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Devout Meditations;

OR,

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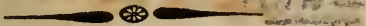
ON

RELIGIOUS

AND

PHILOSOPHICAL

SUBJECTS.



BY CHARLES HOW, ESQ.



First American Edition.

NEW-YORK:

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TO

ARCHIBALD MACAULAY, ESQ.

LORD CONSERVATOR.

HONOURED SIR,

WHEN this work first appeared, it was proposed to have the author's name prefixed to it: and now, that a second edition is become necessary, and that you, Sir, and several other men of good judgment, particularly your friend Dr. YOUNG, so well known to the world for learning, piety, and genius, have given it as your opinions, that to be known for the author of such a work, would add reputation to any name; I have desired that it may be done. And, as the public now know to whom they owe this performance, it has been thought just, that they should also know to whom they owe the publication of it.

The manuscript came to my late dear wife, as executrix to the author, her grand-father, with whom she lived, from her infancy, to the time of his death. And it is evident, from the work itself, as well as from what has been said in the advertisement to the first edition, that he intended it for his own private use. As soon as you perused it, at my house, from a principle of disinterested benevolence only, you earnestly desired it might be published, and took the whole trouble of it upon yourself: so that whatever praise is due for having rendered the closet exercises of a truly good man of public utility, is justly your's. Though I, at the same time, know, that the inward satisfaction, that you have already felt on this account, is much superior to all applause.

I have, at your desire, carefully compared the printed copy with the original manuscript, in my possession, and corrected it in several places; which, I hope, will be of some advantage to this edition.

I am, your's, &c.

GEO. MACAULAY.

Poland-street, 23d May, 1752.

TO

ARCHIBALD MACAULAY, ESQ.



KIND AND WORTHY SIR,

HOW shall I sufficiently thank you for the favour and honour of your very valuable present.

The Book of Meditations I have read, and more than once; and I shall never lay it far out of my reach: for a greater demonstration of a sound head, and sincere heart, I never saw.

* * * * *
* * * * *

Dear Sir, I cannot but return to my favourite Meditations; for, in truth, I am fond of them. I think you was a lucky man in meeting with the manuscript; and I know you was a worthy one, by bringing it to the press. The world is your debtor for it. My part of the debt I will pay, as far as hearty thanks will go towards it: and I wish I could do more. But I am surprised that the author's name is suppressed: for I know no name to which that work would not do an additional credit; and why a man's modesty should rob him of his just honour, when, by that honour, his modesty can be no more offended, I know not. I wish you would consider this, with regard to future editions. I desire you, Sir, to insert me in the list of your friends, for such I am, and such I am obliged to be by your unexpected and unmeritted favour. I am,

Your's, &c.

E. YOUNG.

Wellwyn, 19th January, 1752.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following work was only intended for the private use of the author, as appears from his first meditation; and, during his lifetime, no body saw it. After his death, being in the possession of his grand-daughter, a gentleman, nearly related to her by marriage, read it; and, being greatly pleased with it himself, obtained a copy of it, and her permission to publish it, judging that it might be of good use in an age wherein serious things are but too much neglected by all ranks of men.

The author himself, who attained to the age of eighty-four years, was a gentleman of good fortune, and of a considerable family, which has been ennobled in several of its branches. He was born in Gloucestershire (though his family was of the shire of Nottingham) in the year 1661; and during the latter end of the reign of king Charles II. was much at court. About the year 1686, he took an opportunity of going abroad with a near relation, who was sent by king James II. as ambassador to a for-

eign court. The ambassador died, and our author, by powers given him to that effect, finished the business of the embassy. He had the offer of being appointed successor to his friend in his public character: but disliking the measures that were then carried on at court, he declined it, and returned to England; where he soon after married a lady of rank and fortune; who dying in a few years, left behind her an only daughter. After his lady's death, he lived for the most part in the country; where he spent many of his latter years in close retirement, consecrated to religious meditations and exercises. He was a man of good understanding, of an exemplary life, and cheerful conversation.

So much we have been instructed to say for the reader's satisfaction; who, by this publication, is entitled to form what judgment shall to him seem just and reasonable, both of the merit of this performance, and the character of its author.

TO THE READER.

THIS small, but very valuable volume, was published in Edinburgh, in the year 1761. Some pious and judicious persons recommended it, as a work well deserving another impression; one of whom expresses himself thus:—

“ I have, since we were last together, devoted some hours to the perusal of “ How’s THOUGHTS” ; and, on this more careful perusal of them, I am so far from feeling any discouragement, relative to an American edition of the work, as to be still more persuaded that it is an excellent book, calculated to instruct persons of every profession and class, that are disposed to get knowledge; and which I wish, with all my heart, was more generally the case: I mean that kind of knowledge that is really useful, and which dignifies the human mind.”

Convinced of the justness of these remarks, I have somewhat abridged, made a few alterations, put it again to press, and now offer it to my countrymen, as, in my opinion, a suitable companion for people of every rank and denomination: and I sincerely hope, that the present and rising generation will, from a careful and attentive perusal of it, derive such impressions as may tend to their furtherance and establishment in virtue.

THE EDITOR.

NEW-YORK,
12 MO. 18TH, 1806.

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Devout Meditations.

I do here purpose, by the grace of my good God, (which I most humbly beg that he will be pleased always plentifully to afford me), to write down some meditation or reflection, as often as I can conveniently, from this time forward; and that for these two reasons: *First*, to oblige myself frequently to enter into a serious contemplation of the great God, and of the most proper means to render myself acceptable to him. And *next*, that, by the help of these meditations and reflections, I may be able to make a judgment of the state and condition of my mind for the time past, and to compare it with that of the present, in order to make my life as uniform as is possible in all virtue; for which I most humbly beg the assistance of my gracious God.

There is one picture a man should be drawing all the days of his life; which is that of God upon his soul; and though the resemblance must needs be extremely faint and imperfect; yet, by a constant application and meditation upon the beauties of the original, he cannot fail to make an admirable piece.

Prayer, unaccompanied with a fervent love of God, is like a lamp unlighted; the words of the one without love being as unprofitable, as the oil and cotton of the other without flame.

Faith is as necessary to the soul, as the sun is to the world: were it not for these bright prolific lights, both the one and the other must remain dark and fruitless.

Had we (what we can only have by a divine illumination of our reason, which I beg of my good God to vouchsafe me,) had we, I say, true notions of God, and eternity, right notions of ourselves, and of the world, they could not fail to create in us thoughts full of humility towards ourselves, full of contempt towards the world, full of the highest adoration towards God, and full of earnestness to acquire a happy eternity.

The faculty of thinking justly, is a more desirable talent than that of eloquence in speaking; the one being in order to an advantage only in expectation, whereas the other is the assured mark of a mighty advantage already received; the one tends to the advancement of interest or reputation, the other to the increase of wisdom and virtue; the one may make a man more agreeable to the world, the other will infallibly render him most agreeable to himself, and (what is infinitely more valuable) more acceptable to God.

My adorable God, I humbly beseech thee to accept the sacrifice I here, in all humility, (and I trust sincerity,) desire to make thee, of the remainder of my life, to be entirely employed to serve and adore thee with the utmost vigour, both of my soul and body. And I humbly implore thee to bestow upon me every grace, and every virtue, that may render me acceptable to thee, and worthy of thy service. Pardon, I beseech thee, all the heinous sins and offences of my past life, for the sake of thy blessed Son my Saviour Jesus Christ; and be pleased to bestow upon me a steadfast faith, an ardent love, an humble and perfect obedience, and a will capable of no other incli-

nation than what it shall continually receive from the absolute guidance of thy divine will; to which I beg it may ever be perfectly subservient with all readiness and cheerfulness. And if any action of my life, or thought of my soul, should ever in the least be contradictory to it, I heartily renounce both that and myself. My good God! as I could not have taken this resolution without thy particular mercy, so I know that I shall never be able to maintain it without thy continual assistance: give me, therefore, out of thy great goodness, entirely to overcome all my passions, and to contract and draw all my affections into one constant and ever flowing stream of love to thee. Let not the world, nor life itself, be able to withdraw the least part of them from that channel; but as all my thoughts and actions are continually before thee, so I humbly beseech thee, that they may never be unworthy thy divine presence, for Jesus Christ's sake, thy blessed Son, my merciful Redeemer.

This is an admirable expression in the first collect of the morning prayer, *Thy service is perfect freedom*. And a noble freedom it is indeed, to have the soul released from the insupportable slavery of

ignorance and vice, and set at liberty to range in the spacious and delicious plains of wisdom and virtue; to have it delivered from the harsh and turbulent tyranny of insulting passions, and established under the gentle and delightful government of right reason. O my good God! grant my soul this happy freedom, and set my heart at liberty, that I may cheerfully run the ways of thy blessed commandments, and suffer no impediment to obstruct my course*.

Nothing can be truly valuable that will not be valuable an hundred years together. To demonstrate this to our understanding, we have but to consider the millions of years that have preceded this hundred years, and the vast eternity that preceded them; the millions of years that must succeed this hundred years, and the boundless eternity that will succeed them: and after a serious and just comparison between the one and the other, we shall find an hun-

* *In this, and in a subsequent meditation (page 30), such as are conversant in the writings of Epictetus and Marcus Antoninus, will discern a great connexion between the reasoning of our author and that of the ancient stoics.*

dred years a most contemptible portion of time. After the same manner we have but to consider riches, honour, reputation, and even life itself, (which must all have an end as to any particular person within a much shorter compass than that of an hundred years); and upon such a consideration we shall be forced to acknowledge, that our contempt would be (with much more reason and justice) bestowed upon them, than that high esteem and veneration which most men think their due. And it is indeed much more worthy of a wise man to labour to despise them, than to procure them, and seek his felicity rather in the contempt than in the enjoyment of them.

The great uncertainty and inconstancy so generally observed in mankind, is doubtless from this cause, that all their fancies and imaginations spring from their passions, (not from the truth and reality of things); which being so changeable and irregular, can never produce regular ideas, any more than a crooked rule can be the measure of a straight line. A mind surrounded with passions is in as miserable a condition as a country (too weak to defend itself) seated in the midst of many powerful princes, continually contending for the possession of it;

sometimes it is surprised by one, sometimes by another; but is never long under the government of the same master; nor can it have the benefit to be governed by settled and regular laws, which will always be altered by every new intruder. In this deplorable state is the mind surrounded with powerful passions; sometimes subdued by one, and sometimes by another, but always a slave; ever variable and changing, but never for the better. Now that this is the true cause of man's inconstancy, does evidently appear from this consideration; what different ideas arise in the mind from the two passions of prodigality and avarice? How unlike are the images drawn upon it by the passion of love, from those that are drawn by malice and revenge? Nay, at different times, how unlike will the same passion make a man to himself? How strange and ridiculous a change does pride make in a man; when one hour it shall humble him to act the part of a base mean flatterer, making most servile courtship and addresses to some powerful favourite, and the next hour (raising him to the highest pitch of insolence) shall make him look with contempt and disdain upon all those he thinks his inferiors? When a man is thus governed by his passions, it is impossible

to know any thing of him certainly, but his name: For, like a *Proteus*, he is continually transforming by his passions into some new monster; and this changeableness in himself will make his judgment uncertain and variable; at one time approving what he dislikes another; the same things becoming alternately the objects of his pleasure and displeasure, eagerly pursued one day, and rejected the next; things continually change their shapes and appearances, according as his deceitful passions shall think fit to represent them to him. Now it is easy to imagine how the mind must labour with anxiety under these false representations of things made by the passions, and what a comfort and support it would be to it, to be enabled to steer a steady course; to be able truly to distinguish good from evil, to chase the one and refuse the other; and having made a right choice of its pleasure, and of things profitable, to be sure to have them constant, and as such to be always approved and embraced by it. Now, these true representation of things to the mind, can only be made by illuminated reason; and we may be sure that such images as she draws of them there, will have a true likeness; and if she were to copy them over again ten thousand times, she would draw

them exactly with the same lineaments and features; for where the things themselves do not alter, we may be sure her pencil will not vary.

In order to pass a right and just judgment in any case whatsoever, it is necessary to have unbiassed affections: How then can a man captivated and inflamed with the love of sensual pleasures, be capable of giving an impartial judgment between God and the world? Or how is a man with affections enslaved by vice, fit to judge between that and virtue: and yet men thus incapacitated to be judges in these cases, are often very confidently passing sentence; and, what is worse, too many seemingly unconcerned spectators, are apt to be persuaded by them, that their judgment is equitable.

Meditation is the life of virtue, as virtue is the life of the soul. It is the conduit by which a happy and delightful communication is maintained between God and the soul; through which the graces and blessings of God descend to the soul, and through which the ardour, the praises, and adoration of the soul ascend to God. It is the exercise of the soul which makes it, and preserves it vigorous and healthful; with-

out which it would soon become heavy and languid, void of pleasure, and weary of its own being; and this uneasiness would oblige it to seek its satisfaction in vain and trifling entertainments, and debase it at last even to folly and vice.

I suppose these words, *Pray without ceasing*, may very well be interpreted according to the literal meaning of them: for if the soul can once get an absolute dominion over its passions, keeping continually a strict guard over them; if it be always duly prepared, and have (in their just degrees) all the requisites of prayer, which are faith, repentance, love, humility, obedience, thankfulness, resignation, charity and sincerity, though the man be not always upon his knees, yet his conversation will be in such a manner in heaven, his soul will be so abstracted from the world, as to be almost continually exercising itself in some act either of praise, petition, or adoration of God; which, no doubt, his infinite goodness will accept as an incessant prayer, though it be not accompanied with all the outward appearances of it; which to be sure will not be neglected neither, by such an one at proper seasons. And, in reality, a formal and customary kneeling, a lifting up

the hands and eyes to heaven, without the heart; a cold and careless uttering of words, is but the dead carcass of prayer: the life of it consists in the combination of the fore-mentioned qualifications, without which it can neither be satisfactory to a wise man, nor (it is to be feared) acceptable to the Almighty God; whom I humbly beg to instruct and enable me both how and what to pray, that none of my addresses to him may be unworthy of so great and glorious a Being.

Had men but the same curiosity in their inquiries relating to the essence of God, and the immortality of their own souls, as they have in other philosophical matters, it would carry them earnestly to implore his assistance, (which is absolutely necessary), in order to make the experiments requisite to such sublime discoveries; by the help of which a mighty progress would soon be made in those most profitable sciences of wisdom and virtue; which indeed are the only ones worthy of our time and pains, as being the only ones that can conduct us to substantial happiness in this life, and to that which is eternal in the next; and which are too generally neglected, (if not rejected), through our ignorance of the beauties and

advantages of them. Now the experiment I would have every one make, is this: first, (having made a serious and sincere application to God) to betake themselves heartily to the subduing all their passions, which are so many clouds and fatal impediments to the mind's advancement in this most excellent knowledge; to purify the soul as much as possible from all vicious and impure affections and inclinations; and, after these things are done, no body knows what infinitely profitable (and consequently delightful) discoveries she would be capable to make of her own nature, and in how extraordinary a manner the good God would be pleased to reveal himself to her, (being thus purified), but those most happy few, who have thus made the experiment; none but they can know what evidences and assurances of their own immortality, are conveyed by that divine Being to souls thus disposed to receive them; what glances of his eternal brightness and glory he is pleased to dart upon them for their comfort and encouragement; and what extraordinary measures of faith (how nearly approaching to certainty) he may vouchsafe to afford them, by the more intimate communication and operation of his blessed spirit, to complete their felicity.

It is of great use to reflect, that the riches, honours, and pleasures which we are apt so eagerly to pursue, when past, leave no advantage behind them; and that all the pain, misery, and trouble, which we so carefully avoid, when they depart from us, carry all their mischief along with them: so that it is equal when a man comes to die, whether he spent all his time in pleasures and delights, lying at his ease on beds of down; or whether he had lain all his lifetime tormented upon a rack; whether he had lived a king or a beggar: So great are the vanities of the one condition; so short the miseries of the other.

For a man not to find in his heart to betake himself to the solid comforts of a virtuous life, for fear of interrupting or spoiling the gay diversions and pleasures of the world, is just as unreasonable, as for a man to be so much delighted with the neatness of his garden, and charmed with the variety of plants and flowers, and other pretty contrivances of it, that he could not find in his heart to deface it, though he were sure to discover a mine of gold by digging it up.

Whosoever would be wise, and consequently happy, must raze out of his mind

all those false mistaken notions that have been imprinting there from his infancy; and endeavour to expel from thence that pernicious infection of error, which it has been so long hatching from erroneous customs and examples, and which will prove fatal to it if too long neglected. Among ten thousand other things, of which we have mistaken notions, I will make choice of those of life and death for my present consideration: How charmingly desirable does our fancy paint the one, and with what dreadful deformity does it disguise the other? And how uneasy are these wrong conceptions apt to make us, by fixing our affections upon that of them, which we must not long enjoy, and raising our aversion to the other, which we cannot possibly avoid? Our great business then, in order to make our lives serene and happy, is, to remove our affections from the one, and our aversion from the other; and, to compass this, we must deface those images of them both, which our deluding fancies have drawn upon our minds, and set ourselves diligently to tracing out new lines, and more resembling features. And, *first*, to consider that gaudy blaze of life that appears so fair, and shines so bright, which is almost extinguished as soon as kindled,

and by its speedy decay becomes contemptible; let us paint it binding and fettering the soul, and detaining it in a dark and uncomfortable prison, darkened by ignorance, and made uncomfortable by folly; and let death be drawn in its natural shape, as the friend and deliverer of the soul, approaching to release it from this hated confinement, and to put it into the possession of that desirable liberty, after which it had so long been languishing. Why then should we think death our enemy, for doing the friendly office to the soul, which cannot truly be said to enter into life till it enters into eternity, since that only is worthy to be called life, which is eternal, and to which it can only attain by the kind assistance of death? Then those glimmering sparks of life it had here below, will be kindled into a glorious unextinguishable flame; instead of those faint rays of pleasure which it pleased the great and good God to make to shine here upon it, by the means of faith and virtue, eternal streams of joy and brightness shall then flow in upon it, from the incomprehensible glories of his divine presence.

Faith is the brightness of the great God shining upon the soul; and virtue (which

is nothing else but a combination of love and obedience to him) is a light proceeding from faith: So that they both ebb and flow together; and when faith rushes in plentifully, and rises high in the soul, virtue will maintain a proportionable height; but as that retires and grows low, this will retreat and sink also. Now our passions are the black thick clouds that cause so frequent and tedious eclipses of this light of faith; and, by their interposing, deprive the soul of its only comfort: They are those fierce and strong winds that keep back this tide from flowing in upon the soul, both to refresh and enrich it; which I think is argument sufficient for the absolute necessity of the extirpation of our pernicious passions.

How long is the soul kept and nourished in ignorance of itself, and of its original, like a child of noble extraction, by some misfortune, obliged to be concealed (and educated as their own) by poor peasants; who, believing himself to be of no higher birth, entertains no other than mean and low thoughts and designs suitable to such a condition: but so soon as his true parents are made known to him, he quickly banishes from his mind all that is base and

ignoble, and, animated by the knowledge of his true condition, conceives such thoughts as are answerable to it. It is faith which makes this discovery to the soul, and no sooner acquaints it, that it has the great God for its parent, but it discards all base ungenerous designs, and renounces its former trifling pleasures, and mean affections, disdaining the low objects of its love and desire; it is immediately filled with noble and aspiring thoughts; all its aims and designs from thenceforth became great and elevated, and worthy of its divine birth.

It is wonderful that pride should be so natural to man! that it should take root so deep in so impotent and helpless a creature; whereas, when rightly considered, all human power is entirely founded upon human weakness: It is not the empire over beasts, but over his fellow-creature man, that is the subject of his ambition, and cause of his pride. And this reflection ought to be his mortification, that he himself is liable to all the injuries he can offer to another; and that it is the weakness and infirmity of human nature (equally common to himself) that renders any man obnoxious to his cruelty or oppression.

