

THE
LIFE OF GOD
IN THE
SOUL OF MAN;
OR, THE
NATURE AND EXCELLENCY
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION

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With RECOMMENDATORY PREFACES by
Bishop BURNET and the late Dr WISHART.

To which are added,
SOME FORMS OF PRAYER,
By ANOTHER HAND.

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P R E F A C E I.

THIS age groans under such a surcharge of new books, that though the many good ones lately published, do much balance the great swarms of ill, or at least needless ones; yet all men complain of the unnecessary charge and trouble many new books put them to: The truth of it is, Printing is become a trade, and the presses must be kept going, so that if it were but to shuffle out an ill book, a man may be tempted to keep them at work.

AND for books of devotion and piety, we have seen so many excellent ones of late in our own language, that perhaps no age or language can shew the like: In these the Christian Religion is proposed in its own true and natural colours, and rescued from those false representations many are apt to make of it; and if it consisted either in external performances, or in mechanical heats of the fancy, or in embracing some opinions or interests. *It is, and can be nothing else, but a design to make us like God, both in the inward temper of our minds, and in our whole deportment and conversation.* For this end did Christ both live and die; this he taught by his discourses, and discovered in his life. He died, that he might take away sin, and not only, or chiefly,

chiefly, to procure our pardon, which was done by him for a further end, that an universal indemnity being offered through his death, all mankind might be thereby encouraged to enter into a course of holy obedience with all possible advantages, having the hopes of endless happiness, and the fears of eternal miseries before them; having the clearest rule, and the most unblemished example proposed to them; being also sure of constant inward supplies, to support and strengthen their endeavours, and an unerring Providence to direct all things that concern them. Nor are there any precepts, in this whole doctrine whose fitness and true excellency, besides the authority of the Law-giver, has not been fully made good: And the truth of the principles of natural religion, and of the revelation of the counsel of God, in scripture, was never, since miracles ceased, demonstrated with fuller and clearer evidence than in our age; both for stopping the mouths of all daring hectors, and for silencing the secret doubtings of more inquisitive minds. And though so grave a subject should have been rather prejudiced than adorned by artificial and forced strains of wit and eloquence; yet, as our language was never chaster than now, so these subjects have been handled with all the proper decencies of easy wit and good language.

BUT, after all this, into what a torrent of grief and lamentation must we break out, when we consider the age we live in! for few do
either

either believe or reflect on those great things : And, as if they were a general conspiracy against God and Religion, how does the greater part among us break loose from all the ties and bonds of that yoke that is light and easy, and enslave themselves to many base and hurtful lusts and passions ? And are not satisfied with being as bad as they can be, but desire that all the world may esteem them such, and glory in their shame ; and increase their guilt, by turning factors for hell, studying to corrupt all about them. This sad prospect must needs deeply affect all that either truly love God, or have a tender compassion for the souls of men ; and will certainly set them to their secret mournings and wrestlings with God, to avert the heavy judgments that seem to hang over our heads,—and that he may, of his great mercy, turn the hearts of the froward and disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

AND, till God arise and bless his gospel with more of this success, nothing could be such an effectual means for convincing the world of the truth and excellency of our most holy faith, as that those who profess and embrace it, did walk in all the strictness of a most holy, innocent and exemplary life ; keeping the due mean between the affectation of moroseness and hypocrisy, and the levities of irreligion and folly. This is the only argument that is wanting to convince the world of the truth of our Religion ; all people are more wrought on by living examples set before

before their eyes, than by any discourses or reasonings, how strong or convincing soever; the one is more easily apprehended and leaves a deeper impression than the other, which does not prevail on us, till, by frequent and serious reflections, we be satisfied about them; and when we hear any one speak well, we are not assured he thinks as he says, but do often suspect he is shewing his wit or eloquence to our cost, that he may persuade us into some opinions that may prove gainful to himself. But, when we see a man pursuing a constant course of holiness, in the most painful instances, which do most prejudice his visible interests, we have all reason to believe he is in good earnest persuaded of those truths which engage him to such a conversation.

AFTER the ages of miracles, nothing prevailed so much on the world, as the exemplary lives, and the painful martyrdoms of the Christians, which made all sorts of people look with amazement on that doctrine that wrought so powerfully on all ranks, and did raise persons of the meanest education and dispositions; and of the weaker sex and tender age, to do and suffer beyond what their greatest heroes and most celebrated philosophers had ever done. And in those days, the apologists for the Christian Religion did appeal to the lives of the Christians, to prove their doctrine to be holy; concluding, that there could be nothing but good in that doctrine that made all its votaries such. But
alas!

alas! when we write apologies, we must appeal from the lives of most that pretend to be religious, to the rules and precepts of our most holy faith; and must decline the putting the trial of Christianity upon that issue; and though, thanks be to God, there are beautiful and shining instances of the power of Religion among us, yet, alas! there be too few of them, and they lye hid in a vast mixture of others that are naught.

THE two great prejudices the tribe of *libertines* and *ruffians* are hardned in against Religion, are, *first*, That they do not see those that profess they believe the truths of Religion, live like men that do so in good earnest; and I have known them say, That did they believe the Great God governed all human affairs; and did know all we do; and were to call us to an account for it, and reward or punish accordingly, in an endless and unchangeable state; they could not live as the greater part of Christians do, but would presently renounce all the vanities and follies of this world, and give themselves up wholly to a holy and exact course of life. *Secondly*, The other prejudice is, That as for those in whose deportment they find little to blame, yet they have great cause of suspecting there is some hidden design under it, which will break out when there is a fit opportunity for it; and they conclude, that such persons are either secretly as bad as others, only disguising it by a more decent deportment, or that all they

they do is a force upon themselves for some secret end or other. And if there be some on whom they can fasten, neither of these, (as it is hardly possible but one that is resolved to possess himself with prejudices, will either find or pretend some colours for them) then, at last, they judge such persons are morose and fullen, and that they find (either from the disposition of their body, or their education) as much satisfaction in such their sour gravity, as others do in all their wanton and extravagant follies.

