: first godliness, then life; first virtue, then glory. What shall I say more? Our Lord in his narrative of the last judgment, and elsewhere; and his apostles, in almost innumerable places, have with great power and great earnestness, inculcated this doctrine, that we shall be judged according to our works: that immortality and glory is the portion, not of knowledge, but patience and charity; not of an orthodox belief and specious pretension, but of righteousness and zeal: for the *incorruptible,*

Of Zeal, as it consists

the *never-fading crown*, is a crown of *righteousness*. Or, if men will be judged by their *faith*, which is not the language of the *gospel*, this does not alter the matter at all; since *faith* itself will be judged by its *works*. And as a happy *eternity* depends upon our *zeal*; so nothing else can give us any comfortable, any rational assurance of it in *this* life. The reason is plain; because 'tis *zeal* that is the only unquestionable proof of our integrity; and *good works* are the fruit which alone can evidence the life and truth of our *faith* and *love*; hereby we know, that we know him, if we keep his commandments, 1 John ii. 3. Yea a man may say, Thou hast *faith*, and I have *works*: shew me thy *faith* without thy *works*, and I will shew thee my *faith* by my *works*, James ii. 8. Dost thou believe in God? Why art thou not *holy* as he is *holy*? Dost thou believe in *Jesus*? Why dost thou not *deny* thy *self*, take up thy *cross* and follow him? Why dost thou not walk as he walked? Dost thou believe a judgment to come? Why dost thou not *work out* thy *salvation* with *fear* and *trembling*? Why dost thou not *prepare* to meet thy *God*? Why art thou not *rich* in *good works*, that thou mayest *lay up* a *good foundation* against the *time* to come, and *lay hold* on *eternal life*? Nor are *good works* less necessary

cessary to prove our *love*, than *faith*. Certainly, if we love holiness, if we *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, we shall never live in a direct contradiction to the strongest passions of our soul; we shall never refuse to gratify an inclination, which is not only fervent in us, but its gratification will procure us eternal rewards too. Certainly, if we *love God*, we cannot but seek his glory; we cannot but be desirous to maintain communion with him. And if so, do we know any *sacrifice* that is more acceptable to God than *good works*? Do we know any that he delights in more than *zeal*? Do we *love the blessed Jesus*? Are not *good works* the very test of this love which himself has appointed? *If a man love me, he will keep my commandments*, John xiv. 15. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*, John xv. 14. *The love of Christ*, saith the apostle, *constrains us what to do, to live not to our selves, but to him that died for us, and rose again*, 2 Cor. v. 15. What other returns can we make to Jesus? What other way can we express our gratitude to him? He sits on the right hand of God; *all power is given him in heaven and in earth*: he does not himself need our ministry, nor want our service and charity; but hear what he says, *Inasmuch as you did it to one of these my little ones, you have done it to me*, Matt. xxv. 40.

2. Our *zeal* is indispensably necessary to the welfare and happiness of *others*. Do we regard our neighbour's eternal interest? 'Tis *zeal* represses sin, and propagates righteousness; 'tis *zeal* defends the faith, and suppresses heresy and error; 'tis *zeal* converts the unbeliever, and builds up the believer; 'tis *zeal* that awakens the drowsy, quickens the lukewarm, strengthens the weak, and inflames the good with a holy emulation: 'tis *zeal* that baffles all objections, refutes all calumnies, and vanquishes all oppositions raised against religion, and oppresses its enemies with shame and confusion. 'Tis, in a word, *zeal*, and *zeal* alone, that can make religion appear lovely and delightful, and reconcile the world to it; for this alone can *adorn the gospel*; for it renders virtue more conspicuous, more taking in life and example than it can be in the precepts and descriptions of words. Nor is *zeal* less serviceable to the *temporal*, than *eternal* interest of mankind. When God laid the foundation of the *world*, he laid the foundation of *virtue* too; and when he formed *man*, he wove the necessity of *good works* into his very *nature*. How necessary is *justice* to poor creatures who lie so open to wrongs and injuries? How indispensable is *charity*, or *generosity*, to these, who are exposed to so many accidents,