Pride (by a great mistake) is commonly taken for greatness of soul, as if the soul were to be ennobled by vice: for, that pride is one of the most enormous vices, I think no reasonable man will dispute; it is the base offspring of weakness, imperfection and ignorance; since, were we not weak and imperfect creatures, we should not be destitute of the knowledge of ourselves; and had we that knowledge, it were impossible we should be proud. But, on the contrary, true humility is the certain mark of a bright reason, and elevated soul, as being the natural consequence of them. When we come to have our minds cleared by reason from those thick mists that our disorderly passions cast about them; when we come to discern more perfectly, and consider more nearly, the immense power and goodness, the infinite glory and duration of God; and to make a comparison between these perfections of his, and our own frailty and weakness, and the shortness and uncertainty of our beings, we should humble ourselves even to the dust before him. Can the greatest monarch upon earth free himself from the least mischief that is incident to the meanest of men? Can he by his own power give strength to his body, or length to his life? can he free the one from

pains and diseases, or the other from vexation and trouble? If not, what excellence has he to boast of above other men? What advantage has he to be proud of in relation to his fellow creatures? Custom has made a wide difference indeed between man and man; but it is a difference purely fanciful, and not real; for it must be some intrinsic worth in any creature, that must give it the preference to another. Titles, riches, and fine houses, signify no more to the making of one man better than another, than the finer saddle to the making the better horse. And it truly shews a poor spirit for one man to take these paultry advantages of another. If he is ambitious to excel his fellows, let it be in something that belongs to himself, something that demonstrates him to be a better creature; and not think (like a false jewel among ignorant people) to derive a value from being set in gold: let him contend in virtue, which alone is capable to put a great and true difference between man and man; and whosoever gains the advantage there, has reason to value it, though it will never make him proud.

It seems a little strange at first, that reason, which is always constant and the same, should make such various impressions upon

men's minds: but when we come to consider, it is no more to be wondered at that men differ in their judgments and opinions, than that they are unlike in their faces. For the same argument must have different effects, according to men's different understandings, 'as the same distant object appears differently to several men, according as it happens to strike each man's sight; that which seems green to one, may appear blue to another: so that till the sense of seeing becomes uniform in several men, it is impossible that any object should have the same appearance to them. and it holds alike as to the operation of reason, and arguments upon the mind. Reason we know is uniform; and whatever disputes concerning it arise, it is not really that there are different appearances in reason, but the difference is in our conception and understandings. Reason is not various, though our weak judgments concerning her are so. If all men's sights were alike and true, every object must necessarily appear alike to them, and such as really they were, without any deception; and in like manner, were all men's minds alike and rightly disposed, all arguments and reasons would work alike upon them all: But interest, partiality, pride, and other ungovernable

affections, cause all the disorders in the mind; and consequently in the world.

The passions and affections of the mind are commonly confounded one with another, and promiscuously used, as two different words to signify the same thing; which I think prejudicial, and apt to lead men into great and fatal mistakes: for, since some passions only are taken to be vicious, and others allowed to be innocent, as by such nice distinctions the difference between them is not easily discovered; so by men's partiality and indulgence to their own frailties and their pleasures, it is to be feared, that such passions only will be by them interpreted to be vicious, as do not thwart their inclinations, and to which they themselves are not greatly addicted: by this means vicious passions may attack us in disguise, at distance hang out friends' colours; but when they approach us, we shall perceive to our smart, that they are enemies. Besides, I think it is treating vice a little too favourably, to let it shelter itself under the same name with innocence: therefore, for my own private assistance, I shall take the liberty to make this distinction between affection and passion; that when the just boundaries between these two very dif-

ferent territories are fairly marked out, I may the better be able to keep within the limits of the one, without making incursions into the other. Now, I take the affections of the soul to be the life and vigour of it; by whose warmth and activity all the springs of it receive their power of moving and acting, and without which the soul could no more subsist than the body without the soul: It is by the help of the affections that it moves to good or evil, that it acts virtuously or viciously. The affections may be said to be the fire of the soul, which, wisely managed, is ready to serve it for all sorts of beneficial purposes; but if carelessly neglected, or foolishly employed, is capable of breaking into unruly flames, to its utter ruin and destruction. So long as this fire is under the management of reason, it is both useful and necessary, and still retains the name of *affection*: but when it becomes disorderly, and breaks loose from her government, then it becomes pernicious and vicious, and deservedly assumes the name of *passion*, which signifies the disorder and anguish of the soul: so that when at any time I speak of the necessity of eradicating, or extinguishing the passions, I do not mean to eradicate, or extinguish the affections of the soul, without which it cannot

subsist ; but to eradicate and extinguish the disorders and anguish of it, with which it cannot subsist comfortably.

Human reason of itself has not force or power sufficient to lead and conduct a man to wisdom and virtue ; which are of that noble and sublime nature, that nothing but the divine influence can produce them in the soul of man.

Man from his infancy is nourished in error : he does not only suck his nurse's milk ; but imbibes her errors : he does not only receive his being from his parents, but learns their errors also : he is not only diverted with the conversation of his companions, but infected with their mistakes. Thus error takes the earliest possession of the soul, and never quits her hold, till obliged to it, either by the grace of God, or stroke of death. Nor is it any wonder (in these circumstances) that man should be ignorant of the right end of life, and of his true business in the world. It is to be feared, that too many have no other notion, than that they are placed in the world like beasts in a pasture, to devour the product of it ; and that their great work is to endeavor to excel each other in large possessions, rich clothes,

stately houses, costly furniture, splendid equipage, delicate tables, and such other trinkets of pride and luxury, and incitements to violence and injustice. And this is the ambition that parents strive to kindle in their beloved children. Great God! that men's understanding and ambition should be so short sighted, as not to see, nor aim at any thing beyond the poor extent of these impertinent vanities! and that any man can think, that thou hast given him a being to be wholly employed in these pursuits! that thou hast bestowed reason upon him only, that he may sully it with his passions, as if the use of it were not to give him the pre-eminence over beasts, but to render him inferior to them; for doubtless a rational brute is the worst of brutes, as having larger capacities for mischief. It is strange that a man can think that he receives blessings from God not to make him more mindful of him, or to excite his addresses to him, but to make him neglect and forget him! that his gifts are bestowed upon him to rob the great benefactor of his affection, which is the usual consequence of them! and that the faint and forced adorations of his last breath were the only tribute due to God, as it is too often the only one that falls to his share.

All men have some chief aim superior to all others; the compassing of which is the great employment of their thoughts and labour of their souls: other designs being carried on only leisurely and accidentally, without any great concern; the soul being entirely bent upon the success of that which it has made choice of as its grand business and satisfaction. That of the ambitious man is power and honour; that of the luxurious man is sensual pleasure; that of the covetous man is the increase of his wealth: but that of the wise man is the increase of his virtue. He looks upon the world as the stage, where he is placed by the great Creator to act his part, and upon life as the time allowed him to act it in. He is diligently careful of all his actions and behaviour, knowing that his fate depends upon his performances. He values not the hissings or applauses of the inconstant ignorant multitude; but is most industriously solicitous to obtain the approbation of the Almighty Spectator.

Man is the only creature in the world whose happiness is imperfect, and who is sensible that it is so; who has something in him that disdains the imperfection of his own being, and languishes after a condition

more perfect. Were he composed only, like other animals, of flesh and blood, he would find no more fault with his being than they do with theirs; since the matter of which his body and theirs is made, is not capable of such reflections: but these are the secret repinings of the soul, by which she plainly discovers herself; and our attentive observations of her, will soon turn into a demonstration, that we have such a principle existent in us. And since it is natural for all beings to seek and thirst after happiness, it is necessary to know where the seat of it is fixed; it being the want of that knowledge that makes us waste so much time in vain pursuits, and unprofitable attempts, in endeavouring to confine happiness to the body, which is a prison too weak to hold it; and the senses that conduct it thither are too feeble long to guard and detain it. It is always attempting to make its escape; and, what is worse, it never misses of its aim. Besides, if it has no other existence than the body, it must be very short lived, and in a contemptible portion of time perish with it. A man that is of that opinion must be sure to keep his thoughts always steadily confined within the compass of this life and world: for if they happen to wander beyond it, they will enter

into dark uncomfortable regions, that will afford them nothing but black and dismal prospects, which too many gay unthinking people find by sad experience. Now virtue (which I may define to be the science of happiness) will give us true notions of it, and teach us, that the true seat of it is in the soul; which is of a capacity large enough to contain it, and of a duration lasting enough to preserve it to eternity: there it may rise to unmeasurable heights without restraint; it can never overburden or overpower the soul. It is the poor feeble body only that is not able to support it, that is too weak to bear the rapid and violent motions of the soul, when it is filled and agitated with an excessive joy. The heart is capable of bearing but a small insignificant measure of joy: it may easily be overcharged with it, like a gun with powder, and be rent and destroyed with the irresistible efforts of it; according to the several degree of which, it is evident, that it often occasions ecstasies, swoonings, and death. The heart can no more support immoderate joy than immoderate grief: the one is destructive by dilating it too much, the other by too great a depression: and it is equal whether the vessel be crushed by too strong a pressure without, or torn in pieces by too violent an extension from within. Whichsoever of them

happens, the frail cask is broken, and life spilt.

In case of temptation, it is a prudent caution to avoid the encounter, when we are conscious of weakness, or unable to withstand it: but I do not think it the part of a generous mind to rest satisfied in a safety that is always owing to flight. It is much braver to keep the mind continually exercised, and inured by imaginary conflicts, until it is taught and enabled to overcome in those that are real; that whatsoever temptation offers itself, the soul may be intrepid, and coming bravely to the encounter, may know how to be victorious by its own force and virtue.

It is a preposterous resolution that some people take, of deferring to be virtuous till they grow old, imagining, that wisdom is the natural consequence of old age; as if that which is the greatest imperfection of human nature, were most proper to confer upon us the highest perfection of it. Long observation indeed gives experience; but that is a thing very different from wisdom, though it is the utmost advantage old age can pretend to bestow upon us. Now it is to be considered, that virtue is a habit of the mind, to be acquired with great in-

dustry and application ; to be forcibly introduced into the soul, in opposition to vice, which has gotten (it is to be supposed) a long and undisturbed possession of it, and must be dislodged with great difficulty, and by a persevering resolution. And this is not to be effected in a little time : the inhabitants are all on its side ; and it has so carefully strengthened the place, that the siege must be both long and doubtful. It is like to be an achievement that will not only require the vigour of youth, but more time also than old age has to bestow upon it. The chief end of a virtuous life is to give us as near a resemblance as is possible to God, to make us pure as he is pure ; that is, to raise us to the utmost degree of purity our frail nature is capable of. Now, the deferring this work till we grow old, is resolving first to be as unlike God as is possible, in a confident, but very ridiculous assurance, that old age will help our deformity, and give us a very good resemblance of him, and in an instant confer upon us purity like his, after we have wilfully passed our whole life in contracting pollution. So wonderful a change as this, it is possible for him (who can do all things) though not for age to make ; but it is such an one as no man can reasonably expect. Can we think,

when the purest and sprightliest part of life has been drawn out to vice, that the dregs are an offering fit for God? can we think it then only fit to please him, when we are not able to offend him longer? this is no better than a being cast upon God Almighty by age and infirmity against our will; like mariners who are forced by storms and tempests upon a coast they never intended to come near.

It is generally believed, that the deluge occasioned the shortness of man's life, which is much contracted since that time, in comparison of its length in the time of the antediluvian patriarchs; and we find that the viciousness of mankind occasioned the deluge: and very probably God thought fit to drown the world for these two reasons: *first*, to punish the then living offenders; and *next*, to prevent mens plunging into those prodigious depths of impiety for all future ages: for if in this short term of life, which is now allotted to mankind, men are capable of being puffed up to such an insolent degree of pride and folly, as to forget God and their own mortality, his power and their own weakness. If a prosperity bounded by three score and ten years (and what mortal's prosperity since the deluge ever lasted so long?) can swell the

mind of so frail a creature to such a prodigious size of vanity, what boundaries could then be put to his arrogance, if his life and prosperity were likely to continue eight or nine hundred years together, like that of the patriarchs. If under the present circumstances of life men's passions can rise so high; if the present short and uncertain enjoyments of the world are able to occasion such an extravagant pride, such unmeasurable ambition, such sordid avarice, such barbarous rapine and injustice, such malice and envy, and so many other detestable things that compose the numerous train of vice, how would the passions have flamed, and to what a monstrous stature would every vice have grown, if those enjoyments that provoked and increased them were of eight or nine hundred years duration? If eternal happiness and eternal punishment is able to make no stronger impressions upon men's minds so near at hand, it may well be imagined, that at so great a distance they would have made little or none at all; that the one would have been entirely divested of its allurements, and the other of its terrors, and the great Creator deprived of that obedience and adoration which is so justly due to him from his creatures. Thus the inundation of vice has (in some measure) by God's goodness, been prevented by an inun-

dition of water ; that which was the punishment of one generation, may be said to have been the preservation of all those which have succeeded it ; for if life had not been thus clipt, one *Tiberius*, one *Caligula*, one *Nero*, one *Lewis XIV.* had been sufficient to have destroyed the whole race of mankind ; each of whose lives, had they been ten times as long, and the mischiefs they occasioned multiplied by that number, it might easily be computed how great a plague one such a long-lived monster would have been to the world.

Men are apt to put very narrow limits to human virtue ; and as a reason for their so doing, they plead the frailty of human nature ; which they pretend has put such scanty bounds to it, that it is in vain to attempt to enlarge them. Men may flatter themselves if they please with such pretences ; but I doubt they will not pass for warrantable excuses of our carelessness and negligence. I doubt it will appear, that if the stream of our affections is too small to water a larger field of virtue, it is because it is diverted for other purposes, into other channels. Where interest and ambition lead men, they can break through the bounds of possibility, and march far into the territories even of seeming impossibi-

lity; but when virtue is our conductor, we are not ashamed to stop long before we arrive within sight of those borders. In the former case men can depend upon the help of that imaginary idol *fortune*; but in the latter they dare not rely upon the promised and sure assistance of the all-powerful God. The riches and magnificence of a *Persian* king, the wealthy treasures of the far distant *Indies* could so inflame the soul of *Alexander the great*, as to make him perform actions incredible, and surmount difficulties seemingly invincible: but the eternal joys of heaven, the infinitely glorious and truly inestimable treasures of the great KING of kings, have not (it seems) charms sufficient to kindle in our souls the same ardour. So much is the thirst of fame greater than that of virtue; so much (to our confusion be it spoken) are our passions stronger than our faith.

A wise man must not only take care to govern his own passions, but that he may not be governed by those of other men: for if we must be subject to passion, it is equal whether it be our own or other peoples. When the right way is lost, it is no matter which way we wander. Now it may happen in many cases, that when a man hath

withstood his own passions, and acted in conformity to reason, yet other men (guided by passion, not by reason) finding fault with his actions, will be apt to give him a dislike of his own proceedings, unless he be very well fixed and confirmed in his principles and reason. This is a matter that very well deserves our utmost attention; since upon it depends not only the peace and tranquillity of our lives, but even our virtue also, which will be in danger to be shaken, if the mind be not steady, and proof against the reproaches and derision of the world.

Most men are ready enough to reckon up the income of their estates, and compute how it will answer their several expences; but few employ their arithmetic to calculate the value and income of their life and time, or consider how they may be expended to the best advantage. In these the beggar has as large a revenue as the king, though this is justly accounted the most valuable treasure. The gracious God has distributed equal portions of these to all degrees and conditions of men, though not to every particular man the same proportion; and the sum total of this is threescore and ten years, all beyond that being labour and sorrow, and many years also on this side of it.

Now we have to consider how much of this is likely to be spent in happiness and enjoyment, and how much will be employed to less pleasing purposes, which may be thus easily computed: twenty years may be deducted for education, which is a time of discipline and restraint, and young people are never easy till they are got over it; and the last ten years of the seventy may be deducted for sickness and infirmities, which very often is the portion of those years: so that these thirty taken out of life, there remains but forty, out of which a third part (being at least eight hours in the four and twenty) which amounts to about fourteen years more, must be deducted for sleep, that sister and image of death; and then there remains but twenty-six, out of which when the requisite allowances are taken for the time we are made uneasy with our own passions, and tormented with other peoples, for what passes in sickness, pain, loss, and affliction, what we consume in anxiety for things that must inevitably happen, and what in anguish for accidents irrecoverably past; what passes in stupid and insipid amusements, or brown studies, without either trouble or pleasure; and when this is summed up, the poor inconsiderable remainder, I doubt, we shall not account

much better for; it being generally unprofitably wasted in vice and vanity.

I suppose mens passions do not only make them miserable in this world, but are no inconsiderable part of their torment in the next: for the body limits and restrains the soul; so that the flame either of virtue or vice cannot blaze in this life to an excessive degree: but when it is freed from that confinement, the passions become ten thousand times more furious and raging, being let loose by divine vengeance to torment and rack the vicious soul: as, on the other hand, every virtue is heightened and increased unmeasurably, to the infinite joy of the soul that is virtuous. For it is to be supposed, that the inclinations which the soul has either to virtue or vice at its departure out of the body, are not changed after its separation, but exceedingly augmented and strengthened; so that it is highly necessary to take sufficient time to endue it with an habitual virtue, before it passes into eternity, where habits are not altered, but improved.

The soul agitated with passions, fares like a weak bird in a stormy day; she is not able to make a straight flight, but is

tossed from the tract she would pursue, being lost and carried in the air at the pleasure of the winds. In this condition is the soul, till, by a constant meditation upon the great God, and application to him, it has obtained a strong and vigorous faith to ballast and strengthen it, and enable it to maintain the straight and steady course of virtue.

Reputation and praise may be useful supports to a weak virtue; but when it becomes strong, it must cast them away with the same indignation and disdain that a child does his leading-strings, when he has strength enough to walk without them.

It is a contradiction to imagine, that reputation or praise is a suitable recompense for virtue; since it is a reward that nothing but vanity can make acceptable. It declares a man both foolish and vicious, that can be pleased and satisfied with it; and that his merit is only owing to his pride. True virtue, as it has no other aim than the honour and service of the great God; so the least and only recompense it aspires to, is his approbation and favour.

It gives a greatness of soul truly noble, to a virtuous man, to consider how honourable he is made, by his being the servant of so great and glorious a master. With what generous thoughts, what firm and graceful confidence does the assurance of his favour and love inspire him? How much does he disdain to increase the gaudy slavish crowd, that so assiduously attend the levees and couches of poor frail princes, whose beings are no better than his own? With how much indignation does he despise a fawning courtship, and attendance upon insolent and vicious favourites? scorning to pay such homage to vice. How contemptible do the vain interests and pursuits, hopes and fears, desires and aversions, that so much busy and disturb the world, appear to him who has his soul enlightened and enlarged with the love of its great Creator and merciful Redeemer?

It is wonderful to consider how vast a progress the ancient philosophers made in virtue, apparently by the help of natural reason only; though many of them were not ignorant of the inability of human reason (singly) to make men virtuous; but were conscious of the necessity of divine assistance, in order to so great a performance. And I make no question but many

of them had that assistance to the consummation of their own virtue. It is astonishing to reflect upon the strength of their faith, both as to the existence of a Deity, and the immortality of the soul: and what surprising effects it had upon them, in rendering their lives highly virtuous, in begetting in them the utmost contempt of the world, and the most profound reverence and adoration of God. With how much bravery and courage, in those cloudy times (without the help and direction of the compass of revelation which we enjoy) did those bold and generous navigators sail in the wide and vast sea of virtue? What great and useful discoveries did they there make? What rich mines did they lay open to the world, if men had had industry enough to have wrought in them, and wisdom sufficient to have exhausted their treasures? But, O merciful God, how much greater and plainer discoveries hast thou, in thy infinite goodness, been pleased to reveal to mankind, by the example and doctrine of the blessed Jesus! who *has brought life and immortality* out of thick clouds and darkness, not only into a clearer and brighter, (that were to say too little), but into an open and manifest light! whose gospel is a system of so refined a philosophy, so exalted a wisdom,

and the divine characters that shine in it are so conspicuously legible, that nothing but the darkest ignorance and blackest corruption can hinder us from reading them: both which I beseech thee, O blessed Saviour, to deliver me from, and that thou wilt be pleased to endue me with the same blessed spirit of eternal truth, by whom thy holy word was dictated to thy disciples, that, by its assistance in reading, I may understand it, and by understanding I may evermore delight in it, and conform my life entirely to it.