THESE prejudices, especially the first, must be discuss'd by real confutations; and the strict conduct of our lives, as well as our grave and solemn devotions, must shew we are over ruled by a strong belief of the authority of that law which governs our whole actions. Nor will our abstaining from gross immoralities be argument enough, since even decency may prevail so far, (though alas! never so little as now, when fools do so generally make a mock at the shame and sense of sin, as if it were only the peevishness of a strict and illiberal education) but we must abstain from all those things that are below the gravity of a Christian, and which strengthen a corrupt generation in their vices. What signifies endless gaming, especially when joined with such avarice and passion as accompany it generally, but that people know not how to dispose of their time, and therefore must play it away idly at best? What shall be said of those constant crowds at plays, (*especially*

ally when the stage is so defiled with atheism, and all sorts of immorality) but that so many persons know not how to fill up so many hours of the day, and therefore this contrivance must serve to waste them, and they must feed their eyes and ears with debauching objects, which will either corrupt the minds, or at least fill their imaginations with very unpleasant and hateful representations? As if there were not a sufficient growth of ill thoughts ready to spring up within us, but this must be cultivated and improved by art. What are those perpetual visits, in the giving or receiving of which most spend the better half of the time in which they are awake? and how trifling at best, but generally how hurtful the discourses that pass in those visits, are, I leave to those who live in them to declare. How much time is spent in vain dressing, (not to mention those indecent arts of painting, and other contrivances to corrupt the world) and all, either to feed vanity, or kindle lust? And after all this, many that live in these things desire to be thought good Christians, are constant at church, and frequent at the sacrament. What wonder then if our Libertines, seeing such things in persons that pass for very religious, and having wit enough to discern that such a deportment does not agree with the belief of an account to be made for all we do, conclude they do not believe it, otherwise they would not behave themselves as they do. Some failures, now and then, could not justify such an inference; but a habit and course of

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those things is an argument against the reality of that belief, which I confess I cannot answer.

BUT, when we have got so far as to escape those things that are blame-worthy, it is far from being all we must aim at. It is not enough not to be ill; we must be good, and express it in all the instances which our state of life and circumstances call for: Doing good to all, forgiving injuries, comforting all in trouble, supplying the necessities of the poor; but chiefly, studying to advance the good of all peoples souls as much as we can; improving whatever interest we have in any persons to this end, of raising them to a sense of God and another life; the chief motive offered to this, being the unaffected strictness of our own deportment, which will make all our discourses have the greater weight and force in them.

AND for the other prejudices, it is true there is no fence or security against jealousy, yet we ought carefully to avoid every thing that may be an occasion of it; as all secret converse with suspected persons, the doing any thing (that without sin we may forbear) which is singular, or may bring a disesteem on others, or make us be observed, or talked of; and, in a word, to shun all forced gestures, or modes of speech, and every thing that is not native and genuine: For let men think what they will, nothing that is constrained can ever become

come so natural, but it will appear loathsome and affected to others ; which must needs afford matter of jealousy and dislike, especially to prying and critical observers.

WERE there many who did live thus, the Atheists would be more convinced, at least more ashamed, and out of countenance, than the most learned writings or laboured sermons will ever make them ; especially if a spirit of universal love and goodness did appear more among Christians, and those factions and animosities were laid aside, which both weaken the inward vitals of holiness, and expose them to the scorn of their adversaries, and make them an easy prey to every aggressor. There is scarce a more unaccountable thing to be imagined, than to see a company of men professing a Religion (one great and main precept whereof is mutual love, forbearance, gentleness of spirit, and compassion to all sorts of persons) and agreeing in all the essential parts of its doctrine, and differing only in some less material and more disputable things, yet maintaining those differences with a zeal so disproportioned to the value of them, and prosecuting all that disagree from them with all possible violence, or, if they want means to use outward force, with all bitterness of spirit. This must needs astonish every impartial beholder, and raise great prejudices against such persons. Religion, as made up of contradictions, professing love, but breaking out in all the acts of hatred.

BUT the deep sense I have of these things has carried me too far; my design in this Preface being only to introduce the following DISCOURSE, which was written by a pious and learned countryman of mine, for the private use of a noble friend of his, without the least design of making it more public. Others seeing it, were much taken both with the excellent purposes it contained, and the great clearness and pleasantness of the stile, the natural method, and the shortness of it,--and desired it might be made a more public good: And knowing some interest I had with the Author, it was referred to me whether it should lye in a private closet, or be let go abroad. I was not long in suspense, having read it over; and the rather knowing so well as I do, that the Author has written out nothing here but what he himself did well feel and know; and therefore, it being a transcript of those divine impressions that are upon his own heart, I hope the native and unforced genuineness of it will both more delight and edify the Reader. I know these things have been often discoursed with great advantages, both of reason, wit, and eloquence; but the more witnesses that concur in sealing those divine truths with their testimonies, the more evidence is thereby given.