dents, to so many wants, to such a vicissitude of fortune? And being all subject to so many follies and infirmities, to so many mistakes and fancies, how strong must be our obligation to mutual *forbearance*, *patience*, and *gentleness*? In a word, *sin* and *misery* abounds in the world; and if there were not virtues and good works to balance the *one*, and to relieve and support us under the *other*, life would be intolerable. So that revealed and natural religion do necessarily terminate and center in a *zeal* for good works, as their ultimate end, and utmost perfection in this life; and the rule of our Saviour, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them*, is an abstract, not only of the law and the prophets, but of the code of nature too; and this single principle, if sincerely pursued, will ferment and work us up to the noblest heights of *zeal*. I might here, if it were necessary, easily shew that *zeal* has as happy an influence on the *publick* as the *private*; that *this* must animate that justice and mercy that supports the throne; that it is the soul of that honour, integrity, generosity and religion, which support the states and kingdoms of the world; and without which all politick systems must needs tend to a dissolution. But I have said enough; and from what I have

have said, the truth of my *third* consideration naturally appears.

3. *Viz.* That *zeal* ministers most effectually to the glory of God. For if *zeal* be in itself thus lovely, thus necessary; if the fruits and effects of it be thus serviceable to the temporal and eternal interest of man; what a lovely, what an agreeable notion of God shall we form from this one consideration of him, that he is the great Author of it? that he is the Origin and Fountain of that light and heat, of that strength and power of which it is compounded and constituted? He commands and exacts it; he excites and encourages to it by the promise of an eternal crown, and the ravishing fruition of himself: he has planted the seeds of it in our nature, and he cherishes them by the blessed and vigorous influences of his Word and Spirit. How gracious is the divine *Nature*! how gracious is the divine *Government*! when the substance of his laws is, that we should love as brethren, that we should cloath the naked, feed the hungry, deliver the captive, instruct the foolish, comfort the afflicted, forgive one another, if need be, seven times a day; and such like. If to do all this be an argument of being *regenerate*, and *born of God*; if this be a proof of his Spirit ruling in us, his Nature communicated

municated to us, and his image stamped upon us, how amiable must *God* be when we discern so much benefit, and so much pleasure, and so much beauty, and so much loveliness in those qualities which are but faint and imperfect resemblances of him! In a word, the *holiness* of his children and servants, is a demonstration of the *holiness* of *God* himself; and in this consists the very lustre of divine glory. Holiness is the flower of all his attributes; the most *perfect*, because the most *comprehensive* of all his divine perfections; for *holiness* includes *wisdom*, *power*, and *goodness*. As to *goodness*, the case is so plain, that *holiness* and *goodness* are commonly used as terms equivalent. As to *wisdom*, 'tis evident, that no action is commendable and lovely, whatever the matter of it be, unless the principle, the motive of it be *wise* and *rational*; therefore *wisdom* cannot be separated from the notion of holiness. Lastly, As to *power*, this must needs be comprised in it too; for *beneficence*, which is at least one great branch of *holiness*, must unavoidably imply *power* in the *benefactor*, and *impotence* and *want* in the *beneficiary*. And this is the notion wherein *holiness*, when ascribed to *God* in scripture, is generally taken. *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; heaven and earth are full of thy glory*, does express the greatness and majesty, as well

as the rectitude and purity of the divine nature ; and to *sanctify the Lord God in our hearts*, is, in the language of the scripture, not only to love him for his goodness, but revere and fear him for his majesty and greatness. Need I here add, that the excellencies of the *creature*, their fitness and subserviency to the great ends of their creation, is the glory of the *Creator* ; just as the beauty, strength, and convenience of the *work*, is the honour of the *architect* ? If the sun, moon, and stars, the irrational and inanimate parts of the creation, shew forth the glory of God ; how much more do spiritual and rational beings ? And *virtue* is the perfection of *reason*, and *zeal of virtue* : for this is that which does directly and immediately advance those great ends that are dearest to God, as I have, I think, abundantly made out.

C H A P. XI.

Of Humility. *How necessary it is to Perfection.*

OUR Saviour has so often pronounced the *humblest*, the *greatest* in the kingdom of heaven ; he has so often promised the *first* place and the *greatest* exaltation