Most great and glorious God! who hast appointed the rivers to hasten with a rapid motion to the sea, be graciously pleased (I most humbly beseech thee) to make the stream of my will perpetually to flow with a cheerful and impetuous course, bearing down pleasure, interest, affliction, death, and all other obstacles and impediments whatsoever before it, till it plunge itself joyfully into the unfathomable ocean of thy divine will, for the sake of thy beloved Son, my Saviour, Jesus Christ.

This may be laid down as a general maxim, That whosoever is not sincere to man, can never be sincere to God; nor can

he that is insincere to God, be ever sincere to man: for without sincerity there can be no virtue, either moral or divine.

The original and progress of virtue seems to me to be thus: God, in the first place, gives grace to man, which grace produces faith, faith wisdom, and wisdom virtue. Grace enlightens the soul, and makes the objects of faith visible to it: faith, having the prospect of felicity in view, necessarily begets wisdom, or a most earnest desire, and most prudent prosecution of that felicity; the consequence of which is virtue, or a suitable conduct of our lives, for the attainment of the same end. But there is another sort of faith, of a wretched kind, which may arise in the souls of vicious men at the approach of death; for the deluding scene of the pleasures and vanities of the world being withdrawn, a new and real one will discover itself to them: they must then have faith, their eyes can no longer then be kept shut: they must then be convinced, that there is a God, from whose glorious presence they must for ever be excluded; a heaven never to be enjoyed, and misery not to be avoided. As to the mercies of God to sinners, I desire to have as enlarged notions of them as may be consistent with

reason ; having abundant need of them, and humbly imploring them for my own salvation. I make no doubt but that repentance and conversion may be (and sometimes are) wrought by God Almighty in a moment ; and he that sees the sincerity of it, may, without further proof, be pleased to accept it : but it is an intolerable presumption for any one to expect and depend upon such a favour : besides that he who has this sudden and late sincerity cannot have the satisfaction of knowing it himself, having no time to make any convincing trial of it ; but must lie under extraordinary doubts, whether it be real or not, whether it be the effect of grace, or only the effect of fear : at best it is infinitely hazardous ; and the case is of that prodigious consequence, that a wise man (if possible) would run no hazard at all.

Avarice can overcome pleasure, and constrain the covetous man to abandon it all the days of his life, for no other end than to heap up an useless treasure ; and were it not a shame, should vice have power to do what virtue cannot perform ? shall not our love and duty to the adorable God so much as oblige us to exchange an inconsiderable pleasure for a vastly great one ? a pleasure

which (like a flower) is no sooner blown than it fades, for a joy that, beginning to take root and blossom here, will flourish and bear delicious fruit to all eternity.

It is necessary to be wise, in order to love wisdom; to be good that we may love mercy; and to be charitable, that we may love bounty: for if these be wanting in us, how can we love God and adore him as we ought to do, for these lovely attributes? on the contrary, it is as necessary to be temperate that we may hate intemperance, to be just, that we may hate injustice; to be humble, that we may hate pride; otherwise how can we hate vice, which is so odious to God.

My most gracious God, who hast been so infinitely merciful to me, and my dear child, not only the year past but all the years of our lives, be pleased to accept my most unfeigned thanks for thy innumerable blessings to us; graciously pardoning the manifold sins and infirmities of my life past, and bountifully bestowing, both upon my dear child and myself, all those graces and virtues that may render us acceptable to thee. And every year thou shalt be pleased to add to our lives, add also (I most humbly

implore thee) more strength to our faith, more ardour to our love, and a greater perfection to our obedience: and grant, that, in an humble sincerity and constant perseverance, we may serve thee most faithfully the remainder of our lives, for Jesus Christ's sake, thy blessed Son, our merciful Redeemer.

Reason must be careful to keep all the affections of the soul under a constant exercise and strict discipline, as a skilful general does his soldiers; for too much rest and liberty will make them grow licentious and mutinous: and when they have once learned to be disobedient, it will be a difficult task to reduce them again under good command.

How happy is the soul to whom virtue and vice are the only objects of its desires and aversions! which loves nothing but what it is sure to obtain, and dreads nothing but what it is certain to avoid; which rests upon a rock whose foundation is immovable, and leans upon a support that can never deceive it; which securely reposes itself upon the great and gracious God; and unloading itself of all its cares, lays them upon him who so tenderly cares for us, and loves

us with a dearer and much better love than we are able to love ourselves.

If we do not believe God Almighty to be infinitely wiser than ourselves, why do we worship him? if we do, why do not we (with a happy assurance) commit ourselves, and all that belongs to us, entirely to his will and disposal.

Lively and elevated ideas of God, and of eternal life, must necessarily create in us most despicable and contemptible notions of this life and world: for it is a notorious contradiction to say, that our love to God is hearty and sincere, and yet at the same time we feel in ourselves a great and earnest love of the world; since it is a natural effect of love to create an ardent desire to enjoy the company and presence of that which is beloved: but vehemently to love this life and this world, is to desire to be as far distant and as long absent from God, (whom we pretend to be the object of our love) as is possible.

I am convinced that the pleasure of virtue has been and ever will be a riddle in the world, as long as it lasts; the meaning of which has never, nor ever can be

known or conceived, but by those to whom it shall please God, out of his infinite goodness, to expound it.

Faith is that blessed tree which produces the noble and divine fruits of wisdom, virtue, and true felicity: but withal it is of so fine and delicate a nature, that it will not grow and thrive in the cold and barren soil of man's heart, without his incessant care and industry, and the enlivening influence of the divine Spirit. O gracious God, so cherish and increase, I most humbly beseech thee, that small grain of it which thou hast been pleased to plant in my heart, that it may spread and flourish, and take such firm root there, as to be able to defend itself, and protect me under the secure shelter of its branches, from all storms and tempests that shall ever assault either the one or the other.

Man must consider his being in one of these three capacities; either as liable to an utter dissolution by death, or as capable of an eternal continuance after it in happiness or in misery. If he believes the first, why does he ever disturb his mind with the doubtful thoughts of a God? if he believes the latter, why does he unprofitably entertain it with any thing else.

My most good and bountiful God! what numberless praises have I to give thee, and pardons to beg of thee, both arising from the employment I have been for some months past about! What thanks have I to return thee for the ease, the conveniences, and comforts of life, which thou hast so abundantly bestowed upon me! But, O my gracious Lord! what fervent addresses ought I to make to thy infinite mercy, to forgive my ingratitude and weakness, in suffering my thoughts to wander from thee, and my affections to grow languid towards thee! How much time have I been impertinently consuming in building a house, which I ought to have employed in endeavouring to form my mind to a perfect obedience to thee! Pardon, great God! I beseech thee, for Jesus Christ's sake, all my omissions and neglects, and my too often cold and distracted addresses to thee: and grant, that I may pass the rest of my life in an uninterrupted endeavour to please thee, and in a continual return of thanks for this, and all those innumerable blessings which thou art never ceasing to bestow upon so undeserving a wretch.

Assurance of eternal happiness! that sublimest degree, that finishing stroke of hu-

man felicity in this life, is that which every soul (that makes any serious reflections in matters of religion) pants after. It is therefore necessary to know upon what foundation this blessed state is built, and from what principles it arises; and those, I think, it is plainly evident are faith, love, and obedience; since no man can have assurance that does not feel in himself the principle of obedience; nor can he have obedience without the principle of love, nor love without the principle of faith: for it is a notorious contradiction to imagine, that any one can be assured of God Almighty's pardon, without obeying him; of his favour without loving him; or of the eternal enjoyment of him, without a firm and steadfast belief in him. But I am persuaded, that the word *Faith* is too frequently misunderstood, and taken for a bare, careless, and faint assent to any truth we pretend to believe; which notion of it is not only deceitful and false, but pernicious and destructive. This therefore is what I mean by a firm belief in God; when, from intent meditation and mature reflection, the judgment, reason, understanding, and all the faculties of the soul, are overpowered with an irresistible conviction of the necessary existence of such a divine Being;

which also represents him to the mind infinite in glory, in power, in wisdom, in goodness, and in all perfection; with such charms, such beauty, such loveliness, as to captivate and ravish the affections of the soul, and smite it with a divine love; such a love as may possess it with an ardent and languishing desire after the enjoyment of him, with diligent and laborious endeavours to please him, and with incessant strivings to resemble him, and render itself amiable and acceptable to him. Such a love as may reign triumphantly in the soul, engrossing all its affections, divesting all other objects of their charms, nay making them appear vile and contemptible; and delivering the absolute and entire dominion of the soul to the great and glorious Creator of it. Accept, great God! of such an entire dominion over my soul, and be pleased to maintain it against all opposition and temptation whatsoever, by thy infinite power evermore.

The next thing necessary to be seriously and impartially considered relating to faith, is what measures and degrees we have of it: for, since our eternal happiness depends upon our being possessed of this virtue, we cannot make too nice and diligent inquiries

what proportion of it we feel in ourselves. And to that end, we are to consider whether there be any thing we love more than God, or fear more than him: whether his favour be the centre to which all our aims, designs, and desires tend; and whether his displeasure is the evil we most carefully and solicitously strive to avoid: whether our chief study be to know his divine will, and our constant labour (or rather delight) to perform it: whether any temptation, either of pleasure or gain, be capable of moving us to do any ill action: or whether the fear of any loss or mischief, either to our persons or estates, be capable to deter us from persevering in good ones. For if we value estate, reputation, or life more than we hate sin and vice, and would be induced to commit the latter to save any of the former, it is demonstrable, that we fear the loss of those things more than God. And if we find ourselves capable to be tempted and allured, either by pleasure or profit, to do an unjust or vicious action, it is as plain, that we love those things more than him; and that the consideration of his favour and displeasure only prevails upon us, when nothing else comes in competition with them. But if we find that we refuse many things which otherwise we should

choose ; that we despise many things which otherwise we should value ; that we refrain from many actions which otherwise we should have committed, and do many others that else we should have avoided ; and all only in regard to the favour or displeasure of God, it is evident, that we are actuated by the influence of a true and vigorous faith ; which grant, most gracious God ! to me thy poor unworthy servant, in the most perfect manner my frail nature is capable of, pardoning in me all the defects of it hitherto, for Jesus Christ's sake.

Duty and happiness are so closely linked together, that the performance of the one does naturally draw the other after it : For as it is our duty gratefully to adore the great God for all his blessings, and contentedly to submit to all his dispensations ; so it is a pleasure to be grateful and contented : but he that is discontented can never be grateful, nor he that is contented miserable. Blessed be the most bountiful God, who has annexed an unspeakable pleasure to faith and virtue ! who has, in his infinite goodness, made those things that are of the highest advantage to mankind so exceedingly delightful.

Such is the weakness and imperfection of bare human reason, supported only by its own force, that it is capable of conducting us but rarely to truth; though it frequently leads us to innumerable errors: a remarkable instance of which is the opinion of that learned and great philosopher Aristotle, That the world and the race of man were eternal; than which nothing was ever more injudiciously imagined: nor was there ever a greater contradiction advanced, nor more repugnant to common sense. The falsity of which notion plainly appears from this consideration, without recurring to revelation to confute it. If there were an eternal succession of men, we must in our thoughts trace this eternity up from one man to another, till we arrive at that man who was the first possessor of it; since it is plain, from the nature of succession, that there must have been a first: and whosoever that first was, who was the possessor of eternal life, we must necessarily conceive to be likewise possessed of eternal power; and being eternal without beginning, must infallibly continue eternal without end: which naturally leads us to the conception of a being vastly different from man. So that this wild incoherent notion of the eternity of mankind, shews us plainly how

glimmering a light the clearest human reason gives, and how much we stand in need of brighter illuminations. But though life in man has so short a period, we cannot but conceive it somewhere to be eternal: for if we could possibly imagine a time when no being had life, it is, I think, impossible to conceive how any being could ever have begun to live: for it is evident, that life having annexed to it a measure of power, must consequently be the work and product of power; and in supposing a time when there was no such thing as life, we suppose a time when there was no such thing as power (since there can be no power without life); and consequently it were impossible that life could ever have had anywhere a beginning: from whence it follows, that life in some one being is eternal, and from that inexhaustible fountain has been conveyed and bestowed to all creatures that have ever possessed it; and that eternal fountain of life is God, who is also the sole fountain of wisdom, of power, of happiness, and of all goodness; and who dispenses (out of his infinite bounty) such proportions of these several blessings to all his creatures, as he thinks fit; each of them being totally and entirely comprehended in his own blessed being; whom my soul most

humbly adores, and to whom it desires faithfully to render all honour, praise, and dutiful obedience.

Man is of such a base and perverse disposition, that he is seldom prevailed upon by mildness and goodness, but is restiff and obstinate, like an untamed horse, contending against the fixed methods of God's providence in the world: his mind seldom submits by reason, but must be mastered and broken by rough usage and affliction, till he is sensible of his own weakness, and inability to contend against Almighty power. Was man's reason more strong, or his pride less powerful, he would never be pushed on to so dangerous an experiment.

There is no less necessity of the mind's being fixed and steady, in order to its right direction to the subject of its consideration, than of the hand's being firm and unshaken, that it may surely hit the mark it aims at: for when the mind is pointing at a subject, if it has not firmness enough to keep itself fixed upon it, every light thought or imagination is capable of pushing it beside the mark and making it lose its aim. And being thus unstable and uncertain, it is like a weak bird in a strong tempest, that has neither

force nor weight sufficient to keep a direct course, but is carried by the violence of the storm beside the place where it endeavours to settle. In this condition is the mind when capable of being hurried from the subject of its contemplation by every gust of passion : and though it has reason in view, it wants force to bear up to it, and ballast sufficient to resist the fierce assaults of its unruly affections, which keep it in a continual wavering course, and hinder it from arriving at security and repose. The greatest concern therefore a man has, is to labour to gain such a steadiness of mind, such a method of reasonable thinking, as may not be capable of any interruption. And when this is obtained, the next care must be, with the utmost diligence, to preserve the mind in this happy state. And to this end we must not be less watchful over innocent, than over our vicious recreations ; and take care least an over eagerness in the one, does not amuse and lead us insensibly to the other ; for the thoughts being once unfixed, it is not so easy a matter to settle them again, and the affections being by degrees disengaged from their true and proper objects, will be in danger of betaking themselves to false and trifling ones : nay, it is well (being once upon the wing) if they

stop on this side folly and vice ; the first step towards each of which is a coolness and indifference to wisdom and virtue ; and such a case is not less deplorable, that innocent diversions were the occasion of it : and indeed I doubt no diversions can be said to be innocent which have that fatal effect. Besides, by disuse, the mind, as well as the body, contracts sluggishness and impotence, so that when it is brought to exercise, and we endeavour to turn it to reasonable thoughts, it appears, that it has not only lost its vigour, but its pleasure also : since the pleasure of wisdom and virtue (which are the result of right reason) depends upon the vigorous impressions made by them upon the mind. So that it is impossible that a languid soul can ever be a happy one, any more than one that is doubtfully wavering between virtue and vice. I am but too sensible how ill an effect idle and impertinent cares and amusements (though very innocent ones) by some continuance and frequent repetitions, have upon the mind. I had hopes, when I began to build my house, that I was pretty well prepared against this danger ; being very well aware of it, and (as carefully as I could) endeavouring to prevent it : but I found, to my great dissatisfaction and trouble, that those necessary

cares and contrivances I was obliged to fill my head with, were so great a prejudice and incumbrance to my mind, that I had neither liberty nor power, whatever efforts I made, to penetrate so far into those thoughts and reasonings which I earnestly laboured often after, and passionately desired; and would rather be continually master of, than of all the houses and kingdoms upon earth. My soul was clogged and grown too heavy to soar above the reach of low insipid conceptions; the springs of it seemed relaxed, and incapable of pushing it to vigorous imaginations; all its bright ideas were clouded, and it grieved and languished to think from whence it was failen, and dreaded the misery of sinking lower. It mourned, and was ashamed to stoop to those fairy delusions, those shadows of pleasures, which the world affords, and which it could not forbear to despise, though it had not force to reach its wonted joys, by bearing itself up to lively meditations, full of love and adoration to its great Creator. By this, my ever gracious God! thou hast taught me, that thou being the only fountain of true joy and felicity, every step I advance towards thee, the nearer I approach my happiness; and every degree I depart from thee, I hasten towards my mis-

ery. O be thou mercifully pleased to guard and protect my faith, that neither the open force of the most violent temptations may be able to shake it, nor the insinuating allurements of innocent diversions (by gentle unsuspected impressions) to undermine it: but keep me perpetually and firmly adhering to thee, constantly persevering to the last moment of my life in all those things that are pleasing and acceptable in thy sight, for Jesus Christ's sake, my ever blessed Redeemer.

*A peaceful life, all other ways you'll miss!
Through virtue lies the only path to bliss.*

The first two things to be sought after in order to the acquiring of a settled calmness and undisturbed pleasure of mind, are a constant and frequent love of the adorable God, and a real and entire contempt of the world; which love of God will certainly flow from a frequent and serious contemplation of his continual and unspeakable goodness to us, as the contempt of the world will undoubtedly ensue from a reasonable and impartial consideration of it. These I look upon as the necessary foundation upon which alone may be built that noble, beautiful, and desirable structure of

an intrepid, virtuous, and peaceful mind, the only valuable treasure upon earth! and that alone of which we may be innocently covetous! a dominion more glorious than all the empires of the world! in the pursuit after which alone ambition is justifiable. O my God! strike my soul with an ardent love of thee, that may flame to such an height above all other affections in me, as no one may ever come in competition with it; such a love as may not only subdue all other affections, but purify and make them innocent: a love that may create in my soul a perpetual pleasure in the contemplation of thee, and a continual thirst after thee, never to be quenched, but by the blessed enjoyment of thee: a love that may ravish my soul with thy divine perfections, and paint there such lively images, such bright ideas of thy glorious majesty, that none of the trifling pleasures and temptations of this world may be able to make any impression on it. And as, my gracious Lord! *thou hast given me much, and forgiven me much*, so raise my love to a degree proportionable to thy bounty and mercy.

Death is said to be the *King of Terrors*. These words I suppose are usually misun-

derstood, and are not in general meant of a natural death, as it is only the separation of soul and body ; but must be understood of that eternal death, which is most properly (though not emphatically enough, if words were to be found to heighten the expression) termed the *King of Terrors*, as being the eternal separation of the soul from God, and exclusion of it from any portion of felicity. And I think it is evident, it ought to be taken in this sense: for a man who has either led a virtuous and innocent life, or one who having done otherwise, does truly and sincerely repent, resolving upon a perfect and universal obedience to his God for the future ; and is conscious to himself of no wilful breach of his resolutions, but continually begs pardon for such failings and infirmities, as he cannot either discover or avoid, who unfeignedly abhors those follies and vanities, which he fancied so much pleasure in before, taking his greatest delight in his love and obedience to God, who looks upon his being as made for another world, not for this ; and can with a piercing eye of faith cast frequent, though imperfect glances thither, and make such discoveries of the glories of heaven, as to inflame his soul with an earnest desire to enjoy them : such an one must needs behold

death with a wishing eye: it will appear to him no otherwise than as that which opens the door to his liberty and happiness, and lets him into those ravishing joys he has so much longed for: he would behold death approaching with the same pleasure that a man cast upon a desert island, would see a ship sailing to his relief; he would run eagerly to the shore, and embark with delight.