AND so the Reader is desired to peruse it with some degrees of the same seriousness in which it was penned; and then it is presumed he will not repent him of his pains.

GILBERT BURNET.

P R E F A C E II.

THIS excellent book was first published above threescore years ago, in the Author's lifetime, by a Learned and Eminent Divine, who gives us this character of him: "That the book was a transcript of those divine impressions that were upon his own heart, and that he had written nothing in it, but what he himself did well feel and know."

SINCE I had the happiness to become acquainted with it, I have heartily blessed God for the benefit I have received to my own soul, by the perusal of it; and have earnestly wished it had a place in every family, was carefully perused by every one who can read, and that the sentiments of *pure and undefiled Religion* it contains were impressed upon every heart. I have much regretted the scarcity of copies of it; especially such as might be within the reach of the poorer sort of persons. I have, Indeed, lately seen an impression, which is sold at a low price; but then it is such a sorry one, that I think it must be a pain to read it. I have therefore made it my business to promote an Edition of it in a fair Paper and neat Letter; at so low a price, that the poorest may purchase it, who are able to purchase any book at all; and the charitable may, at a small expence, give it away.

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THE things which especially recommended the book to my heart, and which, I think, cannot fail to recommend it to the heart of every serious peruser of it, are, 1. The just notions it contains of real and vital religion, in opposition to the common mistakes concerning it; and the view it gives us of that *ingenious spirit* which belongs to true piety; with a just allowance at the same time, to the *proper* influence of *external* motives. 2. The excellency and force of the motives, by which true Religion is here recommended, together with the energy and warmth with which they are delivered. 3. The excellent directions here given, for attaining true piety and goodness. 4. The prudence and charity the worthy Author discovers in avoiding matters of *doubtful disputation*; about which the best and wisest men differ, while he is treating of matters of the greatest importance about which all good and wise men must agree: And oh! had we more of that true Christian spirit, so beautifully delineated, and so warmly recommended in this book, I cannot but think, that the fierceness of our contentions and animosities, about things of lesser moment, must considerably abate. In fine, that vein of good sense and clear thought, and of serious piety, which runs through the whole of this performance, exceedingly commended it to me.

For these reasons I earnestly recommend this book to the careful perusal of all with whom my recommendation may be of any weight, particularly

particularly to the people of those congregations of which I have had or now have the oversight. I would, in a more particular manner, recommend it to the poor of our flocks, who have not money to buy, or time to read larger books : You have here a valuable treasure, in a small compass, and at a very low price ; so that you may both easily come by it, and easily become acquainted with it, and render it familiar to you : By reading one half hour in it every Lord's day, you may in a few weeks read the whole : And if, with this, you join serious meditation and earnest prayer, I hope you shall reap great good by it, to the glory of God ; and that I shall have your blessings and prayers for putting it into your hands.

I would likewise, in a particular manner, recommend it to the rising generation, in whose education I have the honour to have considerable charge ; and oh ! that I could be so happy as to make them sensible how much it would contribute to the peace and satisfaction of their whole after-life, to have their minds and hearts early possessed of such just notions of true piety and goodness, and such a prevailing liking to it, as this excellent book tends to promote ; how much, I say, this would conduce to their true enjoyment in a present life, even though we should set aside the consideration of that eternal state, to which we are all hastning apace and whither the youngest of us knows not how soon he may take his flight : The chief part,
and

and valuable end of all true knowledge and learning, is the rectifying and improvement of the heart. I would especially recommend this book to our young Students, who have their views towards the sacred function. I cannot but reckon, that the most necessary part of preparation for that important work, is, to have such a just understanding of the great design of Religion and Christianity, and such a taste of true piety and goodness, as this book tends to inspire us with: *An honest and good heart* is the main thing necessary for *preaching* the word of God, as well as for *hearing* it, with profit.

In fine, I hope, I may take the liberty to recommend it to my younger brethren in the Holy Ministry. The careful perusal of this little book may, I hope, contribute to the further improvement of their notions of Religion, and to promote in them that rational piety, and real goodness, in which they ought to be examples to their *flock*. It may also afford them excellent hints to be improved upon, according to the abilities God has given them, in their public performances: There are few paragraphs in this excellent book, but what may each of them be profitably enlarged into a Sermon. And oh! my brethren, how may it put us to the blush, and what a holy emulation should it raise in us, to know that the worthy Author of this admirable book, composed it before he was 27 years of age? what

what a spur to our diligence, that he came to the end and reward of his labours before he was 28! And if you relish this book yourselves, I hope you will recommend it to the people under your care: And I believe you may find a benefit in it, more than worth all the charge, to bestow some copies of it among the poorest in your flocks, and thus oblige those by a present to read it, who might reckon it a hardship to be obliged to buy it, cheap as it is: We may now serve a dozen or a score of poor families with this useful book, at an expence which hardly any of us would grudge to bestow upon entertaining a distant acquaintance, or a passing stranger.

To conclude, I heartily recommend the Reader, in the Perusal of this book, to the Divine blessing: And am

His sincere well-wisher, and

humble servant in the Lord,

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College of Edingburgh, }
April 26th, 1739.

WILL. WISHART.

CONTENTS.

PART I.

Page

T HE occasion of this discourse,	1
Mistakes about Religion	2
What Religion is,	3
Its permanency and stability,	4
Its freedom and unconstrainedness,	5
Religion is a divine principle,	8
The Natural Life, what,	9
The different tendencies thereof,	10
The divine Life, wherein it consists,	13
Religion better understood by action than words,	16
Divine love exemplified in our blessed Saviour,	17
His diligence in performing God's will,	<i>ib.</i>
His patience in bearing it,	18
His constant devotion,	19
His charity to men,	<i>ib.</i>
His purity,	21
His humility,	23
A prayer,	25

PART II.