tation to the *lowest* condescensions: he was himself so illustrious an example of *lowliness of heart*, of *poverty of spirit*; and the apostle has so expressly asserted his *joy and crown*, to be the reward of his *humility*, *Phil. ii.* that I can never think, that man can ever rise to a more eminent height, than *that* to which the imitation of this virtue of Christ will advance him. The more *perfect* therefore man is, the more *humble* must he be too: the clearer view, and the more assured hope he has of heaven, the more unconcerned must he be for all those things which the world pays a respect and honour to, the more he must be above them: the more fervent his love of God and his neighbour grows, the more confidently must he place all his glory in this one thing; the conformity of his affections and life to that of the blessed Jesus. Then is he *perfect*, and *the same mind is in him that was in Christ Jesus*. Finally, The more he *knows* God, the nearer he is admitted into *communion* with him; the more plainly will he discern at how infinite distance he stands from the divine Majesty and purity, and will prostrate himself even into *dust and ashes before him*. The *perfect* man admires, adores, obeys, loves, relies, trusts, and resigns up himself, and all that is dear to him, to God. He is nothing in his own eyes; he pretends to nothing, he lays claim

claim to nothing, on any other title than that of the goodness and bounty of God: whatever virtues he has, he ascribes them to the grace of God; and the glory and immortality he expects, he expects only as the *gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*. And whatever he be in *himself*, he compares not himself with *others*, but he proves his *own* work, that *he* may have *re-joicing in himself alone, and not in another*. Nothing but *zeal* for God, or *charity* for man, can put him upon the asserting his own merit or service; but when he glories, it is, like *St. Paul*, in his *infirmities*, that *the power of Christ may rest upon him*.

Need I here insist on the *fruit* of humility? Surely 'tis conspicuous to every one that thinks at all. Great is the peace and rest of the *bumble soul here*; and great will be his glory *hereafter*. He who loves not the world, nor the things of it, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, enjoys a perpetual calm and serenity of mind. There is no object that can raise any storm in him; there is nothing that can breed in him uneasy desires and fears. He, that loves the *Father*, is fixed on an immutable and perfect good; and he that *now* quits all for God, shall *one day* participate of the fulness of God, and that for ever.

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Need I invite and exhort man to *humility*? Need I guard him against spiritual *pride*? One would think 'twere altogether useless to attempt it. Is it possible, that the *creature* should think himself so independent of his *Creator*, that he should be able to pay him more service than were due to him? Is it possible, that man should set such a rate upon his own righteousness, as to think it capable of deserving the utmost rewards that an infinite God can bestow upon him? Is it possible, in a word, that *man*, poor, frail, sinful *man*; *man*, that can do nothing that is good, but by the assistance of divine *grace*; *man*, depraved and corrupted in his *nature*, and but a very ill husband of *grace*; is it possible, I say, that *man* should be *proud* towards *God*, towards that glorious and incomprehensible Being, who is the Creator and Lord, the Monarch, and Patron, the God and Father of heaven and earth? But as absurd as this is, universal experience teaches us, that *humility*, true *humility* is a hard lesson; and that very excellent persons are not out of the danger of falling into vicious elations of mind. In order therefore to promote the one, and secure us against the other, I will propose these two or three considerations.

Of Humility.

1. There never was mere man yet, that did not fall short of his duty.

2. *Man* is the creature of *God*, depends upon him, and has received all from him : and therefore let him do the utmost he can, he does no more than his *duty*.

3. God stands in no need of our service: and 'tis our *own*, not *his* interest we promote by it.

1. There never was mere man yet, &c. For proof of this, I will not fly to original corruption, or sins of infirmity. Alas! I need not. The apostle, *Rom. i. and ii. and iii. ch.* lays the foundation of justification by faith, in the universal defection and depravation of mankind. *They are altogether gone out of the way, there is none that doth good, no not one.* And what *sins* he there charges the world with, the *catalogue* he gives us of them will inform us. But are *we* no better than *they*? I answer, the light of the gospel, and the preventing grace of God has undoubtedly given a great check to the progress of sin in the world: but since no *man* can be justified, but through faith in the blood of Jesus, 'tis plain that *we* too must be concluded under sin. And tho' *our* sins may not in the number or scandal equal *theirs*; yet
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we ought to remember too, that every sin is the more provoking, the more voluntary it is, and the greater the grace is which it resists and despises. But what need I compare our selves with the *Jew* or *Gentile*? What need I prove by argument and authority, that no man ever yet lived, or will live, without sin? I mean mortal sin. Whoever yet looked back diligently into his past life, and did not meet with stains and deformities enough? When I consider what legions of sins are ranged under those two banners of the devil, the filthiness of the *flesh*, and of the *spirit*; when I call to mind envy, discontent, murmuring, distrust, pride, covetousness, ambition, wilfulness, contention, frowardness, passion, dissimulation, falshood, flattery, and a thousand other sins; and when I reflect upon the weaknesses and propensions of nature, and the almost innumerable temptations to which we are exposed, I must confess I am not at all surpris'd to think, that no flesh can be justified in the sight of God by a covenant of works: and when ever I find any upon a death-bed, as I do some, acquitting themselves from the guilt of any deliberate wickedness, I rather admire their ignorance and partiality, than their innocence. And yet, after all, a good man is not to examine himself only