*He's truly in a happy state,
Whose hopes increase, and fears abate:
Whose triumphs conquer'd passions grace;
To whom the King of Terrors wears a smiling face.*

It is not amiss in the matter of benefits received, to consider how easily and almost naturally, the love of corrupt, ungrateful man passes from the giver to the gift, and only glancing upon the former, fixes itself on the latter: and this being remarkably notorious in the case of benefits received from Almighty God, it concerns us to consider well what we receive, and how much we pay, that we may know whether our payments in love, duty, and adoration, bear any-tolerable proportion to what we owe, and have received in real benefits: whether

our love to God be pure and sincere, or only mercenary and interested: whether it flows from those infinite perfections that render him truly amiable, or proceeds from the value we have for the things he bestows: if the last be the case, then, if we would speak plain, we must confess, that we love God a little, because he gives us those things we love a great deal; and I doubt it may too often be added, much better than himself: for if our love of him be grounded upon the love we bear to the things he gives us, it is demonstrable, that we loved those things not only before, but better than him, and that our love to him was kindled, not by his own excellence, but by the excellence we fancied in the things he gave us. Now, if those things have no intrinsic value in them, nor have any just title to our affection, and yet they rob God of it, to whom it so justly belongs: I fear such a love can hardly be cleared from being in some measure idolatrous. But there are gifts that have a real value in themselves, such as faith, wisdom, virtue, &c. the love of which will increase our love to God: in these we need not fear loving the gift more than the giver, since it is by the love of these only that we can arrive at the love of God; for faith gives us true notions and apprehensions of him:

wisdom leads us to the knowledge of him, and virtue to the obedience of him. And the same may be shewn from every other grace or virtue. In loving truth, justice, bounty, &c. we actually love God; these virtues being a part of his essence, and inseparable from it, nor belonging properly to any other being but his own: no portion or degree of any of them residing in any other being otherwise than by a gracious communication of them by God, from their several originals remaining entire and complete in himself; from whom I humbly beg continual supplies and increase of all graces and virtues, through his infinite bounty and compassion. #

Pleasure results from an impetuous motion of the united affection, either in the prosecution, expectation, or enjoyment of some good; or at least what we take to be such: but it is more in the expectation, than in the enjoyment even in the sensual pleasures: for the share the body has in pleasure is very inconsiderable; the much greater part, either of pleasure or pain, being lodged in the mind, and felt there; though the body is capable of a greater and more lasting perception of pain than it is of pleasure. Now, to be sensible of this truth,

we have but to consider some one of the most sensual pleasures, as that of gluttony, (and it is the same of all the rest.) Now this at first may appear to be entirely the enjoyment of the body, though that bears a very small share in it, which lasts no longer than the meat is going down, and tasted upon the palate. The chief of this pleasure is in the fancy and imagination; in the earnest longings after it, and expectations of it, before it is really tasted: so that the enjoyment of all sensual pleasures is properly rather the extinguishing of pleasure than the enjoyment of it: since it extinguishes that principal part of it, which was tasted in the mind by the help of fancy and imagination.

A great part of wisdom consists in the knowing how to make a right estimate of things; for our affection and aversion always attending upon our esteem and disesteem, if these be built upon a false foundation, the others will be fixed upon wrong objects: so that we shall either love what we ought to hate, and hate what we ought to love, or at least our love and hatred will exceed their due bounds, in regard of the value of the different objects they are placed upon. Happiness and misery are things, the one of which is most earnestly coveted, the other

most carefully avoided, by all mankind: but how can a man with any judgment set himself to procure the former, and escape the latter, unless he has first the knowledge of those good and evil things, that conduce severally to them: for we must call every thing good that contributes to happiness, and every thing evil that procures our misery. Ignorance and mistakes are fatal in the choice of good and evil: wherefore, it no less behoves every man, to be able to discern between the one and the other, than it does a physician to distinguish wholesome herbs from poisonous plants, least where he designs a remedy, he administers destruction. If men are ignorant, what are the ingredients that enter into the composition of happiness and misery, or be mistaken in the choice of them, they will be wretched enough to choose the contrary of what they seek after. Is it reasonable to imagine, that care and skill are necessary for the acquisition of every trifle we ignorantly set a value upon, as riches and honour, and of all those sciences by the means of which we hope to attain to either of these, and yet that true and substantial happiness, (which is the perfection of our being) comes by chance, without being sought after. Can man be vain enough to imagine, that the

mind can be furnished with just and true notions, without ever taking the pains to think, with lofty and generous conceptions, without giving itself the trouble to meditate and reflect? that it can (to the utmost of its power) fathom the depths of the knowledge of God and itself, without an unwearied diligence and constant application? and, finally, that having by such means ascended to a high degree of felicity, that it can be able to maintain its station without industry and assiduity?

We are not only miserable enough to be governed by our passions, but foolish enough to repine and murmur, that God Almighty will not submit to be governed by them too, which is the cause of our so frequent quarrels at his pleasure, in ordering and disposing the affairs of the world, and of our uneasiness in vainly contending with his unchangeable decrees, which are therefore only unchangeable, because they are the result of his infinite unerring wisdom: all whose determinations, as they are best in themselves, so doubtless are they most beneficial to his poor creatures, if we had but confidence enough to rely entirely on his mercy, which is the only thing that will never disappoint us.

How many irretrievable inconveniences do men fall into, purely from the fickleness and continual mutability of their humours. It were good therefore thoroughly to understand ourselves, to prevent the miseries accruing from this cause. We think perhaps this instant, that such a thing would please us, and make us happy, whereupon we apply our utmost diligence, sparing no pains to procure it; and it is ten to one, by that time we have it, our humour is altered, our labour lost, and all our expectations of happiness frustrated: and then our inconstant fancy pitches upon some other thing, persuading us it is that must give us content: which also obtained, from the same cause, disappoints us as much as the former; and not pleasing us, the consequence is, we grow weary of it, disgusted at it; and it is well if we have it in our power conveniently to get quit of it when we think fit: for a thousand instances may be given of cases where a mistake in the satisfaction we propose to give ourselves, proves vastly prejudicial, and oftentimes the misery of our whole lives. How frequently are young people ruined, and elder ones unfortunate upon this very score? imagining, that the warmth of the present temper will continue and procure them satisfaction in despite of all

the inconveniences that may attend the gratification of it: but that eagerness unexpectedly relaxing, leaves them in the lurch, deirauded of their happiness, and loaded with vexation. Thus unhappy man turns restlessly from one thing to another, hoping by change to find relief, and never reflects that the desire of change is his disease; that his disquiets will never cease till he has unalterably fixed upon the objects of his pleasure, and having brought his mind to like and love only what is fit and reasonable, keeps it firm and constant in the approbation of these things. And when the vagrancy of humour and fancy is settled, a man has but to choose (for once) his pleasures, and (as far the nature of human things will permit) he is assured to have them permanent. I myself was in great danger of making a scurvy experiment of what I have been saying: and had not my mind, by my ever good God's assistance, taken a pretty strong bent before hand towards the satisfaction I had fixed upon for it, it would have run the hazard of declining from it: for the ideas it had conceived began so far to wear off for want of renewing the impressions, by intent meditation and frequent reasonings, (which I was in a great measure hindered from, by an incessant hurry of trivial employments)

for six or seven months together, in conversing with workmen, and contriving for building), that I found it no easy matter to bring it up to its former station, it having considerably lost ground: notwithstanding my continual endeavours to keep it unmoveable in those principles I had resolved to persevere in to my life's end: for though (I thank God) I found no inclination to be vicious, yet the ardour of my virtue was extremely abated, and consequently the pleasure I received from it. And though I still retained an abhorrence to vice, yet my indignation at it was much slackened: so that the one did not seem to have altogether so charming, nor the other so deformed an aspect as they used to appear to me with: and the passions, which I hoped had been pretty well overcome, began to strive and struggle for mastery again; and had they prevailed, the house I was building for a comfortable retreat from the world, where I designed to spend my days in the service and adoration of my most merciful God, and in studying to cultivate my mind, and to improve it in all virtue, and render it less unworthy of his favour, would have seemed to me a melancholy habitation; and after all my charge and pains in building it, I should have grown weary of a solitary life,

(for solitariness without virtue is an unportable burden) and have left it, to have played the fool somewhere else. But, blessed be my gracious God! who has, and, I trust in his infinite mercy, ever will avert so fatal a mischief from me! Oh let me never stray from thee, nor shrink in the least from my resolution of an entire obedience to thee. *Hold thou me up that I may never fall; and in thy glorious light let me evermore see light.* Leave me not to my own vain imaginations, the greatest curse that can befall wretched man.

As a reasonable well-grounded faith is the highest perfection, and supreme felicity of human nature in this imperfect state, so an unreasonable and obstinate belief is of most destructive consequence to salvation. He is as sure to miss the mark he aims at, that overshoots it, as he who shoots below it; and perhaps he is not less likely to fail of salvation that over-believes, than he that believes too little, or does not believe at all; for though it is absolutely necessary to believe, that Jesus Christ came into the world to be the saviour of mankind, and that it is through his merits, propitiation, and intercession alone, that we can reasonably hope to be saved; yet if we think, that he has so

absolutely purchased salvation for us, as to disengage us from the obligation of our utmost obedience, and to release us from labouring and striving diligently (according to the farthest extent of our power) to serve and please the great God, to imitate his perfections, to exterminate as far as possible all sin and impurity out of our souls, and to be always renewing in them the almost worn-out traces of his glorious image; he that has such an unreasonable preposterous faith, I doubt will find himself as much wide of the mark in the affair of his salvation, as he that believes nothing relating to it. Such an unlimited mercy were rather to render us *libertines* than make us free; it were to suppose, that God infinitely pure had purchased and given a liberty to those he was pleased to love and favour, to be as impure and vicious as they thought fit; which is the most notorious contradiction imaginable; since no reasonable man can conceive, that a being of an essence perfectly pure, can delight in perverse polluted creatures, of a nature entirely opposite to his own: yet, after all, we must not pretend a title to the favour of God, from any virtue or purity we are capable of; but having to the utmost we are able performed our duty, we must cast ourselves wholly upon his mercy,

through the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ our Saviour ; for it were a rash presumption to think, that such a creature as man is, were capable of doing or being any thing that could merit from the Deity, who bestows all things upon his indigent creatures, but neither needs, nor can receive any thing from them, but most imperfect praises and adoration ; and those too not flowing from ourselves, but from the influence and inspiration of his blessed spirit in us, who is the author of all our virtue, and by whose power alone it is that we are able to forego any vice. How then can frail man merit of his Creator, who has nothing of his own to bestow upon him ? who with ail his pride and arrogance is likewise so impotent, as not to be able to give himself the life of the poorest insect, nor so much as to retain his expiring breath one moment ; how much less then has he power to assume and lead a virtuous life ? Such a life as makes some approaches toward that of angels ; which nevertheless, not being the result of man's wisdom or ability, can claim no title to merit. If the seed sown produces a plentiful harvest, it is to the sower the praise belongs : and whatsoever virtues spring up in the soul from the divine influence, to the bountiful God alone the honour is due.

Neither vicious nor innocent pleasures that are communicated by the bodily senses, can ever give satisfaction to a rational man, who, by a clearer reason discovering their vanity and insufficiency, will not unprofitably waste his desires and affections upon them. But the pleasures of virtue, which are conveyed to the mind by thought and reflection, come attended with a charming force, which both convinces and ravishes the reason of every wise man with their excellency: so that his soul may freely, without check or restraint, plunge itself into the delightful enjoyment of them.

Though it is impossible to describe all the delusions which wild passions impose upon mankind, the two following may justly be reckoned amongst the greatest; and are indeed the pillars upon which error, vice, and ignorance are erected, and by which they are supported: the one is that man's conceptions of eternity are slight and superficial, as if he had neither share nor concern in it; but his imagination is so filled and loaded with the enjoyments of time, as if it were his own unalterable and inalienable possession. The other no less mischievous delusion is, that man's thoughts and notions of the Deity are low, mean, and unworthy

of that most glorious Being; though his mind is fraught with great and lofty ideas of his own sufficiency and excellence, very unsuitable to so impotent and helpless a creature. Were these two gross mistakes rectified, man would soon grow better acquainted with himself, have a more true and intimate knowledge of God, (in comparison of which all the things we see or can conceive are of no value), and lead a life becoming a reasonable creature.

This day * puts me in mind of the great perplexity and uneasiness I have perceived in many people, occasioned by the superstitious impressions made upon their minds by the tales of weak and ignorant people in their infancy; a time when the tender mind is most apt to receive the impressions of error and vice, as well as those of truth and virtue; and having once received either the one or the other, is likely to retain them as long as it subsists in the body. How charitable a care is it therefore, and how much the duty of every parent (whom it has pleased God to bless with a right understanding) to endeavour to transmit it (with what improvement he can) to his children? and to

* *Childermas-day.*

have at least as much care of them as a gardener has of a nice delicate plant that he values, who diligently shelters and defends it from the pernicious assaults of storms and tempests, and blasting winds, till a milder season and warmer sun puts it out of danger? With no less industry ought a kind parent to guard the tender mind of his child from the no less hurtful notions and superstitious conceits of foolish ignorant people, who, by senseless impertinent tales, begin to plant errors and vice in the innocent soul, even from the cradle; for it is in the nursery, where ignorantly deluded, and deluding wretches, first sow those tares in the child, which it is ten to one whether the grown-up man is afterwards ever able to root out. There every simple creature (if not prevented) will be blotting the yet clear and unspotted soul, and sully- ing of it with false lines, and foul characters; besmearing of it (after their awkward manner) with horrid images of frightful sprites and hobgoblins, and painting upon it a thousand monstrous and terrifying shapes of death, to make their future life miserably wretched. Thus, with a barbarous folly, they create betimes the most abhorring aversion in the mind to that which Providence has ordained unavoidable; and with

a detestable impiety, sow in it the seeds of reluctance and contradiction to the wisdom, will, and unalterable decrees of the Almighty: so that when wiser people come to try their skill, they find the unhappy soul so bedaubed with those odious, hideous figures, that there is little room left for fairer and better impressions. Here is laid the ground work of an erroneous judgment, and wrong understanding: and amongst other mischiefs that have here their beginning, are those very grievous ones, of a timorous and superstitious spirit, apt to give credit to the luckiness or unluckiness of certain days, and to a thousand other ominous whims and conceits; which, as they are the unhappy offspring of weakness and ignorance, so are they the (never enough to be detested) parents of grief and misery to those who are weak and wretched enough to be deluded by them. All these deplorable follies proceed from wrong and unworthy apprehensions of God's providence, in his care of man, and government of the world; for no reasonable creature can ever imagine, that the all-wise God should inspire owls and ravens to hoot out the elegies of dying men: that he should have ordained a fatality in number, inflict punishment without an offence:

and that being one amongst the fatal number at a table, should be a crime (though contrary to no command) not to be expiated but by death! that even spiders and candles should have a foreknowledge of man's destiny: that certain days are unlucky, as if the good and virtuous were not at all times, in all piaces, and in all numbers too, assured of the protection of the infinitely merciful God. These are such horrid conceits, so void of reason, and full of impious folly, that those people can neither have right notions of him, nor truth, nor faith in him, that give credit to them. I might have added amongst the nursery accomplishments, that the passions are generally nourished there as carefully as the child: and it is well if the indulgent mother, as well as others in the family who should have more wit, do not think pride and ambition admirable ingredients in a genteel and virtuous education. Thus folly, like gunpowder, runs in a train from one generation to another, preserved and conveyed by the perpetual tradition of tatling gossips.

Though (as I have formerly said) man (who has no goodness or virtue originally in his own power) can merit nothing from that Being to whom all power belongs, yet

he ought so to live, and so to act, as if the highest pitch of human virtue were scarcely, or (at most) but just sufficient to procure the eternal favour of God; the consequence of which, to those on whom it is bestowed, is no less than eternal felicity.

The affections of the soul of man being incumbered with as many distractions as there are objects to excite and engage them, what measure of proportion (Oh most gracious God!) can the gratitude of so frail and imperfect a creature, bear to the obligations ever flowing upon him from thy unlimited bounty? If every moment of time comes from thee loaded with blessings, what an unaccountable sum must the year produce? And if the blessings of a year surpass our account, how must we be confounded and lost in the reckoning of our whole lives? And should we by the same method, most merciful God! strive to number our sins and offences, we should find it a task equally impossible with that of numbering thy mercies. Accept therefore, I most humbly beseech thee, the imperfect thanks and adoration of my soul, and continually augment its power and capacity, more perfectly to render thee both the one and the other. Accept likewise of

its unfeigned sorrow for all my sins and offences, and continually diminish in it the force of corruption, and all tendency and inclination in it to vice and disobedience. And as thou renewest thy blessings with the year to me and my dear child; so I beg thou wilt be pleased to make us both clean hearts, and to renew also right spirits within us; that we may most gratefully, obediently, and acceptably serve thee all the days of our lives, for Jesus Christ's sake, our gracious Lord and Saviour.

Man's excessive love of the world, and want of love to his and its Creator, is (I may affirm) the cause of nine parts in ten of the vexations and uneasinesses of this life: nor must he depend upon the force of his reason for a remedy, that without assistance is too weak to subdue those fierce and obstinate passions it has to encounter; which though they suffer a small defeat, can immediately levy new recruits, and return to the attack with fresh vigour; whereas reason having no such supplies must needs at length be overcome. Those ever multiplying Hydra's heads are not to be lopped off by so weak an arm; and it were but inconsiderate rashness to attempt the labour of a Hercules, without Hercules' strength;

nor can so difficult a work be successfully undertaken, otherwise than by the help of that divine irresistible power, which is communicated to man by faith,—which is sufficient to make him *more than conqueror*. But of all the mistakes men so constantly make, there are none perhaps more frequent, and (I am sure) more dangerous, than those concerning their faith, which is a treasure they are too apt to flatter themselves they possess; though when it is requisite to make use of it, it is well if they do not find themselves too often deceived. This one instance, I think, is sufficient to demonstrate this matter. No man will walk upon the brink of a precipice, where he is assured that every slip is attended with death: nay, few care to approach even within such a distance where they may stand secure enough; because their fear in that case always represents to them the danger much greater and nearer than it really is. Now, if men believed the eternal displeasure of God to be as great a mischief as the former, they would undoubtedly dread it as much, and as carefully avoid it: but we see many men who think they have faith, or at least would be thought to have it, not only walking continually upon the outwardmost borders of innocence,

but frequently stumbling, and falling far within those of vice, without greatly concerning themselves to prevent such slips for the future. Thus in the former case it is evident, that the firm belief of the danger will not suffer men even to approach it so nearly, as where no danger is; but in the latter their want of faith leads them confidently even where it is impossible for them to escape it. So much can fear in base degenerate man prevail beyond reason! so weak is reason without the strength of faith! Oh, my gracious God! grant me that inestimable treasure, out of which my life may be furnished with all virtues that may render it pleasing in thy sight.

Fancy is a weathercock that turns with every blast of the opinion and applause of the inconstant unthinking world: so that whatsoever point it stands at this moment, the next perhaps it will be hurried to that which is directly opposite: and he that steers his life by this compass, will be sure to make a very uncertain and vexatious voyage; and instead of ever arriving at the haven of tranquillity and enjoyment, he will be forced upon the rocks of delusion and disappointment, where he will be wretchedly entertained with repentance and despair.

Religion is a thing much talked of, but little understood: much pretended to, but very little practised: and the reason why it is so ill practised is, because it is not better understood. Knowledge therefore must precede religion; since it is necessary to be wise, in order to be virtuous. It must be known to whom, and upon what account duty is owing, otherwise it can never be rightly paid: it must therefore be considered that God is the object of all religion, and that the soul is the subject wherein it exists and resides. From the soul it must proceed, and to God it must be directed, as to that Almighty Being whose power alone could create a rational soul, and whose goodness only could move him to make it capable of an eternal felicity; which infinite bounty of God has laid a perpetual obligation upon the soul to a constant love, obedience, and adoration of him; and to an undoubting assurance that the same power and goodness that created man, will for ever preserve and protect him, if he perseveres in the sincere performance of his duty. The body therefore can have no other share in religion, than by its gestures to represent and discover the bent and inclination of the mind; which representations also are but too often false and treacherous, deluding those that behold them into the opinion of

a saint, but truly discovering a notorious hypocrite to God, who sees how distant his intentions are from his pretences. People are as much deceived themselves as they deceive others, who think to use religion as they do their best clothes; only wear it to church on a Sunday, to appear fine, and make a shew, and with them (as soon as they come home) lay it aside carefully, for fear of wearing it out: but religion is good for nothing that is made of such slight stuff as will not endure wearing; which ought to be as constant a covering to the soul as the skin is to the body, not to be divided from it; division being the ruin of both. Nor must it be thought that religion consists only in the bending the knees, (which is a ficing posture of humility) but in the fervent and humble adoration of the soul; nor in the lifting up of the hands and eyes, but in the warmth of the affection. Outward gestures and decent behaviour are things very fit and reasonable, being all that the body can pay; but it is inward sincerity alone can render them both acceptable. Much less does religion consist in dismal looks and sour faces, which only shew that it is very unpalatable to those people that make them: and it seems to me as if they were swallowing something that went grievously against their

stomachs. It is likewise to be considered, that the frequency and fervency of prayer gives it acceptance, not the length of it: that one prayer rightly addressed to God, from a well disposed mind, is more efficacious than ten sermons carelessly heard, and more carelessly practised. But hearing being much an easier duty than praying, (because it can often change into sleeping), is therefore so much preferred to it by a great many people: but if in the end, their profound ignorance will not excuse them, I am sure their stupid obstinacy never will. But there are so many virtues required, in order to praying rightly, that people think perhaps that it would take too much time and pains to acquire them: and they are much in the right, if they think their prayers will be insignificant without them, and that an ill man can never pray well, and to purpose; for the stream will always partake of the fountain: and if the mind (which is the fountain of all our addresses to God) be vicious and impure, the prayers which proceed from it, must needs be sullied with the same pollutions. But, on the contrary, if the mind be once made virtuous, all that proceed from it will be pleasing and accepted. And as to dejected looks, and a sorrowful countenance, they are not at all grace-

ful in religion: which is so far from being a melancholy thing, that it can never appear displeasing, or tiresome to a mind where wisdom and virtue do not first seem troublesome: for wisdom instructing the soul to act reasonably, instructs it likewise to serve and obey God readily and cheerfully: for that which appears reasonable to a wise man, will always appear delightful: and religion is that very same reason and wisdom, whose *ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace**.