THE excellency and advantage of Religion,	26
The excellency of Divine Love,	<i>ib.</i>
The advantages of Divine Love,	29
The	

C O N T E N T S.

	<i>Page</i>
The worth of the objects to be regarded,	30
Love requires a reciprocal return,	31
Love requires the object to be present,	32
The Divine Love makes us partake of an infinite happiness,	33
He that loveth God, finds sweetness in all his dispensations,	34
The duties of Religion are delightful to him,	35
The excellency of universal charity and love,	37
The pleasure that attends it,	38
The excellency of purity,	39
The delight it affords,	ib.
The excellency of humility,	40
The pleasure and sweetness of a humble tem- per,	41
A prayer,	43

P A R T III.

DESPONDENT thoughts which may arise in such as are awakened to a sense of Religion,	45
The unreasonableness of such fears,	46
We must use our utmost endeavours, and then rely on God's assistance,	51
We must shun all manner of sin,	53
We must learn what things are sinful,	54
We must consider the evils of sin, and resist the temptations to it;	56
We must constantly watch ourselves,	60
We must often examine our actions,	61

We must restrain ourselves in many lawful things,	62
We must strive to put ourselves out of love with the world,	63
We must conscientiously perform the outward actions of Religion,	67.
We must endeavour to form internal acts of devotion and charity, &c.	68
Consideration a great instrument in Religion,	70
We must consider the excellency of the Divine Nature, to beget divine love in us,	72
We must often meditate on God's goodness and love,	75
To beget charity, we must remember that all men are nearly related to God,	78
That they bear his image,	79
To beget purity, we must consider the dignity of our nature,	80
And meditate often on the joys of heaven,	81
Humility ariseth from the consideration of our failings,	82
Thoughts of God make us have an humble sense of ourselves,	83
Prayer another instrument of Religion,	<i>ib.</i>
Mental prayer very profitable,	84
Religion is advanced by the same means with which it began,	85
The frequent use of the holy Sacrament,	86
A prayer,	87

C O N T E N T S.

F O R M S O F P R A Y E R.

	<i>Page</i>
1. A short prayer for the morning, -	89
2. A short prayer at night, - -	91
3. A longer prayer, for any other time of the day, - - - -	92
4. A large form for more particular occasions	96
5. A prayer for a family, for morning or evening, - - - -	118
6. The Lord's prayer, paraphrased in the words of the Shorter Catechism, -	124

THE
LIFE OF GOD

IN THE

SOUL OF MAN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THIS designation doth give you a title to all the endeavours whereby I can serve your interests; and your pious inclinations to do so, happily conspire with my duty, that I shall not need to step out of my road to gratify you; but I may at once perform an office of friendship, and discharge an exercise of my function, since the advancing of virtue and holiness (which I hope you make your greatest study) is the peculiar business of my employment. This, therefore, is the most proper instance wherein I can vent my affection, and express my gratitude towards you, and I shall not any longer delay the performance of the promise I made you to this purpose: For though I know you are provided with better helps of this nature than any I can offer you, nor are you like to meet with
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any thing here which you knew not before ; yet I am hopeful, that what cometh from one whom you are pleased to honour with your friendship, and which is more particularly designed for your use, will be kindly accepted by you ; and God's providence perhaps may so direct my thoughts, that something or other may prove useful to you. Nor shall I doubt your pardon, if for moulding my discourse into the better frame, I lay a low foundation, beginning with the nature and properties of Religion, and all along give such way to my thoughts, in the prosecution of the subject, as may bring me to say many things which were not necessary, did I only consider to whom I am writing.

Mistakes about Religion. I cannot speak of Religion, but I must lament, that among so many pretenders to it, so few understand what it means ; some placing it in the understanding, in orthodox notions and opinions ; and all the account they can give of their religion, is, that they are of this and the other persuasion, and have joined themselves to one of those many sects whereinto Christendom is most unhappily divided. Others place it in the outward man, in a constant course of external duties, and a model of performances ; if they live peaceably with their neighbours, keep a temperate diet, observe the returns of worship, frequenting the church, or their closet, and sometimes extend their hands to the relief of the poor, they think they have sufficiently acquitted themselves. Others again
put

put all religion in the affections, in rapturous hearts, and extatic devotion; and all they aim at, is, to pray with passion, and think of heaven with pleasure, and to be affected with those kind and melting expressions wherewith they court their Saviour, till they persuade themselves that they are mightily in love with him; and from thence assume a great confidence of their salvation, which they esteem the chief of Christian graces. Thus are these things which have any resemblance of piety, and at the best are but means of obtaining it, or particular exercises of it, frequently mistaken for the whole of Religion: Nay, sometimes wickedness and vice pretend to that name. I speak not now of those gross impieties wherewith the Heathens were wont to worship their gods; there are but too many Christians who would consecrate their vices, and hollow their corrupt affections, whose rugged humour, and sullen pride, must pass for Christian severity; whose fierce wrath, and bitter rage against their enemies, must be called holy zeal; whose petulancy towards their superiors, or rebellion against their governors, must have the name of Christian courage and resolution.