Of Humility.

concerning the evil that he has done, but also concerning the good which he has omitted. He must inquire, how far he has fallen short of that poverty of spirit, and purity of heart, which he ought to have come up to, and how far he has been wanting in those duties which a thorough zeal would have pushed him on to. And when he has done this, let him be proud if he can.

2. *Man* is the creature of *God*, depends upon him, and has received all from him. And therefore let him do the utmost he can, he does no more than his duty; and strictly speaking, cannot *merit* of *him*. He that will pretend to *merit*, must be his own master; he must have a right over his own actions; he must be free to dispose of his affections and services as he pleases. For, if he be antecedently bound, if he hath no liberty, no freedom, no right to dispose of himself, or any thing he is possessed of, 'tis plain such an one cannot *merit*. And this is the direct case between *God* and *man*. *God* is the great Lord, the great Proprietor of heaven and earth. He that gives alms, does but restore a part of what *God* lent him: he that takes patiently the loss of goods, or health, or friends, does but give back what he had no right to retain: he was but tenant at will, and had no right
to

to any thing longer than God thought fit to continue it. And in all other instances of duty the case will still be plainer. If he adore and worship God, there is infinite reason that he should; for he depends upon him for his being and preservation. If he love God never so much, God has deserved much more than he can pay him: not only the enjoyments of life, but even life it self, being derived from him. From this argument it will follow, that it is impossible for a *creature* to merit of its *Creator*: *angels* themselves never could. For might it not be said with as much truth concerning them, as concerning man, *Who made thee to differ? Or what hast thou which thou didst not receive? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou boast as if thou hadst not received it?* 1 Cor. iv. 7. And the same may be concluded concerning *Adam* in *Paradise*. For I demand, had he kept the covenant of God, had he done this by divine *grace*, or by his *own* strength? If by the *grace* of God, as divines generally hold, then may we apply the expression of *St. Austin* to *Adam*, as well as to any one now under the dispensation of the *gospel*: that *when God rewards the works of man, he does only crown in him his own gifts*. But suppose he had done this by his *own* natural strength: were not the endowments

of nature, as much the gifts of God, as the endowments of grace? The one were natural, the other *supernatural* gifts: both gifts still, tho' of a different kind. If it be here *objected*, If this be so, how comes St. Paul to affirm, *To him that worketh is the reward due, not of grace but of debt?* Rom. iv. 4. I answer, first, God seems, when he enters into covenant with man, to suspend, or lay aside the natural right which he has over him as his creature; and to transact with him, as free, and master of himself: but this is all infinite condescension. Secondly, It seems unsuitable to the infinite goodness of God, to bereave man of the life and happiness he has once conferred upon him, unless he forfeits it by some demerit: *The gifts and calling of God are without repentance*; nor can I think how death, which has so much evil in it, could have entered the world, if sin had not entered it first. In this sense, *unfinning* obedience gives a kind of *right* to the *continuance* of those good things, which are at first the mere effects of divine grace and bounty. Lastly, A covenant of works being once established, 'tis plain, that as sin forfeits life, so obedience must give a *right* to it: and as the penitent could not be restored, but by an act of grace, so he that commits no sin, would need no pardon.

But then life it self, and an ability to work righteousness, must be owing to grace antecedent to the *covenant*: and so such an one would have whereof to *boast* comparatively, with respect to *others* who fell; but not before *God*. The sum of all is, *man* has nothing to render to *God*, but what he has received from him; and therefore can offer him nothing but his *own*: which is no very good foundation for merit. But suppose him absolute master of himself; suppose him holding all things independent of *God*. Can the service of a few days merit immortality and glory, angelical perfection, and a crown? He must be made up of vanity and presumption, that dares affirm *this*.