The peace of God being what we so often pray for, and earnestly desire, ought (as far as possible) to be understood, in order to be more earnestly coveted, and surely possessed: for that in which it is said to *pass all understanding* †, is in the invaluable advantages and delight with which it is constantly attended; and not that it is so unintelligible a thing, as not possibly to be apprehended by us. Since that which in a great degree we are capable of feeling, we are certainly in some measure capable of understanding, this blessing is prayed for, that we may have the unspeakable comfort of feeling it; and indeed there is no under-

* *Prov.* iii. 17..... † *Philip.* iv. 7.

standing it but by feeling it. But though we may comprehend enough of its value to make it infinitely desirable, yet the utmost extent of it as far surpasses our understanding, as the blessings which precede and follow it; which are the favour of God, and the inconceivable bliss that accompanies the eternal enjoyment of him: therefore I will never cease my endeavours to know as much, nor my petitions to thee my gracious God, to make me feel as much of this blessed peace of thine, a peace which all the power, wealth, and vain glory of this world can never give, as thou of thy infinitely tender mercy shall think fit to bestow on me. It is natural that the word *peace* should put us in mind of its contrary, *war*; since peace arises from the conclusion of war, and from the cessation of strife and combat: and that there is a contest between reason and passion, wisdom and folly, virtue and vice, in the soul of man, is too evident to need a proof. And it is as plain that there is trouble and disorder wheresoever there is strife and contention: so that the agitated mind must needs be perplexed and restless as long as this intestine war continues, and till there be a complete victory gained on one side or other. If vice and passion absolutely prevail, the contest

indeed will be at an end, but it will be a wretched one; and such a peace will only ensue as will suffer those outrageous enemies to tyrannize without opposition or controul; a peace fatal to the soul, that debars it from any future hopes of liberty or happiness. But if it pleases the all-merciful, as well as the all-powerful God, to succour man's weak reason and virtue engaged in this doubtful and dangerous conflict, and so to illuminate the one and strengthen the other, as to give them an entire victory; then he crowns the transported soul with his divine peace, the joy and comfort of which as much surpasses all expression, as the infinite benefit and blessing of it surpasses all understanding; which peace, most gracious God! grant evermore I beseech thee to thy poor unworthy servant, for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

Imperfection is an argument that there is such a thing as perfection; and the experience of so many things imperfect, plainly leads us to a certainty of others that are perfect: for one contrary is an argument of another opposite to it, as cold of heat, darkness of light, death of life, and so of innumerable others: the first of all these being the privation of the latter, are therefore

evident demonstrations of them. The world is a prodigious heap of imperfection, if it could be conceived to be independent, and bearing no relation to any thing but itself; and man the most unfinished and imperfect of all its animals; who seems to have a capacity only of aiming at, and pretending to power and wisdom, without any ability of attaining to either; whose greatest advantage is from his own manifest insufficiency and imperfection, to raise to himself a most convincing argument of the union of all those virtues and perfections in the deity, of which he possesses himself little more than confused notions and faint conceptions: and thus from his own clouds and darkness he may reason himself into an assurance of the existence of that blessed and unclouded light. Since man therefore finds in himself such a deficiency of power and wisdom, he must needs perceive how unfit and unable he is to be his own governor; being assaulted from without by unhappy accidents, which he cannot prevent, and within by vexations and perturbations of mind, which he is not able to redress: and, in consequence, that his corrupted will and depraved affections have much less any title to be his rulers. Why then does he not betake himself to consider what is the will

and pleasure of that transcendant being, whom superior power and excellence, by an unquestionable right, have constituted his lord and governor, bending the utmost of his endeavours, and dedicating his whole life to the fulfilling and performance of them: as by thy grace and mercy, most holy God! (which I, in all humility, implore of thee) I fully purpose and design to do.

The great preference I see frequently given to sermons above prayer, makes me desirous to consider that matter, in order to a true discovery to which of them the preference is justly due, and what the real value of each of them is. Sermons serve for these two purposes; to teach their duty to those who are ignorant of it, and to put those in mind of their duty who are neglectful of it; shewing the first sort how to perform it, and persuading the latter effectually to do it: in both which things sermons contribute no otherwise to salvation, than he that shews a traveller his right way, and advises him to keep in it, contributes to the bringing of him to his journey's end: for if the traveller shall rest satisfied in the bare advice and instruction he has received and proceeds no further, he is never likely to reach the place he first design,

ed to go to; since it is not to be supposed, that he who directs him is to carry him thither on his back. It is just the same case in hearing of sermons. The minister's business is no more than to teach him how to be saved; their own piety and virtue must carry them to heaven. This is the use of sermons, and a very great and necessary one it is; and yet a man may be condemned notwithstanding all the good instructions that enter in at his ears, unless they make a right impression on his heart; but it cannot be imagined, that the same thing should serve for all purposes. The ears are made for one use, and the heart for another: the one being the conduit of instruction, but the other the seat of wisdom. So the mouth is very useful to the body in receiving food for it, but it is the stomach that must digest and prepare it for strength and nourishment. Thus it appearing what the use of sermons is, that of prayer is to be considered. And first it must be known, that the affections of the soul have something that corresponds and sympathizes with them in the body, by which they usually discover themselves, as grief in the soul appears by the weeping of the eyes, and joy displays itself in a gay and cheerful countenance. And so in our several duties

to God, according as the soul is affected, from the same causes it will certainly make the same outward discoveries. If it be oppressed with trouble, or has a lively sense of its wants and imperfections, it will oblige the tongue to utter them, seeking redress in humble petitions. If it abounds with gratitude, the lips will not be able to refrain their thanks; nor to withhold their praises and adorations, when the soul is inflamed with love. Thus prayer is the language of the soul, whereby it expresses its several conditions and affections to the Almighty God, between whom and it by this means, a constant correspondence is held. By prayer the soul explains and unfolds itself to God, and by its virtue draws down continual benefits and blessings from heaven, asking being made the condition of receiving. And it is a folly for any one to expect favours that he will not take the pains to ask for. And thus the advantages of those two different, but both necessary duties, are discovered. Sermons hold the light for the direction of prayer; the former being the instruments of instruction, the latter the instrument of salvation. Nay I might add, that were all people as wise and as virtuous as they ought to be, and could continue so

there would be no need at all of sermons ; since there would be no occasion either for teaching or persuading : the first relating only to the ignorant, and the latter to the obstinate and vicious : so that as folly, weakness, and vice alone have made sermons necessary, nothing but such a perfection in wisdom and virtue, as the frailty of human nature will hardly admit of, can ever render them useless. But the obligation to prayer is that which nothing can ever cancel or discharge : for the more perfect wisdom and virtue grow, the more vehement and incessant will they render prayer ; which can never cease as long as there remains any spark of the love of God in the soul, or any sense of his bounty and benefits. Could prayer have an end, the pleasure of the soul must end with it : since the smothering of strong affections causes as great uneasiness in the mind, as the venting of them gives relief, and consequently delight : wherefore, so long as there is love in the soul it will be taking pleasure in declaring it : and so long as there is gratitude, it will delight in expressing it : and whilst it continues virtuous and happy, it must have these affections : therefore prayer must be as eternal as itself.

All virtue is copying and imitation; every wise man knowing full well that his own virtue is no original, but a faint and imperfect copy only of the divine perfections. It is plain that whosoever would gain the affection of others, must form his humour to the model of theirs, or otherwise he can never hope to be successful; since likeness and agreeableness of humours is that which creates mutual friendship and affection. And the same method must be observed towards God, whose favour must be deserved by resemblance; and whose image must be drawn upon the soul before he will place his love upon it. And I know not whether this will not be the main question at the day of judgment, *Whose image and superscription does he bear**? which will be the mark that will discover to whom every soul belongs, according to which they will be disposed of: so that it will not be by a demure and sanctified look, but by a virtuous and sanctified soul, that every one must be acquitted. *Be ye perfect as God is perfect* †, being the entire sum and substance of religion. †

How pride can so far intoxicate men's understandings, as to make them really

* *Luke xx. 24.....* † *Matt. v. 48.*

think themselves exalted by riches or honour above other men, and, in the vanity of their hearts, to look down with contempt upon their supposed inferiors, is prodigious, as usual as it is. Certainly it cannot be imagined that the richer clothes create the nobler heart, or the choicer meats the more honourable blood; though with all the senseless boasting of noble blood, it is the quails and woodcocks, and other dainties, that give it all the pre-eminence it has above that which is bred by coarser diet; with gouts and scurvies, and other honourable attendant diseases, into the bargain.

Every body that wishes me well, seeing I have built a convenient and pleasant house, to shew their kindness, are apt to wish that I may live long to enjoy it; which I take very kindly of them, since I know their wishes are correspondent to their own natural desires; though at the same time I perceive, that their notions of life and happiness, and mine are very different; for I cannot think this life worth desiring barely upon the account of pleasure, and should be ashamed to put up so unworthy a petition to the all-wise God, as to prolong my life for no other end, than for the short and insignificant enjoyments that attend it; as

if there were no expectation of a more complete and perfect happiness, than what we enjoy in this world: and as if the flesh and blood our souls are invested with, were the only vehicles of pleasure, and in consequence the Almighty Creator had made creatures to be more happy than himself, and those innumerable companies of blessed spirits that rejoice in the beams of his glory. God is infinitely gracious to man, in indulging him in the innocent gratifications of his appetites, and in supplying his wants whilst he continues him in this world: but that is a very wrong reason why a man should desire that he may never go out of it. He ought to consider that his conveniences are suited to the necessities of this life, and are no longer useful than that lasts, and it were unreasonable to expect that this life should be lengthened and proportioned to his conveniences. As long as we live in this world a house is necessary; but it is not necessary to live because we have a house. And so long as cold weather lasts, a cloak is necessary; but no body would wish the continuance of ill weather, because he had a cloak. Alas! this life we are so fond of here, is but the dawning to life; and we must be conducted through that gloomy, but short passage of death, into

the bright and perfect day of it, that shall be eternally enlightened by the amazing splendor of the divine glories in heaven. It is immortality that makes life a ravishing and desirable blessing; without which it would be but an unprofitable and burdensome trifle, preserved with anxiety, and quitted with terror. And how great a weakness of faith must we discover, when we are capable of preferring a bawble of a house before the eternal enjoyment of the Almighty God; who will first enlarge all the capacities of the soul to love, desire, resemble, and adore him; and then abundantly replenish it with suitable gratifications. There the soul languishing and thirsting after wisdom and truth, will have free access to the blessed and eternal fountain of them, to satiate itself with boundless draughts of delight: there it may ever gratify, ever satisfy its unmeasurable desires, without ever extinguishing them. For the pleasures of the soul are quite different from those of sense, which are destroyed by fruition: as they must needs be, since pleasure, which has its entire existence in desire, must necessarily increase and abate, live and perish with it. But though I say, that pleasure has its existence in desire, yet desire is so far from being productive of

pleasure that it always creates pain and uneasiness, so long as the desire remains wholly unsatisfied: for though nothing pleases us but what we like and desire, yet we must have some sort of enjoyment of what we like, before it can give us pleasure: and for this reason the *hungering and thirsting after righteousness**, is very different from the hungering and thirsting after meat and drink. The thirsting of David's soul after *the living God*, was likewise very different from that of *the hart after the water brooks†*, though the allusion is exceeding lively and elegant. For none ever thirst after God and righteousness, but those who in some measure already enjoy the one and possess the other. And from the knowledge of the pleasure arising from that lesser degree of enjoyment and possession, they are still desiring and thirsting after a greater: happy notwithstanding in what they possess and enjoy, and ravished with the assured expectation of a more full and complete felicity; full in its abundance, and complete in its duration: whereas in the natural hunger and thirst of the body, it is pain and want that creates the desire, and pleasure proceeds only from the ceasing of

* *Matt. v. 6.....† Psal. xlii. 1, 2.*

the pain, and relieving of the want; which makes it differ extremely from the other cases, where the want of enjoyment is continually relieving, and the present supplies which God affords to the eager desire at once gratify and inflame it. There are but two things, that (were they not both limited by my entire resignation to the will of my God) would make me desirous of life: the one for my own advantage, the other for my dear child's. And I most humbly implore of thee, my ever gracious Lord! to grant me for myself, to live till thou hast so far perfected my faith, love, obedience, and sorrow for having ever offended thee, that I may be received into thy everlasting favour; which I have confidence through thy infinite mercy, and through the mediation of thy blessed son Jesus Christ, that thou wilt grant me, and not suffer thy poor servant to perish for ever. And for my dear child, I humbly commit both her and myself to thy protection; and beg, that thou wilt graciously be pleased to bless her with a continued innocence and purity of life: bestowing upon her plentifully of thy grace and wisdom, and making her thy accepted servant, to trust in thee, to love thee, and to obey thee faithfully all the days of her life, that thou mayest give her eternal bliss

in thy heavenly kingdom. And for her instruction in virtue, my tenderness inclines me to wish to live to see her confirmed in it. For I must confess, that in all the conflicts I have with aversion to death, and love of the world, (considering her youth and scarcity of friends) they always find that the weakest and worst guarded part to assault me in. But I most humbly resign both her and myself to the determination of thy divine will; which I beg may always be done; and that thou wilt ever make mine most joyfully conformable to it: in full confidence that thou wilt answer my humble petition (to make my dear child a virtuous woman, zealously mindful evermore to perform her duty to thee) by such ways and methods as thou in thy infinite wisdom and mercy shall think fit.

Where there is not a strong faith, there can be no love: where there is no love, there can be no desire: where there is no desire, there is no notion or conception of beauty; and where there is no notion or conception of beauty, there can be no delight: and, in consequence, there is no beauty in that holiness which is not supported by faith, and pursued with delight. O grant me, my most adorable God! ever-

more to serve thee *in the beauty of holiness**; and give me all those graces and virtues that are necessary for so glorious, so sublime a performance.

So teach me, great God! *to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom*†. This is an arithmetic truly worth learning; most of our errors being committed for want of a right calculation of time and eternity: for want of computing how much we have to do in the one, and how long to continue in the other, how unspeakable the concern! how short and uncertain the preparation! display, good Lord! I beseech thee, to my understanding the inestimable treasures of thy truth, which are those alone of which I am ambitious: the knowledge of thy truth being that invaluable pearl of wisdom which I am most desirous to purchase at any rate. Instruct me in all my addresses to thee, and dictate all my petitions; grant that they may always be for those things that may fit me to please thee, and not for such as may be the fittest to please myself; and for an accumulation of blessing, so influence my soul with thy divine spirit, that thy will may ever be my pleasure.

* *Psal.* xcvi. 9.....† *Psal.* xc. 12,

Every man, when he perceives the near approach of death, finds it reasonable to betake himself to hearty prayer for the mercy and favour of God. And can any one be so intuated, as to think it fit to pass his whole life in an entire ignorance and neglect of that Almighty Being, to whom at last he will be obliged to resort, as to his only refuge and support? But so much, alas! does base fear in poor man prevail above reason, so much a stronger influence has the terror of almighty power over man's degenerate spirit, than the charming allurements of infinite bounty and goodness.

How faint are the impressions that truth usually make upon the mind of man? Not for want of force in the one, but through the obdurateness of the other. What an unhappy skill has vice and folly, in forging of such wretchedly hardened armour for the soul, that will not suffer it to be penetrated by truth, though never so sharp and piercing? A miserable defence against an instrument that is never employed to wound, but to cure; but a treacherous shield that never opposes those cruel weapons, which give not only wounds, but death.

If men's passions make their lives uncomfortable, and are hardly to be endured for so short a space, how can they be borne withal, when they shall become eternal? For I take it for granted, that one mighty torment hereafter will be an excessive heightening and enlarging of all the passions, with an utter depriving them of any prospect of gratification. But on the other side, if the love of wisdom and virtue be so sweet and delightful to the soul in this its imperfect state, what floods and torrents of joy will be poured in upon it when all its affections shall be boundlessly and eternally enlarged for their reception? as doubtless they will be, to the inconceivable bliss of those most happy souls who shall be received into the everlasting favour of the Almighty. And that I and my dear child may be of that blessed number, grant my most merciful God! I humbly beseech thee, for the sake of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

Honesty is like a strong perfume; one little grain of it suffices to enrich a great mass, that had neither scent nor value before. How little honesty is there in the world? and yet what numbers of men that by some one or other are termed *honest*? A

small proportion of this noble (though unfashionable virtue) is sufficient to gain the vulgar esteem; though the most of it that one who truly endeavours to be an honest man, can make himself master of, will scarce give him a tolerable opinion of himself: for here it is requisite that his desires should enlarge themselves beyond what he possesses, or else a very moderate degree of it, will make him sit down contented. Some men are satisfied, if they can but shelter themselves from ignominy under the shadow of it; and others, if they have but enough of it to procure them a pretty good reputation, have as much as they desire; and I am sure (if the esteem of unthinking people were of any value) much more than they deserve, since that is all they aim at. Thus the first betake themselves to honesty, as they would to a spreading tree in a storm, only for shelter and protection; the latter make use of it as they who want true ones do of false jewels, to amuse the world with their counterfeit lustre, and deceitfully to procure themselves that respect to which they had no just title. What worth then must there be in the thing itself, whose appearances only can give protection, and confer esteem? But as honesty deserves diligently to be sought after,

so it is most-difficult to be acquired, being (as I may say) an elixir extracted from all the virtues, and is never right when any one of them is wanting in its composition. For it is not enough to be honest only so long as a man may be honest without disadvantage; but he ought to be so at the peril of all he is worth: nor is it sufficient to be honest only so long as a man may be honest with safety; but he ought to preserve his integrity at the expense of his life. He that designs to be a real honest man, must think that the most honourable character he can possibly aspire to, and must have the least falshood or injustice in as great a detestation as murder or blasphemy: So far must he be from doing wilfully a dishonest action, that his soul must abhor a dishonest thought. In short, he ought to be unmoveable and unshaken; neither to be deterred by fear nor allured by advantage, but to be proof against all temptations; and to value his sincerity equal to the favour of his God, believing that he shall undoubtedly forfeit the one, whenever he foregoes the other.

Wisdom, which is sometimes called *holiness*, sometimes *righteousness*, is that vital principle, whose separation is as fatal

to the soul, as the separation of that is to the body. It is that lamp of faith which enlightens it, and introduces it to those astonishing beauties, and amazing glories of the divine perfections, which irresistibly inflame it with love and desire. A love whose pure fire purges the soul from dross and impurity! a love that utters peace and pardon to it! that vanquishes sin, and triumphs over temptation. Great God! I beseech thee, cleanse and enlarge all the clogged and narrow passages of my soul, that thy glories may rush in, and perpetually feed it with this divine flame, constantly to ascend with an uncontrollable motion in praises and adorations to thy heavenly throne.