But certainly Religion is quite *What Religion is.* another thing, and they who are acquainted with it, will entertain far different thoughts, and disdain all those shadows and false imitations of it. They know by experience that true Religion is an union of the soul with God, a real participation of
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the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul, or, in the Apostle's phrase, *it is Christ formed within us.* Briefly, I know not how the nature of Religion can be more fully expressed, than by calling it a *divine life*. And under these terms I shall discourse of it, shewing, first, how it is called a *Life*, and then how it is termed *divine*.

I chuse to express it by the name of *Life*; first, because of its permanency and stability. Religion is not a sudden start, or passion of the mind, not though it should rise to the height of a rapture, and seem to transport a man to extraordinary performances. There are few but have convictions of the necessity of doing something for the salvation of their souls, which may push them forward some steps with a great deal of seeming haste: But anon they flag and give over; they were in a hot mood, but now they are cooled; they did shoot forth fresh and high,---but are quickly withered, because they had no root in themselves. These sudden fits may be compared to the violent and convulsive motions of bodies newly beheaded, caused by the agitations of the animal spirits, after the soul is departed, which, however violent and impetuous, can be of no long continuance; whereas the motions of holy souls are constant and regular, proceeding from a permanent and lively principle. It is true, this divine life continueth not always in that same strength and vigour, but many times

times suffers sad decays; and holy men find greater difficulty in resisting temptations, and less alacrity in the performance of their duties: Yet it is not quite extinguished; nor are they abandoned to the power of those corrupt affections, which sway and over-rule the rest of the world.

Again, Religion may be de- *Its freedom*
signed by the name of *Life*; be- *and uncon-*
cause it is an inward, free, and *strainedness*.
self-moving principle; and those
who have made progress in it, are not acted
only by external motives, driven merely by
threatenings, nor bribed by promises, nor con-
strained by laws; but are powerfully inclined
to that which is good, and delight in the per-
formance of it. The love which a pious man
bears to God and goodness, is not so much by
virtue of a command enjoining him so to do,
as by a new nature instructing and prompting
him to it; nor doth he pay his devotions as an
unavoidable tribute, only to appease the divine
justice, or quiet his clamorous conscience; but
those religious exercises are the proper emana-
tions of the divine life, the natural employ-
ments of the new-born soul. He prays, and
gives thanks, and repents, not only because
these things are commanded, but rather be-
cause he is sensible of his wants, and of the
divine goodness, and of the folly and misery
of a sinful life; his charity is not forced, nor
his alms extorted from him; his love makes him
willing to give; and though there were no out-
ward

ward obligation, his *heart would devise liberal things*: Injustice or intemperance, and all other vices, are as contrary to his temper and constitution; as the basest actions are to the most generous spirit, and impudence and scurrility to those who are naturally modest. So that I may well say with St John, † *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* Though holy and religious persons do much eye the law of God, and have a great regard unto it; yet it is not so much the sanction of the law, as its reasonableness, and purity, and goodness, which do prevail with them; they account it excellent, and desirable in itself, and that in keeping of it there is great reward; and that divine love wherewith they are acted, makes them become a law unto themselves.

Quis legem det amantibus?

Major est amor lex ipse sibi.

Who shall prescribe a law to those that love? Love's a more powerful law which doth them move.

In a word, what our blessed Saviour said of himself, is in some measure applicable to his followers, ‡ *that it is their meat and drink to do their Fathers will*. And as the natural appetite is carried out toward food, though we should not reflect on the necessity of it for the preservation of our lives; so are they carried with a

† 1 John iii. 9.

‡ John iv. 34.

natural and unforced propension toward that which is good and commendable. It is true, external motives are many times of great use to excite and stir up this inward principle, especially in its infancy and weakness, when it is often so languid that the man himself can scarce discern it, hardly being able to move one step forward but when he is pushed by his hopes, or his fears by the pressure of an affliction, or the sense of a mercy, by the authority of the law, or the persuasion of others. Now if such a person be conscientious and uniform in his obedience, and earnestly groaning under the sense of his dullness, and is desirous to perform his duties with more spirit and vigour; these are the first motions of the divine life, which, though it be faint and weak, will surely be cherished by the influences of heaven, and grow unto greater maturity. But he who is utterly destitute of this inward principle, and doth not aspire unto it, but contents himself with those performances whereunto he is prompted by education or custom, by the fear of hell, or carnal notions of heaven, can no more be accounted a religious person, than a puppet can be called a man. This forced and artificial religion is commonly heavy and languid, like the motion of a weight forced upward: It is cold and spiritless, like the uneasy compliance of a wife married against her will, who carries it dutifully toward the husband whom she doth not love, out of some sense of virtue or honour. Hence also this religion

Religion is scant and niggardly, especially in those duties which do greatest violence to mens carnal inclinations, and those slavish spirits will be sure to do no more than is absolutely required: It is a law that compels them, and they will be loth to go beyond what it stints them to; nay, they will ever be putting such glosses on it, as may leave themselves the greatest liberty: Whereas the spirit of true religion is frank and liberal, far from such peevish and narrow reckoning; and he who hath given himself entirely unto God, will never think he doth too much for him.