3. *God* stands in no need of our service; and 'tis our *own*, not his interest we promote by it. The foundation of merit amongst *men* is *impotence* and *want*: the prince wants the service and tribute of the subject; the subject, the protection of the prince: the rich needs the ministry, and the labour of the poor; the poor, support and maintenance from the rich. And it is thus in imaginary, as well as real wants. The luxury and pleasure of one, must be provided for and supported by the care and vigilance of others: and the pomp and the

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pride of one part of the world cannot subsist, but on the servitude of the other. In these cases therefore, mutual *wants* create mutual rights, and mutual merit. But this is not the case between *God* and *man*. *God* is not subject to any wants or necessities; nor is his glory or happiness capable of diminution or increase. *He* is a Monarch, that needs no tribute to support his grandeur, nor any strength or power besides his own, to guard his throne. If *we* revolt, or rebel, we cannot injure *him*: if *we* be loyal and obedient, we cannot profit *him*. He has all fulness, all perfection in himself: he is an almighty and all-sufficient God. But on the quite contrary, tho' *God* have no *wants*, *we* have many: and tho' *his* Majesty and felicity be subject to no vicissitude, *we* are subject to many. Our service to *God* therefore is our *own* interest; and our obedience is designed to procure our *own* advantage: we need, we daily need his support and protection; we depend intirely on his favour and patronage: *In him we live, and move, and have our being*: and from *him*, as from an inexhaustible fountain, we derive all the streams of good, by which we are refreshed and improved. To know and love him, is our wisdom; to depend upon him, our happiness and security; to serve and worship him,

him, our perfection and liberty; to enjoy him will be our heaven; and those glimpses of his presence, which we are vouchsafed through the Spirit in this life, are the pledges and foretaste of it. This is the constant voice of scripture. *Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, Jam. i. 17. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most high: and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me, Psal. l. 12, 13, &c. If thou be righteous, what givest thou unto him? Thy wickedness may hurt a man, as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man, Job xxxv. 7, 8.*

S E C T. III.

Of the Impediments of Perfection. Five Impediments reckoned up, and insisted on.

1. Too loose a notion of religion.
 2. An opinion that Perfection is not attainable.
 3. That religion is an enemy to pleasure.
 4. The love of the world.
 5. The infirmity of the flesh.
- The whole concluded with a prayer.

TH O' I have been all along carrying on the *design* of this *section*, that is, the removing the obstacles of *Perfection*; yet I easily foresaw there might be *some* which would not be reduced within the compass of the foregoing *heads*: for *these* therefore I reserved this place; these are *five*.

§. 1. Some seem to have entertained such a *notion of religion*, as if moderation here were as necessary as any where else. They look upon *zeal* as an *excess* of righteousness; and can be well enough content to want degrees of glory, if they can but save their souls. To which end they can see no necessity of *Perfection*. Now I would beseech such seriously to lay to heart, that salvation and damnation are things of no *common* importance: and there-

therefore it highly concerns them not to be mistaken in the *notion* they form to themselves of *religion*. For the nature of things will not be altered by their fancies; nor will God be mocked or imposed on. If we will deal sincerely with our selves, as in this case it certainly behoves us to do, we must frame our *idea* of *religion*, not from the opinions, the manners, or the fashions of the *world*; but from the *scriptures*. And we must not interpret *these* by our own inclinations; but we must judge of the duties they prescribe, by those descriptions of them, by those properties and effects, which we find there. We must weigh the *design* and *end* of religion; which is to promote the glory of God, and the good of man, and to raise us above the world, and the body: and see how our platform, or model of religion, *suits* with it. And if, after we have done this, we are not fully satisfied in the true bounds and limits which part vice and virtue, it cannot but be safest for us to err on the right hand. We ought always to remember too, that the repeated exhortations in scripture to diligence, and that the most earnest and indefatigable ones to vigilance, to *fear and trembling*, to patience, to steadfastness, and such like, are utterly inconsistent with an easy, lazy, gentile religion; that