I make no doubt but many people would be apt to judge, by my way of living, and by what I write, that my thoughts and life were the effects of a dismal melancholy; which is a great mistake: for (I thank God!) they are both of them the effect of his infinite goodness, as they are the cause of a far more serene and pleasant life than ever I led under the conduct of folly and passion. My vicious inclinations made me but too well acquainted with the pleasures that most men are so fond of; nor did I

naturally want pride and ambition sufficient to have pushed me to the utmost extravagance of endeavouring to procure riches and honour: but, my gracious God, whom I can never enough love and adore, for his invaluable mercies to me, has clearly discovered to my reason, the wretched folly of such pursuits, and has so far strengthened it, as not to suffer it to be overpowered and dazzled with such childish and gaudy vanities: so that my contempt of the world, and its advantages, is not for want of knowing the value of them, but it is that very knowledge which makes me despise them. It is natural amongst men—that are ignorant of what it is that dictates and governs their own thoughts, and those of others, to wonder at any body whose judgment and opinion differs from their own; not considering that the same diversity of judgment and opinion, causes the same astonishment on the other side: but that wonder ceases when a man, by reason and reflection, is led to an insight of that common nature, wherein he shares with the rest of mankind; for then he readily discovers the sources and causes of all their severally different opinions, and the various conceptions arising from each passion, as far as the windings of such an intricate labyrinth are

capable of being traced. No wise man therefore will wonder even at the folly of another; because I take it for granted, that the wisest of men (now a-days) have found difficulty enough to overcome their own, and to restrain their still natural propensity to it; which will incline them not only to be thankful to that infinite wisdom, which has so graciously communicated itself to them, but to be very compassionate of the weaknesses and follies of other men, and heartily to wish and pray for their relief: whereas a presumptuous inconsiderate fool has no mercy for those that have different sentiments from his own; which is the cause of so much blind zeal, and so many barbarous persecutions as have been in the world: men in power and authority being unreasonably bent to model the opinions of others exactly to their own, without considering or caring whether they be right or wrong; and without imagining that they have any dependence upon any being greater or wiser than themselves.

It would seem strange perhaps should I say, that it is a sin to be miserable, and that it is a sin not to be happy: but yet, when narrowly examined, I believe it will

appear to be no stranger than true: for the effect must needs partake of the cause, and misery must therefore be undoubtedly sinful; because it is acknowledged to be the offspring of sin. But there are two sorts of miseries incident to mankind, the one not to be avoided, and therefore to be pitied; the other to be remedied, and therefore inexcusable. The former sort are such as are occasioned by bodily indispositions; the latter are the diseases of a vicious mind. To the miseries of a distempered body we are enslaved by nature: to those of a distempered mind we voluntarily submit. In the first case we want power to break our chain; but in the latter we want will to obtain our freedom. I think it cannot be denied, that it is a sin to be miserable through the vice of the mind; since it is apparent, that those miseries generally proceed either from desiring things vicious or impossible, or from fearing and dreading things natural or unavoidable; in all which we are guilty of disobeying or repining at the will of God, to which we ought cheerfully, and in all humility to submit: for by desiring things vicious we discover our disobedience; by desiring things impossible we demonstrate our impiety; and by dreading things natural and unavoidable, we betray our infidel-

ity. Thus it being proved, that it is a sin to be miserable, it will follow of an undeniable consequence, that it is a sin not to be happy. It is evident that true happiness consists in such a peaceful tranquillity and contentment of mind, as is neither to be ruffled by fear, nor discomposed by desire. And it is as certain, that such a blessed temper can never be obtained without faith, love, obedience, and submission (in their several relations to God), and all of them to a great perfection. Now happiness resulting from the union of these virtues, and the want of any one of them being sinful, it must be granted, that it is a sin not to be happy.

Whosoever thinks himself wise enough, or virtuous enough, is in a fair way never to be either. He that engages in those difficult paths, must keep in perpetual motion: there is no stopping without losing ground. He must consider, that if his undertaking be glorious, it is also laborious; that he has a strong tide to stem; which, if he does not still keep resolutely advancing, will inevitably bear him down the stream. The current of passion is fierce and rapid, not to be resisted by feeble reason, and wavering resolution. But if the difficulties to

be overcome be great, the prize to be obtained exceeds all value: he therefore whose noble ambition pushes him to the pursuit of wisdom and virtue, must not be discouraged at their amazing height: nor must he think to rest upon the steep ascent of those aspiring mountains, who hide their lofty tops in heaven; whither we must climb before we can reach them, securely to sit down and enjoy eternal happiness and repose.

It fares with a feeble mind, too weak to resist the powerful assaults made upon it by the cares and necessities of life, as it does with the poor bee in a windy day, who, spying the flowers which afford honey, makes eager attempts to settle upon them; but the impetuous storm drives it away, and often obliges it to rest upon some tasteless plant, from whence it can extract nothing that is useful, nothing that is sweet. And in the same manner the inconstant mind, not sufficiently upheld by wisdom and virtue, is apt to be hurried from the objects of its pleasure and happiness, and forced to fix upon such as (not only) yield it neither, but upon such as envenom it with anxiety and disquiet.

Either we owe no obedience to God Almighty, or else we owe the most exact one that it is possible for us to pay him: for if any duty belongs to him, it must necessarily be the most perfect one that the utmost capacity of our nature can enable us to perform, even as perfect as an indigent creature is capable of expressing to his bountiful Creator.

By the grace of God, justice and equity shall be the pillars I will make use of to support my fortune in the world, and not favour and interest; and when those are too weak to uphold it, let it take its chance; and I hope I should be able to take the same course, if my life were under the same circumstances: for I had much rather lose my right or my life by another man's injustice, than obtain the one, or preserve the other, by any base pursuit, or unworthy application of my own: nor shall I ever value, or seek for any favour, but that of my God, to whom he that has grace enough to commit himself, may with security commit his fortune; and whom I humbly beg to dispose both of me and of mine, perfectly according to his own pleasure; and that he will always vouchsafe to support my faith, whatever else he shall permit to fail me.

Faith, that fruitful parent of all other graces, can never be too carefully cultivated and improved. It is the source of pleasure, the lamp of wisdom, and the soul of virtue! it is that mysterious ladder by which the soul ascends to heaven, and heaven descends to it; by which a joyful correspondence is continually held between it and its Creator. Faith is that celestial flame that purifies the soul from dross and pollution: and opens in it a new and glorious scene, gilded with the ineffable brightness of the Deity, adorned with the inconceivable delights of a blissful eternity, and enriched with ravishing hopes, pure desires, love divine, and joy unutterable.

No man can truly be termed *an honest man*, who is capable of being moved by any temptation whatsoever to be dishonest: for though there were but one temptation in the world that had power to work that effect, yet he still lies under the possibility of being a bad man; and the best that can be said of him is, that he is more honest than thousands of others; and has but that one unhappy exception to his being a perfectly upright and virtuous man. A citadel may be called strong, in comparison of a weaker, because it can hold out a longer siege; but if any force be able to make it

surrender, it can not be called *impregnable*, neither can the soul of man be positively termed *virtuous*, till it is so fortified as to become impregnable against all manner of vice.

Virtue and vice are words better known in the world by their sound, than by their true meaning; men taking the liberty to give such an interpretation of them, as is most suitable to their own fancy and inclination. But he that thinks it necessary to lead a virtuous life, and designs to apply himself heartily to the doing of it, must come to a better and righter understanding of what the things are that are really meant by those words. I take it, that virtue consists in acting conformably to the divine attributes and perfections of God; and vice in acting in opposition and contradiction to those perfections, which is very properly called *sinning against God*, as not only offending against his commands, but against his very essence. For as acting falsely and deceitfully, oppressively and unjustly, cruelly and maliciously, covetously or impurely, is acting viciously, because plainly against the attributes of truth, justice, mercy, bounty, and purity in God: so acting faithfully and sincerely, generously and justly, kindly and mercifully, charitably and tem-

perately, is acting virtuously, because in conformity to those several divine attributes. And as every reasonable man must conceive the deity to be the exact model of perfection, so he must necessarily contemplate him as the model for his most exact imitation.

Strife and contest are evidences of difference and contrariety; and difference and contrariety demonstrate clearly a plurality of principles: for where there is unity there is no contradiction: all contest must (at least) be between two. Fire being of an uncompounded nature, has no variance in itself, but an addition of water to it, causes strife, and plainly discovers the diversity of elements. Thus man, were he a simple uncompounded principle, would never find any strife or contradiction in himself, any more than there is in other animals, in whom no such thing can be perceived; but being compounded of the two very different principles of soul and body, he is sensible of continual disputes and contradictions in himself, which I think is a very sufficient demonstration of the existence of those two different principles of soul and body in his composition. Nay, farther, there is a possibility of the one's being pleased whilst the other grieves, of the one's being delighted

whilst the other feels pain; as has been evident in men that have chosen to suffer punishment rather than do a vicious unjustifiable action. And though it is sufficiently known, that the body abhors pain and dissolution, yet there have been those who have rejoiced in flames, and delighted in death; which is a manifest triumph of the soul over the body, and shews it to be, not only a different, but a far more excellent principle than the other.

I have formerly had it in my thoughts that imperfection is an undeniable argument of perfection, which I find confirmed by this further reflection, That whatsoever is imperfect has some degrees of perfection in it; as a part has some portion of the whole, and is an argument of a whole. If then that which is imperfect has some degrees of perfection, (as must be acknowledged), then it is plain, that there is such a thing as perfection: since it is impossible that there should be any degrees of a thing which is not. The next inquiry must be, where this perfection is lodged? It is evident not in the insensible, nor yet in the brutish part of the creation; nor yet in man, to whom his little portion of reason must clearly evidence that it is not in him; though it as clearly discovers, that imper-

fection is in him : where then shall we seek it, or expect to find it, but in thee, O, infinitely perfect, all-wise, all-mighty, all-glorious, and all-bountiful God ! whom my soul most humbly adores, and begs of thee this inestimable blessing, that thou wilt enable it most fervently, sincerely, uninterruptedly, and acceptably, to love, serve, and adore thee from this moment to all eternity, for Jesus Christ's sake, thy blessed Son, my most merciful Redeemer ; to whom with thee, and the Holy Spirit, the one great God, be evermore attributed all honor, power, praise, majesty, and perfection.

We can assign an end for the creation of all beasts, fowls, fishes, trees, and plants, and even the sun, moon, and stars ; namely, for the use, support, and convenience of man. And can it be imagined, that man was made for no other end than to consume and devour the rest of the creation ? and that he himself is a useless, worthless, insignificant thing, though lord and master of the whole earth ? Great God ! that thou whose power, wisdom, and glory shine so bright in all thy works, shouldst yet remain almost undiscovered to thy creature man ; on whom thou hast bestowed a rational soul, on purpose to enable him to arrive at the felicity of knowing, loving,

obeying, and adoring thee, which grant that I may perform accordingly, and account those duties the highest excellencies and advantages of my being, and enjoy the blessing of them to all eternity.

Upon whatsoever foundation happiness is built, when that foundation fails, happiness must be destroyed; for which reason it is wisdom to choose such a foundation for it as is not liable to destructive accidents. If happiness be founded upon riches, it lies at the mercy of theft, deceit, oppression, war, and tyranny; if upon fine houses and costly furniture, one spark of fire is able to consume it; if upon wife, children, friends, health, or life, a thousand diseases, and ten thousand fatal accidents, have power to destroy it: but if it be founded upon the infinite bounty and goodness of God, and upon those virtues that entitle to his favour, its foundation is unmoveable, and its duration eternal.

Could I ever sufficiently value the worth and benefit of that noble virtue *faith*, I might be induced to think I had already mentioned it often enough; but every degree of advancement in the knowledge of it, discovers such infinite beauties and ex-

cellencies, that were I to live a thousand years, and were able to employ my whole time in meditating upon this one incomparable virtue alone, I must of necessity leave much more unthought and unadmired concerning it, than my mind (by such slow progresses as it is now capable of making towards wisdom and knowledge) could possibly in that space of time comprehend of it. This to many people might seem a studied encomium, rather than an urgent truth: but, alas! I do not desire to amuse myself with such trifling conceits. Truth is the thing I labour after; and I hope that the great Being who is environed with the bright glories of it, will vouchsafe the shade of its pure enlightening rays upon my soul, darkened and clouded with sin and ignorance. I may say (if this expression will be allowed), that there is as great a variety of climates in the mind of man, as there is in the globe of the earth; the one occasioned by the nearness or distance of faith, as the other is by the vicinity or remoteness of the sun; the first shedding the same happy influences upon the soul, as the latter does upon the world. They who by a near approach bask in the beams of that illustrious virtue, like the happy inhabitants of Spain and Italy, enjoy the serenity and delights of so fortunate a situation, ever gratified

with the rich and delicious fruits, which are the natural product of it: while those who by an unhappy separation are divided from it, and have but rarely the benefit even of its short, remote, and imperfect giances, may be compared to the wretched natives of Lapland and Norway, doomed and confined to uncomfortable regions, abounding only in ice and storms, barrenness and obscurity.

Virtue requires the utmost force, application, and exercise of the mind, both in order to its acquisition and preservation. True notions and right ideas are not to be acquired without our utmost labour and industry, nor to be preserved without unwearied thought and diligence; and yet it is absolutely requisite to have both true notions and right ideas of things: without which we must inevitably make a thousand mistakes in the disposal of our affections and aversions, fatal to our present tranquillity and future happiness. For we cannot forbear to love and hate, according to the ideas we have of things; and if those deceive us, we shall love where we should hate, and hate where we should love. From which cause it is that so many prefer folly and vice to wisdom and virtue: they are deceived by the false ideas and conceptions formed in the mind of the one and the

other. How much then ought we to love, and how diligently to seek after truth? which is the original of all our happiness, as falsehood is of all our misery. It is faith, it is truth, that is the only unerring light that can guide and conduct the soul to present peace, and eternal felicity; and it is doubt and falsehood that endeavour to seduce it from both. But after all when we are happy enough to have obtained right ideas, and imprinted them upon the soul, we have then done but half our work; the other no less difficult part is, to preserve them bright and entire; and, by continual reflection and meditation, to renew those impressions they have made there: for as these decay, our affections will grow languid towards their objects, as well as our aversions towards theirs, till at last, by a long neglect (if we should be so wretchedly careless), virtue and vice will grow indifferent to us; and that indifference in the end will naturally conclude in the preference of vice and rejection of virtue; than which there is but one greater curse attending upon folly, and that is, the soul's eternal confinement to it, even after the discovery of its misery and deformity.

*Scorn the world, abandon folly,
Purchase faith, that glorious treasure!
Faith is wisdom, wisdom virtue,
Virtue faith, and faith is pleasure.*

I make no doubt but many think a contemplative life, an idle life: but those who are of that opinion know better what belongs to the labour of the hands, than to that of the mind; to the force of the body, than to the vigour of the soul. That body may be able to bear a great burden, which would find itself too weak to support the violent impulses of an active mind, and would sooner languish, tire, and grow lean with this exercise, than with the other. That metal would resist the weaker assaults of a common fire, which would be immediately forced to yield and dissolve by the subtle and impetuous flames of the piercing lightning. The thinnest bodies make the most quick and violent impressions; a rapid stream will do that which a cannon ball can not effect; and the furious rage of a tempest surpasses the force of water; though the yet thinner body of fire is less to be resisted than both the former. If then the most solid bodies are not able to oppose the efforts of those that are more thin and pure, how unequal a match is flesh and blood to the violent concussions of an active spirit?

This day I have lived 42 years, being born in the year 1661. And I humbly thank my most gracious God, for having given me life, and that he did not destroy it whilst it was miserably clogged with sin and folly. I humbly adore thy glorious majesty for having given me a capacity of loving, obeying, and contemplating thee; and consequently of happiness eternal in the adoration of thee. Give me, I implore thee, a power to exercise that capacity in the most perfect manner that thy infinite bounty shall excite thee to enable thy unworthy creature to do it; and grant, that the remainder of my life may be spent in the exactest performance of every part of my duty to these, for Jesus Christ's sake.

In any adversity that happens to us in this world, we ought to consider, that misery and affliction are not less natural than snow and hail, storm and tempest: and it were as reasonable to hope for a year without winter, as for a life without trouble. Life (how sweet soever it seems) is a draught mingled with bitter ingredients; some drink deeper than others before they come at them: but if they do not swim at the top for youth to taste them, it is ten to one but old age will find them thick in the bottom. And it is the employment of faith

and patience, and the work of wisdom and virtue, to teach us to drink the sweet part down with pleasure and thankfulness, and to swallow the bitter without making faces.

He that has pleasure in himself, is pleased with every thing; and he that wants that pleasure, is pleased with nothing: but to think reasonably, and act reasonably, will give a man pleasure in himself; therefore to think and act reasonably, is the sure way to be happy. To illustrate this argument, it is necessary to consider, that the pleasure of a fool flows from things without himself; whereas the pleasure of a wise man springs up within himself: the former arises from the bodily senses, the latter from the understanding; the one is the pleasure of the body, the other of the soul. Now it is evident, that the body has not at all times power to communicate its pleasures to the soul (no! not even to the soul of the most vicious fool), which makes its pleasure very imperfect, since they extend but to one half of the man: but the pleasures of the soul never fail to communicate themselves to the body, and by that communication are rendered as perfect as our being is capable of; because they become the pleasures of the whole man. To give an instance of this: when envy, anger, grief, or any other

passion, disturbs the mind, all the gratifications that can enter by the senses of the body are not able to give it pleasure, nor is the man (under these disturbances of mind) capable of being happy. But when the mind is freed from all perplexing and disquieting passions, and is at liberty both to think and to act reasonably, without any opposition from the body, such a happy disposition of the soul necessarily diffuses and communicates itself to the body, and gives pleasure to the whole entire man: and under this pleasing temper of mind, whatsoever portion of pleasure the body is capable of contributing will considerably raise and increase the stock of happiness, which was before great enough not to stand in need of any addition: so that our main care must be, not to abandon bodily pleasures that are innocent, and consistent with wisdom and virtue, since they are capable of contributing to our happiness, but to avoid laying in too lavishly such stores of them as may oppress and stifle that supreme reasonable pleasure of the mind (that flame kindled by wisdom, and maintained by virtue), without which it is impossible to enjoy any tolerable or lasting measure of happiness.

Doubts and uncertainty are the most general roots of all human misery and discon-

tent, in virtuous as well as vicious men. The vicious man seldom fails to doubt, that by following his inclinations he shall destroy his happiness; and the virtuous man will be sometimes too apt to doubt, that he has in vain *washed his hands in innocence*, and that by renouncing his inclinations, he has abandoned his happiness. But we must take care not to permit ourselves to think that we are out of the way, because we walk out of the road of the generality of the world; on the contrary, we may rest assured, that the narrow path is the right way, where we find the least company.

So long as virtue does not appear lovely to a man, it is in vain for him to imagine that he can love God; since it is impossible to love the author of injunction, whilst the duty enjoined is repugnant and distasteful to us. Did ever a slothful servant cordially love his master? or did ever a faithful diligent one (who was convinced of the reasonableness of all his master's commands) hate him? No! where duty and reason are perfectly reconciled, affection will instantly unite itself to them; and then obedience will become not only an easy, but a delightful task.