*Religion
a divine
principle.*

By this time I hope it doth appear, that Religion is with a great deal of reason termed a *Life*, or vital principle, and that it is very necessary to distinguish betwixt it and that obedience which is constrained, and depends upon external causes. I come next to give an account why I designed it by the name of *divine Life*: And so it may be called, not only in regard of its fountain and original, having God for its author, and being wrought in the souls of men by the power of his holy spirit; but also in regard of its nature, Religion being a resemblance of the divine perfections, the image of the Almighty shining in the soul of man: Nay, it is a real participation of his nature, it is a beam of the eternal light, a drop of that infinite ocean of goodness; and they who are endowed with it may be said to have *God dwelling in their souls, and Christ formed within them.*

Before

Before I descend to a more particular consideration of that divine life wherein true religion doth consist, it will perhaps be fit to speak a little of that natural or animal life which prevails in those who are strangers to the other: And by this I understand nothing else, but our inclination and propension towards those things which are pleasing and acceptable to nature; or self-love issuing forth and spreading itself into as many branches as men have several appetites and inclinations. The root and foundation of the animal life, I reckon to be *sense*, taking it largely, as it is opposed unto faith, and importeth our preception and sensation of those things that are either grateful or troublesome to us. Now these animal affections, considered in themselves, and as they are implanted in us by nature, are not vicious or bleameable; nay, they are instances of the wisdom of the Creator, furnishing his creatures with such appetites as tend to the preservation and welfare of their lives. These are instead of a law unto the brute beasts, whereby they are directed towards the ends for which they were made: But man being made for higher purposes, and to be guided by more excellent laws, becomes guilty and criminal when he is so far transported by the inclinations of this lower life as to violate his duty, or neglect the higher and more noble designs of his creation. Our natural affections are not wholly to be extirpated and destroyed, but only to be moderated and over-ruled by

superior and more excellent principle. In a word, the difference betwixt a religious and wicked man, is, that in the one divine life bears sway, in the other the animal life doth prevail.

But it is strange to observe

The different tendencies of the natural life. unto what different courses this natural principle will sometimes carry those who are wholly guided by it, according to the divers circumstances that concur with

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

to them : And it is well that nature hath provided this complexional tenderness, to supply the defect of true charity in the world, and to incline men to do something for one another's welfare. Again, in regard of education, some have never been taught to follow any other rules than those of pleasure or advantage ; but others are so inured to observe the strictest rules of decency and honour, and some instances of virtue, that they are hardly capable of doing any thing which they have been accustomed to look upon as base and unworthy.

In fine, it is no small difference in the deportment of mere natural men, that doth arise from the strength or weakness of their wit or judgment, and from their care or negligence in using them. Intemperance and lust, injustice and oppression, and all those other impieties which abound in the world, and render it so miserable, are the issues of self-love, the effect of the *animal life*, when it is neither overpowered by religion, nor governed by natural reason : But if it once take hold of reason, and get judgment and wit to be of its party, it will many times disdain the grosser sort of vices, and spring up unto fair imitations of virtue and goodness. If a man have but so much reason as to consider the prejudice which intemperance and inordinate lust do bring unto his health, his fortune and his reputation, self-love may suffice to restrain him ; and one may observe the rules of moral justice, in dealing with others, as the best way to secure his own interest, and maintain his credit

credit in the world. But this is not all: For this natural principle, by the help of reason, may take a higher flight, and come nigher the instances of piety and religion: It may incline a man to the diligent study of divine truths; for why should not these, as well as other speculations, be pleasant and grateful to curious and inquisitive minds? It may make men zealous in maintaining and propagating such opinions as they have espoused, and be very desirous that others should submit unto their judgment, and approve the choice of religion which they themselves have made: It may make them delight to hear and compose excellent discourses about the matters of religion; for eloquence is very pleasant whatever be the subject: Nay, some it may dispose to no small height of sensible devotion. The glorious things that are spoken of heaven, may make even a carnal heart in love with it; the metaphors and similitudes made use of in scripture, of crowns and scepters, and rivers of pleasure, &c. will easily effect a man's fancy, and make him wish to be there, though he neither understand nor desire those spiritual pleasures which are described and shadowed forth by them; and when such a person comes to believe that Christ has purchased those glorious things for him, he may feel a kind of tendernefs and affection toward so great a benefactor, and imagine that he is mightily enamoured with him, and yet all the while continue a stranger to the holy temper and spirit of the blessed Jesus; and what hand the natural constitution may have in the rapturous devotions of some melancholy

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choly persons, hath been excellently discovered of late by several learned and judicious pens.

To conclude, there is nothing proper to make a man's life, pleasant, or himself eminent and conspicuous in the world; but this natural principle, assisted by wit and reason, may prompt him to it; and though I do not condemn these things in themselves, yet it concerns us nearly to know and consider their nature, both that we may keep within due bounds, and also that we may learn never to value ourselves on the account of such attainments, nor lay the stress of religion upon our natural appetites or performances.

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

dinary sound, yet do they carry such a mighty sense, that the tongue of man or angel can pronounce nothing more weighty or excellent. *Faith* hath the same place in the *divine life*, which *sense* hath in the *natural*, being indeed nothing else but a kind of sense, or feeling persuasion of spiritual things : It extends itself unto all divine truths ; but in our lapsed estate, it hath a peculiar relation to the declarations of God's mercy and reconcileableness to sinners through a mediator ; and therefore receiving its denomination from that principal object, is ordinarily termed *Faith in Jesus-Christ*.