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that the *life* of *Jesus* is the fairest and fullest comment on his *doctrine*: and, that we never are to follow the examples of a corrupt world, but of the best men, and the best ages. This, this one thing alone, will convince us, *what* endeavours, *what* virtues are necessary to gain an incorruptible crown. See with what eagerness the *disciples of Jesus pressed towards the mark!* see with what courage, nay joy too, they *took up their cross, and followed him!* how generous were their *alms!* so that the *riches of their liberality* were conspicuous in the very *depth of their poverty.* What plainness and singleness of heart; what grace and warmth, what peace and joy shewed itself in their conversation! what modesty, what humility in their garb, deportment, and the whole train of life! how frequent, how fervent, and how long too were their prayers and retirements! In one word, the spirit and genius of a disciple of Christ discovered itself in all they said and did: and the virtues of their *lives* did as evidently distinguish a *Christian* from a *Jew* or *Pagan*, as their *faith.* How lovely was religion *then!* how full its joy, how strong its confidence! *Then* did Christians truly overcome the world: *then* did they live above the body: *then* was the cross of Christ more delightful than

than the ease or honour, the pride or pleasure, of a sinful life: *then* did they truly, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Let us now compare *our* lives with *theirs*, and then sit down content with poor and beggarly attainments if we can. Let us put *our* virtues in the scales against *theirs*; and, if we have any modesty, the inequality will put us out of countenance: we shall blush at our vanity, and shall not have the confidence to expect the same crown, the same kingdom with them. But as too lax a notion of religion is apt to beget too much indifference and unconcernment; so will it be said, too exalted an one is apt to beget *despair*: which is a *second* and no *less* obstacle of *Perfection*.

§. 2. Many there are, who, forming their judgment upon the slips and defects of good men, and the corruption of human nature, conceive *Perfection* to be a mere imaginary notion. They believe indeed, that, considering how apt man is to fall short of his duty, 'tis very fit that the rule prescribed him should be exact; and that he should be frequently pressed, and exhorted to *Perfection*: but that the thing it *self* is too difficult for mortal man to attain in this life. But to this *objection* I
must

must oppose *these* few things, which I believe will be sufficient to remove it.

1. The *beginning* of virtue is the most difficult part of it; the nearer we approach to *Perfection*, the easier, as well as pleasanter, is religion. And therefore, whoever startles at the difficulties which lie in the way to an exalted virtue, has as much reason to be startled at those which will encounter him in his first entrance upon religion: and yet *these* must be conquered.

2. The avoiding the difficulties of religion, does but plunge us into worse. We are necessarily under this *dilemma*: if we will attain the peace and tranquillity of the *mind*, we must mortify and reduce the appetites of the *body*: if, on the other hand, we propose to gratify the appetites of the *body*, and enjoy the pleasure of *sin*, we cannot do so without offering much violence to the *mind*. And if this be so; if such be the war and opposition between the soul and the body, that there is no way to a true and well settled peace and pleasure, but by the reduction and mortification of the one or the other; *then* it will be easy to resolve what we are to do. For those appeals which atheists themselves make to reason, proclaim the *soul* of man to be the ruling and nobler part of him. Besides, the soul is the more vital, the more tender and sensible part of us: and consequently the affliction

fiction of *this* must render us far more miserable, than any hardships or difficulties virtue can impose upon the *body*. 3. Whatever be the difficulties of *virtue*, they will soon vanish, if we often call to mind, that peace and joy are the *fruit of virtue*; but shame and remorse, of *sin*: that no man ever yet repented of his resisting and conquering his lusts; but no man ever yet did not repent of following them; unless he *died* as much a brute as he *lived*: that heaven is a cheap purchase, whatever it costs us; but the pleasure of sin a very dear one, how easily soever we come by it: and finally, that we are not our own masters: there is a God to whom we stand accountable for our actions: and consequently, whether we will, or will not, we must either undergo the hardship and discipline of virtue, or the eternal plagues and punishments of sin. Lastly, The truth is, this opinion of the *impossibility of Perfection*, has both been begot and cherished by those wild *schemes* of it, which have been drawn by the hands of a flaming, indeed, but an indiscreet zeal. But I have here recommended to the world, no fantastick, or enthusiastick *Perfection*. I have advanced no heights of virtue, but what many do, I hope, at this day, actually feel and experiment in themselves: none, I am sure, but what the *followers* of the blessed *Jesus* actually attained and practised,

fed. *Be ye followers of us, said the apostle, as we are of Christ. Their lives were as bright a rule as their doctrine: and by their own actions they demonstrated the power of the faith they taught. They did not, like the Scribes and Pharisees, bind heavy burdens upon others, and not move them with their finger; they did not, like Plato and Aristotle, magnify temperance and modesty at the tabernacles and carnivals of princes; nor commend the pleasure of wisdom in the gardens of Epicurus: but they lived as they taught, unspotted by the pleasures, unbroken by the troubles of the world; modest, serene, equal and heavenly minded, in honour or dishonour, want or abundance, liberty or prison, life or death. Let us then no longer object or dispute, but with faith and patience be followers of those who have inherited the promises: being incompassed with a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; lest ye be wearied and faint in your mind, Heb.*

xii. 1, 2. I have done with those, who endeavour to *soften* or *shun* the difficulties of religion, not to *conquer* them.