Grief and discontent have generally their foundation in desire : so that whosoever can obtain the sovereignty over his desire, will be master of his happiness. On the other hand, all such desires as occasion grief and discontent are founded upon weakness or ignorance ; so that we must gain the possession of their contrary qualities (which are wisdom and constancy) before we can ever hope to be masters of our desires. The two chief heads to which all human griefs and discontents may be reduced (bodily pains and indispositions excepted) are these....either we desire to have what we cannot possess, or else we desire to be freed from what we cannot get quit of. And it appears plainly, that both these sort of desires are founded upon weakness and ignorance ; being founded upon impossibilities, which it must be either weakness or ignorance to languish after : for if the things we desire are in our own power, there is no cause of grief ; and if they are not, it is vain and unreasonable to grieve. Sometimes indeed we make ourselves miserable, by desiring things possible ; but then they are such as are hurtful and inconvenient : so that in this case, though our desires are grounded upon possibility, they are yet grounded upon inconsistency (which is altogether as bad) ; since the gratification of

such desires is incompatible with our happiness. Thus generally our discontents are owing to our folly and impiety: to our folly, because they are vain and fruitless; and to our impiety, because we cannot (as we ought) submit to the divine will, and cheerfully acquiesce in divine determinations; which is a proof that either we think ourselves wise enough to contrive our own happiness, or that we mistrust lest the infinite bounty of God should fall short in the distribution of it to us. As to grief for the loss of friends (which still proceeds from impossible desire) it must necessarily flow from one of these two causes, either that we think their death a diminution of our happiness, or of theirs; or else we grieve we know not why, and consequently our grief is unreasonable. If the diminution of our own enjoyment causes our lamentation, we are moved by interest and self-love, not by the love of our friend. On the other hand, if the diminution of our friend's enjoyment be the occasion of it, we must have an ill opinion of his condition. But if our felicity depends either upon friends, or any thing else in this world, it is very uncertain; and if we conceive, that our friends felicity depends entirely upon the present union of soul and body, our faith is as doubtful as our happiness. O, good God!

how many degrees of doubt wilt thou allow to enter into the composition of saving faith, if uncompounded faith be too sublime for human nature? If ten degrees of doubt for one of faith will not be accepted, I fear the number is very small of those who are saved by faith. O, great God! increase my faith, increase the faith of all mankind that have it, and bestow it upon those who want it, out of thy infinite compassion; and let the defects of our faith be supplied by thy mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

I would examine whether grief be an effect of infidelity; and if it appears to be so, I am sure we ought to endeavour by all means (as far as possible), to banish it out of our souls. Our Saviour tells us, that a sparrow does not fall to the ground without the knowledge and will of God, and that *the very hairs of our heads are numbered*; by which he would more forcibly inculcate, that nothing befalls man without his knowledge and appointment: since therefore whatsoever happens to man in this world, is either directed by the will, or consented unto by the permission of God, what ground has grief to stand upon but human weakness? All opposition to the will of God is wrestling with his power; all reluctance to his will,

and repining at it, is contending, as far as man is able to contend with Almighty Power, by condemning and disapproving the exercise of it, and avowing, that he would oppose and contradict it if he were able; which is the most insolently foolish impiety imaginable. And for things that befall us, through the bare permission of God, where he does not exert his own immediate power to bring them to pass; though in this case it were not impiety to grieve, yet it would be unreasonable; since where there is a power sufficient, and a propensity in any means to effect a thing, unless it should please God to supersede that power, which he does not think fit to do, but permits it to act according to its own propensity; I say, in this case, that the not interposing of the Almighty Power, leaves an absolute force in that means to produce that effect, so that the accident it occasions is as inevitable, as if it had been actually performed by Almighty Power; and therefore it would be unreasonable to lament it. Nay, in truth, I think myself obliged, upon further consideration, to retract my saying, that in such cases it would be no impiety to grieve; because, though this were not to repine at Providence, for doing something which we would have undone; yet it is evidently repining at it, for not putting a stop to the power of

second causes, and, in consequence, for not doing something which we would have it to have done ; which is the same thing in effect. But as to the sort of grief, which, I said, shared of impiety, I mean only such an one as is occasioned by such actions as are the appointment of Divine Providence, and not by such as he permits to be within the compass of our own determination and performance. For there is a grief that does not proceed from our contradiction to the will of God, but from our having acted in a manifest contradiction to it, which is called *repentance*. And though by this grief we cannot revoke the sins we have committed, yet we discover by it our inclination and desire (if it were possible) to revoke them ; and we thereby give a testimony of our sincere abhorrence of them, and of our purpose and resolution never to be guilty of them more ; which grief is the most effectual to the procuring its end, and therefore the most reasonable : for though it does not really revoke the sin, yet it actually annuls the punishment which would have attended the guilt of it ; and has the desired effect of reinstating the sinner into the same degree of God's favour which he enjoyed before the commission of it. But for our grief for the loss of friends, all that can be said of it is this, that there is a strong pro-

pensity in human nature to lament the loss of any person or thing that is agreeable to us, and contributes to our comfort and satisfaction; and that it is very difficult to derive a sufficient power from reason to oppose its efforts: so that a man must not pretend to claim an exemption from grief for the loss of his friend, who does not make it appear from the rest of the actions of his life, that he uses his utmost endeavours to govern himself entirely by reason; to subdue his passions, and to get the mastery over pleasure as well as grief: for otherwise his not grieving will be an evidence rather of his illnature than of his philosophy and religion. And that man who conforms his life and behaviour to the usual methods and customs of the generality of mankind in other things, ought likewise to do it in this; since it is reasonable to imagine, that his thoughts in the main resemble theirs: and death, according to the common notion of mankind, being looked upon as the greatest evil, it were the highest pitch of illnature (in a man that thinks it so) not to lament when it happens to his friend. But he who has established his mind in a firm belief that death is no evil; but, on the contrary, esteems it to be only the passage to perfect felicity, may justly be allowed to have the same senti-

ments of it in relation to his friend, as he would have in regard to himself. And now, having been so long on the consideration of grief, (in order to a more perfect knowledge of it), I will enter upon that of another affection of the soul, that has a very close connection with it, and is inseparable from it; and that is *love*. For it is plain we grieve, because we love either ourselves or something else. And since I have discovered, that grief is generally both impious and unreasonable, as deviating from that perfect obedience and resignation we owe to God, and therefore not allowable in a wise and virtuous man, who makes it his endeavour to know and perform his duty with the utmost exactness he is able; it may be expected that I should tell what other marks and demonstrations a wise and virtuous man can give of his love; which I think no difficult task to do. For if grief be the only mark a man is able to give of his love to his friend, (let him have as sorrowful a heart as he pleases), I would not give a rush for his friendship. These in my opinion, are the true properties of valuable friendship, to desire to have done, and to endeavour to do, all imaginable good to those we love; to assist and comfort them, as far as we are able, while they are in a capacity of being assisted and comforted by

us ; to contribute with all our power and skill to their satisfaction and happiness ; to be as covetous of their advantage as of our own ; and when any disaster, or unhappy accident of any kind, befalls them, to ransack all the faculties of our souls to procure their relief. But for lamentation, when a friend is no longer in a capacity to receive the marks of our affection, or to need them, it is neither beneficial nor reasonable, either in respect of our friend or of ourselves ; though the world (whose love generally flows only from their tongues and eyes) may think tears and complaints decent things. And thus they would make an easy amends by hypocrisy for their want of real friendship.

It is as impossible for a vicious man (under the habit and power of vice) to conceive what is the pleasure of one that is virtuous, as it is for a beast to conceive his : for a beast is not endued with such a spirit as is capable of receiving the ideas of vice ; neither is a vicious man endued with such a purity, brightness, and elevation of soul, as to enable him to receive and apprehend the form of virtue ; and consequently he is as great a stranger to the manner of a virtuous man's thinking, as a beast is to his.

Amongst great numbers of men which are accounted rich, there are but few that really are so. I take him to be the only rich man that lives upon what he has, owes nothing, and is contented. For there is no determinate sum of money, nor quantity of estate, that can denote a man rich; since no man is truly rich that has not so much as perfectly satiates his desire of having more. For the desire of more is want, and want is poverty.

A. fine gentleman may as well think to go abroad in a blustering day without disordering his peruke, as a wise man may fancy that he can abandon his mind to the trifling business and hurry of the world, without disordering his thoughts.

Thought is undoubtedly in a great measure governed and directed by the affections; which shows the necessity of subduing the affections to right reason, otherwise our thoughts can never be reasonable, and all human actions are, or ought to be, governed by thought: so that such as the thoughts are, such must be the actions, equally partaking of wisdom or folly. And I doubt the latter (by the natural consequence of this argument) has the greatest share in the government of the world, in the same man-

per as Themistocles said his little boy governed Athens: "For this child," said he, "governs his mother, his mother me, and I the Athenians."

Since every man almost in these parts of the world, thinks his salvation and happiness depend upon his being a christian, it is highly necessary to know what the true meaning of the word and the thing *Christian* is. In order to which it must be observed, that in all ages the most reasonable men have applied themselves, with their utmost industry, to search after truth; the knowledge of which can alone be properly termed *wisdom*; and these were called *philosophers*, or lovers of wisdom; of which there were several sects, according to the several doctrines and opinions of the authors or beginners of them: so that whosoever afterwards, upon the examination of the several doctrines of these philosophers made choice of any one, preferring it to all the rest, and endeavoured to regulate his life and actions according to it, he was called, according to the name of the sect, a *stoick*, *peripatetick*, *epicurean*, &c. Now, after many philosophers had introduced several opinions relating to morality, and to instruct men how to arrive at their supreme happiness (for this is the philosophy I mean, and

the only one worth our care and thought), Jesus Christ was born into the world, who, unacquainted with learning and the professors of it, taught a doctrine much more clear, reasonable, and excellent than any that ever was known before (and, indeed, so far surpassing all human power of thinking, that it were of itself sufficient to give him a title to divinity, had there been no other arguments for his being the Son of God), and the embracers of this doctrine were called *christians*. But though the bare profession of this admirable doctrine is sufficient to give a man the name, yet something else is requisite to make him a real christian; and that is thoroughly to contemplate both the life and doctrine of our Saviour; to obtain as far as possible the same spirit; to enter into the same temper of mind; to be moved by the same influences; governed by the same principles; and, in short, to form his life as exactly as possible after his model; that is, to think as he thought, and act as he acted: and this, according to my notion of it, is that alone which can truly and deservedly confer upon a man the name of *christian*; though perhaps it may reduce the number of christians within a narrow compass. For I hear there are as many who bear that title who are not christians indeed, as there were.

Israelites who were not Israelites indeed. He therefore that aspires to be a christian, must never slacken his endeavours till he really feels himself one; and that is very possible: for the soul is as capable of the perception of things within itself, as the body is of heat or cold, hunger or thirst, ease or pain. And a man may, as reasonably conclude that he is a good christian without feeling himself such, as he may fancy that he is cold, or hungry, or in pain, without feeling that he is any of them. It is evident, that a man may feel within himself whether he is, or is not, endued with the qualities belonging to a christian; and therefore ought not to rest satisfied of his being perfectly such, till he feels those qualities within him: till he finds himself (in relation to his God) firm in faith, fervent in love, humble, sincere, constant in obedience, and cheerful in resignation. Whilst he is labouring after those several graces, he is endeavouring to be a christian; and when he has obtained them, he is (most certainly) such indeed.

Every sincerely virtuous man, fixed in the principles of virtue, and entirely influenced by reason, must needs be in a fair way to be a good christian: nor do I doubt

but if Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, with many other virtuous heathens, had been happy enough to have lived contemporary with our Saviour, or to have been acquainted with his life and precepts, they would readily have embraced the christian doctrine, and been eminent in the first rank of its professors. Was it not the integrity and virtue of Joseph of Arimathea, and of Nathanael, that had fitted them for christianity, and that had disposed their minds for the reception of truth, when and wheresoever they could find it? and, in my opinion, there had been sufficient reason for the belief of the gospel delivered by our Saviour, though there had been neither predictions nor miracles to confirm his extraordinary mission; and that upon this consideration. Every truly virtuous man feels in himself an utter abhorrence and aversion to falsehood and deceit, and is assured, that so long as he continues under the influence of virtue, he is capable of neither; for he knows, that virtue is a power conferred by God upon the mind of man, to capacitate him to act in conformity to his will and commands: so long therefore as he feels this divine power in his soul (which is what the scripture terms *Grace*), he knows himself to be in no danger of being false or deceitful; since this power and falsehood are inconsistent,

and cannot possibly subsist in the mind of man at the same time. A virtuous man thus conscious of his own principles, is acquainted with the effect that the same principles must necessarily have in the minds of other men; and, in consequence, discovering in the life, behaviour, and doctrine of our Saviour (by infinite degrees) the most exalted purity, virtue, and integrity, (that ever any man was possessed of, that lived upon the earth), he will be perfectly convinced, that it was impossible for any thing but truth to proceed from him. I trust (through God's great goodness) that even I myself am not capable of lying or deceiving for any advantage, or upon any account whatsoever; and from the abhorrence and aversion I feel to those detestable vices (which I beg my good God ever to continue in me), I am as confidently assured, that it was impossible for any thing but truth to proceed from the lips of the blessed Jesus (whose name I am not worthy to mention), as that it is impossible for cold and darkness to proceed from the sun: and consequently, that he who has so often owned himself to be the Son of God, is certainly so, and my merciful Redeemer, through whose purity in life, satisfaction in death, and mediation in glory, I trust I shall receive the perfect remission of all my sins and corruptions

and enjoy the eternal felicity of loving, praising, serving, and adoring him; to whom with the Father, and Holy Spirit, I humbly ascribe *all power and glory world without end.*

It were worth a man's while to consider whether his present temper of mind be such as he would be willing to continue in as long as he lives; and if, upon reflection, he finds his soul overspread with malice, pride, envy, avarice, injustice, or any other vice, let him consider whether that be the state he desires it should be in, when it leaves his body; if it be, let him acknowledge himself an atheist; if it be not, let him own himself a fool, and endeavour to grow wiser as soon as he can.

Wheresoever pride predominates in the soul of man, self-love is the most powerful and active principle in it. The extraordinary opinion a proud man has of himself, makes the extravagant value he has for his own imaginary merit appear to him just, and the great contempt he has for all other men reasonable. And from this vain and foolish conceit, he fancies that all the blessings and bounties of Providence ought to centre in him; and looks upon the prosperous events that happen to others, as so

many unjust distributions of that good to which he alone hath right. It is no wonder therefore, that a man possessed with such wild notions, should always be ready to bestow upon himself any advantage that lies in his power, how much soever it may be to the detriment of others, whom he considers as so many cyphers in the creation, and himself as the only significant figure. It is this excessive pride, this unreasonable self-love, that excites in the mind of man all those motions and agitations that hurry him to tyranny, oppression, fraud, rapine, cruelty, and almost every other mischievous and detestable vice: so that wherever this passion rules, she governs with an imperious sway, and is surrounded with a numerous retinue composed of every ill. From this it is plain, that a wise and virtuous man can never be proud; nor can he be exalted in his thoughts at any advantages he has above others; because he is conscious of his own weakness and inability, to become either wise or virtuous by any thing he finds in his own power: and his sense of the goodness of the bountiful God in bestowing upon him more abundantly, what he has been pleased more sparingly to vouchsafe to others, will inspire his soul with humility, thankfulness, and adoration. Besides, he will reflect how unworthy he would be

of so glorious a distinction, and of so invaluable, as well as undeserved a preference to other men, if he could be capable of acting so as to seem to attribute any part of it to himself; and how just it would be in that adorable Being to deprive him of those blessings his bounty alone had conferred upon him, and to degrade him to the lowest rank of human nature. But no reasonable man can think himself able to acquire and preserve wisdom by his own strength, when he knows that either a blow or disease is capable of making an idiot of him; and thus finding himself too weak to preserve it, his reason will readily demonstrate to him, that he wants force to acquire it. But, on the contrary, a proud, and (which is all one) a foolish man, thinks nothing too good for himself, and every thing too good for others: he thinks he has an indisputable title to all the enjoyments of life, and that others are unworthy of them. His pride and envy make him unconcerned how little other men enjoy of happiness, whilst his viciously tender love for himself gives him the vain conceit, that he alone ought of right to engross it, his narrow mind is confined to the compass of his own body: whereas the virtuous (which is the only great and generous) soul admits of no lim-

its to its bounty and love, but such as give bounds to the creation.

How wretchedly disposed is the heart of man towards God? In prosperity it is apt to be full of neglect, in adversity of repining; and as for love and obedience, they may crowd in, when the other two think fit to make room for them.

I find the business I have resolved upon, and am employed in, is to oppose most of my natural inclinations: so that if nature be in the right, I am to blame to contradict her; but if not (which is the infallible truth), I doubt the greatest part of mankind are in the wrong.

The capacity of thinking, which is in man, is a most noble and delightful faculty; but we have not the absolute government of it. It is often busy and waking in me, when my frail body would willingly be at rest; and it is many times heavy and drowsy, when I am desirous to keep it awake. We must therefore patiently watch and attend upon wisdom (which is the result of thought), and embrace every opportunity of conversing with her, that she will please to favour us with. For my own part, I have often wished, that four hours only of

the four and twenty would sufficiently satisfy my body with sleep, that I might have the happiness of employing as many of the rest as possible, in the agreeable exercise of thought.

The scheme and manner of our thinking is formed and altered, either by the impressions of outward objects upon the mind, by the inward disposition of the body, affecting it; or by divine impulse; so that every new temper of mind displays a new scene of thought. But notwithstanding that numberless variety of schemes of thinking that roll with an incessant vicissitude in the mind, there is but one that is right, one that is reasonable; unity being the inseparable property of truth. And the first great difficulty is to light on it; and the next is to fix upon it: for it is this alone that proceeds from the divine impulse, and is continually combatted by those others that arise from the other causes; which makes it impossible for us firmly to retain and establish it in our minds, without a force derived and continued to them from the divine bounty and power; which we must labour to procure, and act, as if we were able to deserve; which force, O, my great and good God! bestow, I beseech thee, upon thy most unworthy creature, for his sake who

enjoyed it most amply and perfectly, leading a life in this world spotless of sin, and triumphant over all temptations.

Having lately observed so many new authors, that pretend to give an account of the nature of God, and of the human soul, who are usually men of no very virtuous principles, I would willingly consider how such men came to be qualified for such a performance, and how *the secret of God* comes to be intrusted with them; which David observes* was always used to be committed to another sort of men. Now it plainly appears to me, that a vicious man can have no true notion of God; because the knowledge of a thing is necessary to the forming a notion of it. And no man can have the knowledge of God, but he on whom God himself shall be pleased to bestow it: for that knowledge is the consequence of faith, and faith is not naturally implanted in the mind of man; it being solely the gift of God conferred upon men at such time as he thinks fit: for if it were originally implanted in the mind, there would be no such thing as a vicious man or unbeliever; nor yet could there be any such

* *Psal.* xxv. 14.

thing as a regenerate man ; since, if faith were natural to the soul, there would be no need of any such work, as rooting up and new planting ; which is the laborious business of regeneration, which is the happy effect of a lively faith. How then should the vicious man come by this knowledge, which he neither has from nature, nor can possibly have by his own acquisition ? Besides, that it is evident, that the moment God Almighty gives it to any one, it makes him cease to be vicious : for he who by faith has obtained the knowledge of God, must immediately discover his glorious beauties and perfections ; and he who has discovered those will find himself obliged to love him ; and he that loves him, must needs obey him ; and he who obeys him as he ought to do, is the direct contrary to a vicious man.

Where there is no constancy of mind, there can be no constancy of happiness. Immutability is that admirable attribute which crowns the beatitude of the Almighty. Inconstancy and change are the great imperfections under which human nature labours, the divine one being entirely exempt from them.

If happiness be necessary to man, religion is necessary in order to attain it. For religion is properly nothing else than a right guided pursuit after happiness. We must not imagine, that when we perform any duty towards God, or put up our addresses to him, that we literally do him either honour or service; but that we are doing the most reasonable thing in the world, and the most beneficial to ourselves, by which we aspire after, and acquire effectually, our greatest felicity, from the bountiful acceptance of our performances by God, to whom they are utterly unprofitable, and to whose complete and perfect sufficiency and bliss, all the united beings of the creation would not be able to make the most inconsiderable addition. We must therefore by no means entertain such absurd notions as to fancy, that in our religious duties we are doing service to God, when we are actually doing the greatest honour and service to ourselves that can be conceived, whilst he is pleased to permit us to enter into any communication with him, upon which he shall vouchsafe (through his own pure bounty) to confer his favour. And indeed our performing any duty as we ought to God, is the consequence of his favour, as well as the means of procuring

and increasing it ; since it is by his favour only that we are induced and enabled to make any right applications to him.

There are two extraordinary virtues to be learned from human imperfection. The imperfections of others may teach us patience ; and our own may teach us humility.

We are not to imagine, that we do honour to Jesus Christ by believing in him ; for our faith is a tribute due to his excellence : and we do ourselves honour in manifesting (by our faith in him) that discerning wisdom, by which we are led to discover the infinitely superior excellence which was in him above all the men that have ever lived in the world ; which superiority is evident in various instances, and particularly in that wonderful and intimate knowledge he had both of the divine and human nature. Our own experience compared attentively with his discourses and reasonings upon that subject, will sufficiently demonstrate to us, that no man ever had so clear an inspection into all the powers and weaknesses, motions and mutations, vices and virtues of the mind of man as he had ; nor did ever any man understand the perfections and imperfections, the miseries and

happiness incident and belonging to human nature, in any degree equal to him ; neither was any man ever able to prescribe such just rules and methods of attaining the one, and avoiding the other, as he (to the infinite benefit and advantage of mankind) has been pleased to do. And since we have so sensible a demonstration (by our own inward feeling of what passes in ourselves, and by our continual discoveries and observations of what passes in others), that Jesus Christ has made so lively, just, and true a description of human nature, no reasonable man ought to doubt either of his knowledge or sincerity in what he has discovered to us of the divine. For his truth in the one is a justification of his truth in the other ; and his knowledge of the one a justification of his knowledge of the other.