The *Love* of God is a delightful and affectionate sense of the divine perfections, which makes the soul resign and sacrifice itself wholly unto him, desiring above all things to please him, and delighting in nothing so much as in fellowship and communion with him, and being ready to do or suffer any thing for his sake, or at his pleasure. Though this affection may have its first rise from the favours and mercies of God toward ourselves, yet doth it, in its growth and progress, transcend such particular considerations, and ground itself on his infinite goodness, manifested in all the works of creation and providence. A soul, thus possessed with *divine love*, must needs be enlarged, toward all mankind, in a sincere and unbounded affection ; because of the relation they have to God, being his creatures, and having something of his image stamped upon them ; and this is that *charity* I named as the second branch of Religion, and under which all the parts of justice,

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all the duties we owe to our neighbour, are eminently comprehended : For he who doth truly love all the world; will be nearly concerned in the interest of every one; and so far from wronging or injuring any person, that he will resent any evil that befalls others, as if it happened to himself.

By *Purity*, I understand a due abstractedness from the body, and mastery over the inferior appetites ; or such a temper and disposition of mind, as makes a man despise and abstain from all pleasures and delights of sense or fancy, which are sinful in themselves, or tend to extinguish or lessen our relish of more divine and intellectual pleasures ; which doth also infer a resoluteness to undergo all those hardships he may meet with in the performance of his duty : So that not only chastity and temperance, but also christian courage and magnanimity, may come under this head.

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

These are the highest perfections that either men or angels are capable of ; the very foundation of heaven laid in the soul ; and he who hath attained them, needs not desire to pry into the hidden rolls of God's decrees, or search the volumes of heaven to know what is determined

mined about his everlasting condition; but he may find a copy of God's thoughts concerning him, written in his own breast. His love to God may give him assurance of God's favour to him; and those beginnings of happiness, which he feels in the conformity of the powers of his soul to the nature of God, and compliance with his will, are a sure pledge that his felicity shall be perfected, and continued to all eternity: And it is not without reason that one said, *I had rather see the real impressions of a God-like nature upon my own soul, than have a vision from heaven, or an angel sent to tell me that my name were inrolled in the book of life.*

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

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

That sincere and devout affection wherewith his blessed soul did constantly burn toward his heavenly Father, did express itself in an entire resignation to his will;

Divine love exemplified in our Saviour.

it was this was his very *meat to do the will, and finish the work of him that sent him.*

This was

the exercise of his childhood, and the constant employment of his riper age. He spared no travel or pains while he was about his Father's business, but took such

His diligence in doing God's will.

infinite content and satisfaction in the performance of it; that when, being faint and weary with his journey, he rested himself on *Jacob's well*, and intreated water of the *Samaritan woman*. The success of his conference with her, and the accession that was made to the kingdom of God, filled his mind with such delight, as seemed to have redounded to his very body, refreshing his spirits, and making him forget the thirst whereof he complained before, and refuse the meat which he had sent his disciples to buy. Nor was he less patient

His patience and submissive in suffering the *will of God*, than diligent in *the doing of it*: He endured the sharpest afflictions, and extremest miseries that ever were inflicted on any mortal, without a repining thought, or discontented word: For though he was far from a stupid insensibility, or a fantastic or stoical obstinacy, and had as quick a sense of pain as other men, and the deepest apprehension of what he was to suffer in his soul, (as his *bloody sweat*, and the *fore amazement and sorrow* which he profess, do abundantly declare) yet did he entirely submit to that severe dispensation of providence, and willingly acquiesced in it.

And he prayed to God, that *if it were possible*, (or as one of the Evangelists hath it, *if he were willing*) *that cup might be removed*; yet he gently added, *Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done*. Of what strange importance are the expressions, *John xii. 27.* where he first acknowledgeth the anguish of his spirit, *Now is my soul troubled*, (which would seem to produce a kind of demur) *and what I shall say?* and then he goes to deprecate his sufferings, *Father save me from this hour*; which he had no sooner uttered, but he doth as it were, on second thoughts, recal it in these words, *But for this cause came I into the world*; and concludes, *Father glorify thy name*. Now we must not look on this as any levity, or blameable weakness in the blessed Jesus: He knew all along what he was to suffer, and did most resolutely undergo it; but

But it shews us the unconceivable weight and pressure that he was to bear, which being so afflicting, and contrary to nature, he could not think of without terror; yet considering the will of God, and the glory which was to redound to him from thence, he was not only content, but desirous to suffer it.

Another instance of his love to God was his delight in conversing with him by prayer, which made him frequently retire himself from the world, and with the greatest devotion and pleasure spend whole nights in that heavenly exercise, though he had no sins to confess, and but few secular interests to pray for; which, alas! are almost the only things that are wont to drive us to our devotions: Nay, we may say his whole life was a kind of prayer; a constant course of communion with God: If the sacrifice was not always offering, yet was the fire still kept alive; nor was ever the blessed Jesus surpris'd with that dulness, or torpidity of spirit, which we must many times wrestle with before we can be fit for the exercise of devotion.

In the second place, I should speak of his love and charity toward all men, but he who would express it, must transcribe the history of the gospel, and comment upon it; for scarce any thing is recorded to have been done or spoken by him, which was not designed for the good and advantage of some one or other.

miraculous works were instances of his goodness as well as his power; and they benefited those on whom they were wrought, as well as they amazed the beholders. His charity was not confined to his kindred, or relations; nor was all his kindness swallowed up in the endearments of that peculiar friendship which he carried toward the beloved disciple: But every one was his *friend* who obeyed his *holy commands*, John xv. 14. and *whosoever did the will of his Father*, the same was to him as *his brother, and sister, and mother*.