§. 3. There are *others*, who will look upon this setting up the doctrine of *Perfection*, as a design against the *pleasures* of mankind. What, says such a one, shall I let go my present *pleasures* out of my hands, to hunt after I know not what, and I know not where? Shall I quit *pleasures* that are every-where obvious, for such as have no being, it may be, but in speculation? or at least, are never to be enjoyed by any, but some few rare and happy creatures, the favourites of God and nature? *Pleasures*, that have matter and substance in them, for such as I can no more grasp and relish than I can dreams and visions? But to this I answer, This pretty talk is all but stupid ignorance and gross mistakes. For,

1. As to innocent and virtuous *pleasure*, no man needs part with it. I endeavour not to deprive man of *this*; but to refine and purify it. And he that prefers either silly, or vicious *pleasure* before religion, is wretchedly mistaken. For, 2. *Perfect* religion is full of *pleasure*. Had we but once arrived at true purity of heart, what could be so full of *pleasure* as the business of religion? What can be more delightful,

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than blessing and praising God, to a grateful soul; *Allelujabs*, to a soul snatched from the brink of destruction, into the bosom of its Master? What can be more transporting than the melting tenderesses of a holy contrition, made up, like *Mary Magdalen's*, of tears and kisses, sorrow and love, humility and glory, confusion and confidence, shame and joy? What can be more transporting than love, the love of a Christian, when he is all *love, as God is love*; when he *desires nothing in heaven, nor in earth, but God*; when *all things are dung and dross to him in comparison of Jesus*? 4. If the *pleasures* of the world be more transporting than those of *religion*, 'tis because our faith is weak, our love imperfect, and our life unsteady. A constant and exalted *pleasure* is, I grant it, the fruit of *Perfection* alone. The *peace and joy* of the Holy Ghost reigns no-where, but where that *zeal and love*, which is an effect of the fulness of the Spirit, reigns too. I had once proposed to have insisted on the reasons of this here; but this labour is prevented, for they are very obvious to any one who hath read the *chapter* of *Zeal* with seriousness and attention. Lastly, What is insinuated in the *objection*, that the *pleasures* of the world are more numerous, or obvious, than those of *religion*, is altogether a false

false and groundless fancy. In every place, and in every state, do the pleasures of virtue wait upon the *perfect* man. They depend not, like those of the body, on a thousand things that are not in our power; but only on God, and our own integrity. But this part of the objection I have, I think, for ever baffled, *sect. 1. chap. 4.* These *obstacles of Perfection* being thus removed, and the mind of man being fully convinced of the happiness that results from a state of *Perfection*, and of his obligation to surmount the difficulties which obstruct his way to it, there seems to be nothing now left to disappoint the success of this discourse, but somewhat too much fondness for the *world*, or somewhat too much indulgence to the *body*; which I am *next*, though but very *briefly*, to consider.

§. 4. There is a *love* of the *world*, which though it be not either for the matter, or degree of it, criminal enough to destroy our sincerity, and our hopes of salvation; yet it is strong enough to abate our vigour, hinder our *Perfection*, and bereave us of many degrees of pleasure at present, and glory hereafter. The *indications* of this kind of love of the world, are too much concern for the pomp and shew of life; too much exactness in the modes and customs

of it; too quick a sense of honour and reputation, pre-eminence and praise; too much haste, and too much industry to grow rich, to *add house to house, land to land, and to load ourselves with thick and heavy clay*; too brisk a relish of the pleasures of the world; too great a *gait* of mind upon the successes, too much *dejection* upon the disasters and disappointments of it; too much care and too much diligence; an incumbering and embroiling one's self too far in worldly affairs; too much diversion, too much ease. These, I say, are the symptoms of a mind tainted with a love of the world, though not so far as to sickness and death. However, it will be enough to check the vigour, and dilute the relish of the mind. Now, the only way to overcome this defect, and to captivate the mind entirely to the love and service of religion and virtue, is to consider frequently and seriously the rewards of *Perfection*, the pleasure that will attend it in another life. Had the *young man* in the *gospel* done this; had he had as lively a notion, and as true an estimate of the riches of *eternity*, as he had of *temporal* ones, he would never have *gone away sorrowful*, when he was advised to have exchanged the treasures of *earth* for those of *heaven*. Had the soul of *Martba* been as much taken up with the thoughts