The chief reason why few arrive at the felicity of a clear and strong faith, seems to me to be this ; the soul is not able so to disengage itself from the objects to which its affections have united it, as to give itself up freely to the disquisitions and embraces of abstracted and important truths ; that is the infamous slavery to which our vices and corruptions have betrayed us, this is the glorious liberty which we can never obtain but by the bountiful assistance of divine

power ; which by enlightening the reason, and displaying before it far more excellent and noble objects, can alone enable it to make a truer and better choice : but whosoever is happy enough to enjoy such an illumination, must not imagine that his reason is more easy to be kept bright than a piece of brass or iron ; for if he neglect frequently to rub and polish it, he will soon be convinced that it will lose its lustre. And nothing but our ignorance of the difference between a clear and a sullied reason, can ever make us with patience endure the latter.

Jesus, my Lord, have mercy upon me ! I believe thee, I know thee, to be the Son of the everlasting God ; not more from the miracles which thou hast wrought, than from those that thou hast spoken. Thy words are no less a demonstration of infinite wisdom, than thy works of infinite power ; and I most humbly implore thy favour and mercy, both as my Saviour and my God.

Thou great and adorable God ! the complete knowledge of whom is perfect felicity, and even the imperfect knowledge of thee the most desirable blessing of human creatures ; enlarge and purify my soul for the contemplation of thee, that when I consider

thy incomprehensible glories, I may adore thee in a measure proportionable to my conceptions of thee. Make my knowledge and adoration of thee to increase every moment of my life ; and, if it please thee, raise them still higher in the last moments of it ; that, by a lively faith, humble obedience, fixed hopes, and ardent love here, I may ascend to the eternal fruition of thee in thy everlasting kingdom of glory, through Jesus Christ my Saviour.

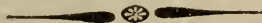
I think the mystery of the trinity may be very well accounted for by human reason, so far as to vindicate it from being a contradiction : but to imagine, that human reason is capable of arriving to a clear and just notion of it, is to imagine, that human reason is not human reason ; that it is neither finite nor limited, but capable of extending itself even to the infinite extent of all truth. There is nothing more vain than to fancy that human reason is the measure of all truth : and that nothing can be true but what is measured by it. We may as justly think, that a man's span is the measure of infinite space, or that the hollow of his hand is the measure of all matter, as that his understanding is the measure of all truth. It is objected, that one cannot be three, nor three one : if this be affirmed of numbers, I

grant it is true ; but if it be affirmed, that by granting it to be true as to numbers, it must necessarily be true as to the trinity, I absolutely deny that affirmation ; for the case is not the same between them. And this objection is only a fallacy, which supposes two cases alike which are not alike : and therefore its conclusion is false. It is evident, that the number three contains three units, and that three units is more than one unit : it is also evident, that one unit is not so much as three units, and therefore that one unit cannot be three units. Now to make the case the same in the trinity, and this is a just confutation of it, some body must affirm (but who that some body is I do not know), that one essentially distinct God may be three essentially distinct Gods, and that three essentially distinct Gods may be but one essentially distinct God. But no body that believes the trinity rightly, believes it in this manner : and therefore this is a fallacious comparison, and a wrong argument. The true notion of the trinity (as I conceive) is, that God the Father has existed from all eternity ; that the Son is begotten by him from all eternity, and has eternally existed with him ; that the Holy Ghost has, by an eternal procession, proceeded from the Father and the Son, and eternally existed with them : but no body

imagines, that either the Son; or the Holy Ghost were ever separated and divided from the Father (since such a separation would make three essentially distinct Gods: but, on the contrary, the Christian belief is, that both the Son and Holy Ghost are inseparably united to the Father; that they remain one same and indivisible substance with him, so as with him to make but one God. Now this is as far from a contradiction as to say, that a thousand houses is but one city, and one city is a thousand houses; that millions of drops is one stream, and that one stream is a million of drops: but all the difference is that we know by our own perception, how thousands of houses make one city, and how millions of drops make one stream; and so on the contrary: but we do not know (because it is out of the reach of our senses, and beyond the bounds of our understanding) how the three persons of the trinity (as we call them) are one God, or how the undivided godhead contains the three persons in the trinity. But to give a yet clearer and juster instance of the matter, when we see a plant or tree with different shoots growing out of the same root, we think we speak properly (and so we do) when we say it is but one plant or tree; and we speak as properly when

that plant or tree), we say that the root and two shoots growing out of it are three ; for there is both such a diversity and distinction as must be numbered by three ; and yet, in another respect, there is such an unity as can be called but one. There is such an union and connection between the root and those shoots which grow out of it, that when we conceive of them altogether, we can have no notion but of one undivided plant or tree : but when we conceive of the root and its several shoots, as distinguished from one another, we lay aside the notion of unity, and consider them as three distinct things ; and yet this is so far from any contradiction, that our notions in both respects are very right and agreeable to the real truth of things. Thus, it is evident we have notions of trinity in unity without absurdity, how wittily soever some men may make an unwary and dangerous jest of it. This, in relation to the Deity (whose essence and perfection are incomprehensible), must be acknowledged to be a great mystery ; a truth revealed to us, but not explained to our understandings ; we have reason to believe it true though we cannot comprehend by our reason after what manner it is true. We are assured we have reason to believe, that all those beings which shall for ever continue in the favour and presence of God

must necessarily enjoy a perfect felicity; but to comprehend the full nature, extent, and manner of that felicity is above the reach and capacity of our understandings; and must be so, till, by being made capable of enjoying it, we become capable of understanding it. In short, as it is not reasonable to believe very strange things without good grounds for our belief; so it is unreasonable positively to conclude every thing to be false, the truth of which does not lie evidently open and level to our understandings. A wise man knows certainly many truths which an ignorant man cannot comprehend; but the wisest of men know by many degrees fewer truths than they are ignorant of.



MODERATION IS VIRTUE.



THE word *moderation* has of late been so much in every body's mouth, that it gave me the curiosity to examine the nature of the thing represented by that word. There is doubtless one true original idea belonging to every singly significant word, though custom may have applied several other sig- (designing to distinguish the differences of)

nifications to it, different from its first and proper meaning: and it is in the labyrinth of this various acceptation of words, or rather misunderstanding of ideas, that contending parties are apt to lose themselves in endless disputes. My design therefore is to consider, in as few words as possible, the nature of moderation (abstracted from party and passion), what it really is, and wherein it consists. It is granted on all hands, that moderation is a virtue: but I think that is to say too little of it; since it is the indivisible point in which all virtue centres. For all excess is vicious, and that spot only which is free and unpossessed by excess, is the point of moderation, and the very centre of virtue and truth, surrounded with extremes, without partaking of them. The virtue of prudence is moderation in judgment; the virtue of temperance is moderation in appetite; the virtue of justice is moderation in the mutual dealings and intercourse amongst men; and the virtue of fortitude is moderation, setting just bounds and limits to fear and desire, and equally balancing the mind between timidity and rashness. I might as easily trace moderation in all the inferior subordinate virtues, as I have done in these principal and original ones; but this suffices to shew, that moderation is the point in which all

virtue resides, and that there can be no separation between them. So that when it is required, that *our moderation should-be known to all men*; nothing less is meant, than that we should give to the world undeniable evidences of our virtue, truth, and sincerity; which are all comprehended in that one word *moderation*. But if any body imagines, that in contest concerning important truths, to yield up the point, and depart from that truth, is moderation, they are infinitely mistaken; for it is so very far from it, that it is a vicious and, in consequence, immoderate compliance. To comply in indifferent matters, is charity and civility: but to comply where justice and truth are concerned, is a manifest renunciation both of the one and the other; and men must have a care that they do not permit their virtue to be over-powered, either by their good-nature or good-breeding. Where there is a contest between two persons, the one is apt to desire the other to be more moderate, that is, to yield up the point in dispute: and the other, if he has more right on his side, may more reasonably and justly make that demand to him; since it is most certain, that the adhering to justice and truth, is moderation; and he who does that, is a moderate or virtuous man: and, on the contrary, he who

either opposes justice and truth, or departs from them, is an immoderate or vicious one. Should a *Jew* press a *Christian* to renounce his religion, and finding him firm to his principles, desire him to be more moderate, no man can imagine that it would be a virtuous moderation in the other to renounce christianity, and turn *Jew*. But, in short, here lies the fallacy and mistake, both vice and virtue are (for want of a true distinction) indifferently attributed to moderation, which is vulgarly and falsely taken for yielding and complying, (no matter whether reasonably or unreasonably); and he who can not oblige another to comply with his interest or passion, will always be apt to accuse him of want of moderation. But I don't wonder that moderation is more talked of than understood, since most men's virtues lie more in their tongues than in their affections and understandings; and he who does not feel the influences of virtue and moderation in himself, must needs talk as ignorantly and imperfectly of it, as a blind man does of colours. But were there more moderation in men's minds, there would be more in their manners; more justice and integrity, more charity and generosity; and when the world is more possessed with that virtue, it would be better known, better practised, and less

talked of: it will then be attended with those natural effects of unity, peace, and kindness, which it would never fail to produce, were it more real and universal. In the mean time, I take the liberty to advise all contending parties, to examine very impartially, whether, at the same time, that they upbraid their adversaries for having the mote of immoderation in their minds, they have not a beam of it lying across their own, and if they have, to remove it as soon as they can; for having experimentally learnt to work that cure in themselves, they may more justly reprove, and more skilfully and successfully advise and assist their neighbours. As for my own particular, I profess to be of no other party than that of moderation; which is the party of right reason and truth: yet, at the same time, I clearly foresee, that it will be my fate (though I shall never think it my misfortune) to be always on the weakest side; since power and superiority never fail to get the better of moderation; which is ever successively abandoned by all prevailing parties, and left as a poor neglected portion for those few, who value it enough to content themselves with it, even nakedly divested of power and advantage.

REPUTATION NO TRUE RULE
OF ACTION.

ONE reason why men usually have such wrong notions of things, is, because they receive general rules (which yet have many exceptions to them), without having any consideration to those exceptions; or rather it is because they receive those rules for general ones, which are not general. For want of knowledge and judgment they do not make right distinctions between that part of a rule which must always be the same, and other parts which are liable to variation and change. It is a great mistake amongst many people, that reputation is to be the rule of action; which is as much as to affirm, that an uncertain and variable thing is to be a certain and fixed direction; that a heap of sand, which will be scattered by the first wind, is a sufficient land-mark for travellers for ever to know their way by; that a thing which is capable of as many forms and sudden changes, as the clouds in the air, is a constant and settled rule of behaviour and action. In short, if we have no other rule of action but reputation, I must affirm, that we have none at all. But

I think we have another, which we may securely follow and depend upon; such an one as will keep us always in the right way, if we can but be happy enough to keep our eyes ever fixed upon it: which rule is the united principles of right reason and religion, or rather of true christianity, which is right reason. Here we have a substantial rule; there we have only the wavering shadow of one: here we have something that will last as long as right reason lasts; there we have something that will change as often as the stream of men's fancies and opinions change, which is as often as the weather-cock; and those who resolve to be directed by it, must be as inconstant as the wind. Were a man always to be governed by reputation, he must change the fashion of his virtues as often as the fashion of his clothes; otherwise he will run the hazard to be laughed at for an old fashioned virtue, as well as an old fashioned coat. A foundation that is unfixed, is a foundation upon sand, fit only for fools to build on. Wise men therefore will find another, and choose a foundation that has itself a foundation to rest upon; and then they know they may build securely. The true foundation of action is the truth and rectitude of action, and the foundation of that truth and rectitude is the eternal perfection and will of the divine

nature. We are to do things because they are right, not because they are commendable; always considering, that they are not right, because they are commendable, but they are commendable because they are right. Wisdom, not vanity, ought to move us to virtue. We are to act for the sake of truth, in order to please God, not for the sake of praise, in order to please fools: neither are we to please ourselves with the trifling bawble of vain reputation, but with the substantial benefit of having done our duty, and of having pleased that adorable Being, whom we are obliged to make it the whole business of our lives to please. But to come to a clearer state of this matter, without which there can be no avoiding of confusion, it is necessary to distinguish between the different notions of virtue, and different motives to it; by which we may judge of the difference there is in men's notions of reputation. I will confine myself to two, *viz.* the *Heathen* notion of virtue, and the *Christian* notion of it: for we must not confound the one with the other; but when we speak of virtue, we must know what virtue we mean, or else, when men speak of reputation, we shall never know what reputation they mean. The notion of most of the celebrated Heathens was, that glory was the only object fit for the pursuit.

of great and generous souls; and that such designs only were to be formed and prosecuted by them, as would procure them the most lasting and (as they vainly enough imagined) immortal glory: that is, the praise and applause of their actions while they lived, and the perpetuating their fame in after ages; so that future generations might bestow that commendation upon their names and memories which the present did upon their living persons. This present and future glory was the idol of the more generous Heathens; it was the ultimate good they proposed to themselves in this life, and the only felicity they hoped for after death: so that the only motive of all their actions, the only incitement to their ambition, was glory and praise; a thin diet for a rational mind to feed upon; all the pleasure and immortality of which was only to be enjoyed in the short space of this present life, by the help of a vain fancy and over-heated imagination. The other notion of *Christian virtue* is this, that the principal thing towards which a wise man ought to bend his thoughts, designs, and actions, is the approbation and favour of God: the eternal enjoyment of whom is the true immortal glory he ought ambitiously to aspire after. This is no vain imaginary pleasure, but a real felicity to be felt, tasted,

and enjoyed for ever. It will not fail and vanish when the heat of imagination is extinguished, like the pleasure of commendation and praise: but it will be so inseparably united to our very souls and beings, that the one must last as long as the other. This is the true virtue, the true principle of action, as well as the true rule by which it is to be regulated. When our actions are formed and finished by this rule, they will deserve praise and commendation: and we may with assurance give it to ourselves, though all the world refuse it to us. He who has the approbation of a well instructed, well regulated conscience, needs no other; if that acquits him, it is a divine acquittal, nor needs he care who condemns him. Those who walk altogether by reputation, travel in a labyrinth, amongst such a multiplicity of ways, they never find the right one, but weary themselves in fruitless and endless labour. Among good fellows it is a reputation to drink, amongst the debauched to be lewd, amongst the atheists to blaspheme, amongst the pick-pockets to cheat and steal, amongst politicians to deceive and circumvent, and amongst heroes to plunder and oppress. In short, every one commends what he likes best himself; and where there is such vari-

ety of different directors, a man who has no other knowledge of his road will be very apt to miss it. Among the clamours of so many false reputations, the low voice of a true one is hardly to be heard; and if heard, it will hardly be credited, against so strong an opposition. There are so few who value either men or actions, because they are good, that he who only considers reputation, will be apt to choose one that makes a louder noise. Men generally love to have their praises proclaimed, not whispered. There are not many who have the patience to stay till the day of judgment, to receive the approbation and applause of their actions. If a man is scorched with the thirst of praise, he will strive to quench it, though it be in the first puddle; he will not take the pains to search far for a clear fountain, if muddy water be near at hand. But it may be objected, that certainly reputation is a valuable thing, since it has been accounted so by the wisest of men: neither will I deny that a just and true reputation is a most desirable thing; but I deny that it is desirable only as it is praise and commendation (since ill actions among many people may procure those as well as good ones), but it is desirable as it is the effect of a desirable cause; it is desirable because true

merit (which can only give a true reputation) confers it, and true merit is what every body ought to aspire after, and to be thankful to God for giving it to them when they have it. Men ought to be truly virtuous, because true virtue is in itself a desirable thing, loved by that adorable wisdom, which is the fountain of all wisdom as well as of all virtue; and whether it is its fortune to be commended or neglected, esteemed or despised, it will not (or at least ought not) to appear less amiable to those who admire, covet, and possess it, because they are assured it will make them approved and accepted where approbation and acceptance is a more valuable, lasting, and substantial blessing, than ever that immortal fame and glory, which is so generally and foolishly preferred before it, can obtain.

How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh of God only? John v. 44.

A strong vanity makes a weak faith,
And a strong faith a weak vanity.

Misery is the inseparable attendant upon life, how fond soever we are of it; and those evils which are beyond the cure of

reason, find a sure remedy in death, how averse soever we are to it.

When men are in health and gaiety, the passions are usually much too strong for reason, which is so oppressed with the thick clouds of falsehood and error, that truth, how bright soever, cannot approach near enough to make any impressions upon it: hence it is, that most commonly under these circumstances death enters into their thoughts without its terrors, the notion of a God passes into their minds without the representation of his majesty; but life and the world flow in upon their imaginations with ten thousand false deluding charms.

Timor fecit Deos, says the atheist. The reverse is true, fear is so far from making Gods, that it is God who undoubtedly made fear.

It is not the business of a wise man to dispute about living well, but to live well without dispute.

There is an obstinacy in error, which nothing but truth can overcome: as for instance, a man who has neither faith nor virtue, is apt to think he has both; and

never knows he had neither, till he comes to have both. And so it happens in all other things ; he that is in the wrong, believes himself in the right, and never knows he was in the wrong, till he comes to be in the right : wherefore we ought to be most nicely inquisitive into the truth of our notions and opinions, before we adhere too obstinately to them, lest they prove to be false, and we bring our minds to cleave immoveably to error.

I think there ought to be a difference made between the sensation or feeling of happiness and that of pleasure. And the true difference between them I take to be in this : pleasure is either entirely the result of bodily sensation, or else it is the result of a mixed sensation, partly of the body and partly of the mind ; that which I mean by the pure result of bodily sensation are such pleasures as naturally arise from certain feelings or sensations of the body without being heightened by the imagination : as for example, the pleasure of taste is a natural pleasure, which every healthy body feels, who eats any thing that is very agreeable to his palate : but when the love or desire is heightened (toward any thing that is eaten) by a strong imagination, then the

pleasure it gives is a mixed sensation, arising partly from a feeling in the body, and partly from a feeling in the mind. And I think all sorts of pleasure may be reduced to one of the two heads above mentioned. But happiness is a felicity of a very different nature: for happiness is a pure and entire sensation of the mind; and the utmost concurrence towards it, that is required of the body, is not to interrupt or disturb it with its own passions or sensations. Happiness may be defined to be such a temper or situation of mind, as upon a man's just reflection on things past, present, and future, he feels and determines himself to be in a state of felicity: for reflections upon the past, the present, and the future, must necessarily precede such a felicity, and such a determination of the mind; and that for these reasons: First, Because we know that such a temper of mind as makes us happy, is not the effect of our own power, but of divine power and goodness. Secondly, We know that our happiness is imperfect and uncertain; that it is variable in its degrees, and uncertain as to its duration. It is imperfect, because we have it not in our own power to make it perfect; it is uncertain, because we have it not in our own

power to make it lasting and durable ; and of consequence we must depend upon another power, which is God, for the perfection of our happiness ; which makes the consideration on the past, the present, and the future, so necessarily previous to our happiness ; for since we must depend upon another power for the perfection of it, we must reflect upon the past to discover whether our actions have been agreeable or disagreeable to that power, and how the defects of them are to be repaired : We must likewise reflect upon the present, because happiness is a present feeling ; and we must inevitably reflect upon the future, because hope is a great ingredient in our happiness, (and hope is nothing else but an act of the imagination, confirmed by the understanding, whereby the mind receives a present enjoyment even of futurity itself, and makes absent things in some measure present to it) ; so that the imperfections of our happiness receive some degrees of present supply by that act of the imagination and of the understanding, which renders the future perfection of it present to us. This, I think, is sufficient to confirm the truth of the definition I have made of happiness, and justify the distinction I have made between it and pleasure.

No set of words or expressions, whether they be extemporaneous or premeditated, can properly be said to be a prayer. But when the ideas formed in the mind from such words or expressions, excite its affections to put them forth in petitions and addresses to God, then they become truly and properly a prayer. So that, though another composes the words, yet it belongs to every particular person that utters them, to convert them into a prayer.

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