thoughts of *eternity*, as that of *Mary*, she would have made the same *choice as she did*. They who often *think*, how soon the fashion, the pomp and grandeur of this world passes away, and how much better their *heavenly* country is than their *earthly*; how much more lasting, and how much more glorious the *New Jerusalem*, that *city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*, than this city of ours which may be overthrown in a moment; will neither weep, nor rejoice, with too much passion; neither buy, nor possess, with too much application of mind. In one word, he that so often and devoutly *thinks* of that day, wherein *Christ, who is our life, shall appear, and we also appear with him in glory*, that he comes to *love and long for it*; such an one will have no great taste of the honours, or the pleasures, or the interests of life; nor will he be slothful or remiss, but *servent in spirit, serving the Lord*: whatever degrees of affection he had for any thing of that nature, they will all vanish; he will have no emulation, but for good works; no ambition, but for *glory*; I mean, *that which is eternal*. In the pursuit of *this*, will he lay out the strength and vigour of his mind, for *this* he will retrench his profit, for *this* he will deny his pleasure, for *this* he will be content to be obscure, mean, and laborious;

horious; for if the *world* be once crucified to him, *he* will the more easily bear the being crucified to it.

§. 5. After all, there is an *Infirmity* in the *flesh*, against which if we do not guard our selves, if we do not struggle heartily, we shall *miscarry*. *The spirit is willing*, said our Saviour, *but the flesh is weak*. Without much care, and much watchfulness, the vigour of our minds will be relaxed; the exultation of our spirits will flag and droop; and we shall soon lose the relish there is in religion. The more effectual *remedies* against this frailty and fickleness of our nature, are *two*: *First*, *Godly fear*; and *this*, the purity and presence of God, the strictness and the impartiality of a judgment to come, the loss of an eternal crown, the terrors of eternal punishment, the number and strength of temptations, the deplorable falls of the greatest saints, and the conscience of our own weakness, will not fail to work in us. Let us then, not only *begin*, but also *perfect holiness in the fear of God*. *Blessed is he that feareth always*. *Secondly*, The steadfastness of *hope*; of hope, that waits and longs for the coming of our Lord. *This* will invite us often to take a view of *Canaan*; *this* will fill the mind often with the beauties and the glories of eternity;
this

this will often call to our thoughts, the security, the rest, the transports of another world, the love of God and of Jesus, incorruptible crowns, the hallelujahs of angels, the shouts of victory, the fruit of the tree of life, the streams that water the paradise of God. And every such object will chide us out of our weakness and cowardise; every such thought will upbraid us out of our laziness and negligence; we shall hear always sounding in our ears the words of Jesus to his disciples, *What! can ye not watch with me one hour; and yet do you expect to reign with me for ever? or those to the Church of Laodicea, To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me upon my throne; as I have overcome, and am sat down with my Father on his throne.*

And now, *Reader*, if you find I have done you any service, if you think yourself under any obligation to me, the return I beg from you is, that you will *first* offer praise and thanks unto God; and *next*, whenever you are in the vigour of the spirit, and the arduous of faith and love before God in prayer, put up these, or the like petitions for me, which I now offer up for myself.

O My God, and my Father, increase the knowledge of thy Word, and the grace of thy Spirit in me. Enable me to perfect holiness in thy fear, and to hold fast the steadfastness of my hope unto the end. Pardon all the sins and errors of my life; and accept of my imperfect services through Jesus Christ. And because, though, after all we can do, we are unprofitable servants, thy infinite bounty will yet certainly recompense our sincere endeavours to promote thy glory; let me find my reward from thee; or rather do thou thy self vouchsafe to be my reward. I should have ever thought my self unworthy to have put up this petition to thee, O thou glorious and incomprehensible Majesty, had not thine own Goodness, thine own Spirit, kindled this ambition in me. Behold! what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of **G O D**! these are the words of thy servant St. John: and now therefore my soul can never be at rest, till I awake at the last day after thy likeness; I can never be satisfied till I behold thy glory: which vouchsafe me, I beseech thee, by thy mercy and thy faithfulness; by the sufferings and intercession of thy dearly beloved Son.

F I N I S.

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