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

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

The third branch of the *divine* *His purity.* *life is purity*, which, as I said, consists in a neglect of worldly enjoyments and accommodations, in a resolute enduring of all such troubles as we meet with in doing of our duty. Now surely, if ever any person was wholly dead to all the pleasures of the natural life, it was the blessed Jesus, who seldom tasted them when they came in his way; but never stepped out of his road to seek them. Though he allowed others the comforts of wedlock, and honoured marriage with his presence; yet he chose the severity of a virgin life, and never knew the nuptial bed: And though at the same time he supplied the want of wine with a miracle, yet he would not work one for the relief of his own hunger in the wilderness; so gracious and divine was the temper of his soul, in allowing to others such lawful gratifications as himself thought good to abstain from, and
supplying

supplying not only their more extreme and pressing necessities, but also their smaller and less considerable wants. We many times hear of our Saviour's sighs, and groans, and tears; but never that he laughed, and but once that he rejoiced in spirit: So that through his whole life, he did exactly answer that character given of him by the prophet of old, that he was *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*. Nor were the troubles and disaccommodations of his life other than matters of choice; for never did there any appear, on the stage of the world, with greater advantages to have raised himself to the highest secular felicity. He who would bring together such a prodigious number of fishes into his disciples net, and, at another time, receive that tribute from a fish which he was to pay to the temple, might easily have made himself the richest person in the world: Nay, without any money, he could have maintained an army powerful enough to have jostled *Cæsar* out of his throne, having oftner than once fed several thousands with a few loaves and small fishes; but, to shew how small esteem he had of all the enjoyments in the world; he chose to live in so poor and mean a condition, *that though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, yet he, who was lord and heir of all thing, had not whereon to lay his head*: He did not frequent the courts of princes, nor affect the acquaintance or converse of great ones; but being reputed the son of a carpenter, he had fishermen, and such other poor people for
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his companions, and lived at such a rate, as suited with the meanness of that condition.

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

gratify the curiosity of the *Jews* with a sign from heaven, some prodigious appearance in the air; nor would he follow the advice of his countrymen and kindred, who would have had all his great works performed in the eyes of the world, for gaining him the greater fame: But, when his charity had prompted him to the relief of the miserable, his humility made him, many times enjoin the concealment of the miracle; and when the glory of God, and the design for which he came into the world, required the publication of them, he ascribeth the honour of all to his Father, telling them, *that of himself he was able to do nothing*;

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

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

A PRAYER.

INFINITE and ETERNAL Majesty! Author and Fountain of being and blessedness! How little do we poor sinful creatures know of thee, or the way to serve and please thee! We talk of Religion, and pretend unto it; but alas! how few are there that know and consider what it means! how easily do we mistake the affections of our nature, and issues of self-love, for those divine graces which alone can render us acceptable in thy sight! It may justly grieve me to consider, that I should have wandered so long, and contented myself so often with vain shadows, and false images of Piety and Religion; yet I cannot but acknowledge and adore thy goodness, who hast been pleased, in some measure, to open mine eyes, and let me see what it is at which I ought to aim. I rejoice to consider what mighty improvements my nature is capable of, and what a divine temper of spirit doth shine in those whom thou art pleased to choose, and causest to approach unto thee. Blessed be thine infinite mercy, who sentest thine own Son to dwell among men, and instruct them by his example as well as his laws, giving them a perfect pattern of what they ought to be. O! that the holy life of the blessed Jesus may be always in my thoughts, and before mine eyes, till I receive a deep sense and impression of those excellent graces that shined so eminently in him; and let me never cease my endeavours, till that new and divine nature prevail in my soul, and Christ be formed within me.

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AND now, my dear Friend, having discovered the nature of true Religion, before I proceed any further, it will not perhaps be

The excellency and advantage of religion. unfit to fix our meditations a little on the excellency and advantages of it, that we may be excited to the more vigorous and diligent prosecution of those

methods whereby we may attain so great a felicity. But, alas! what words shall we find to express that inward satisfaction, those hidden pleasures which can never be rightly understood, but by these holy souls who feel them? *A stranger intermeddleth not with their joy.*

Holiness is the right temper, the vigorous and healthful constitution of the soul: Its faculties had formerly been infeeble and disordered, so that they could not exercise their natural functions; it had wearied itself with endless tossings and rollings, and was never able to find any rest: Now that distemper being removed, it feels itself well; there is a due harmony in its faculties, and a sprightly vigour possesseth every part. The understanding can discern what is good, and the will can cleave unto it. The affections are not tied to the motions of sense, and the influence of external objects but they are stirred by more divine impressions, are touched by a sense of invisible things.

Let us descend, if you please,

The excellency of divine love. into a nearer and more particular view of Religion, in those several branches of it which were named

before:

before: Let us consider that love and affection wherewith holy souls are united to God, that we may see what excellency and felicity is involved in it. Love is that powerful and prevalent passion, by which all the faculties and inclinations of the soul are determined, and on which both its perfection and happiness depend. The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love: He who loveth mean and sordid things, doth thereby become base and vile; but a noble and well-placed affection doth advance and improve the spirit into a conformity with the perfections which it loves. The images of these do frequently present themselves unto the mind, and, by a secret force and energy, insinuate into the very constitution of the soul, and mould and fashion it unto their own likenesses. Hence we may see how easily lovers or friends do slide into the imitation of the persons whom they affect; and who, even before they are aware, they begin to resemble them, not only in the more considerable instances of their deportment, but also in their voice and gesture, and that which we call their mien or air; and certainly we should as well transcribe the virtues and inward beauties of the soul, if they were the object and motive of our love. But now, as all the creatures we converse with have their mixture and alloy, we are always in hazard to be sullied and corrupted, by placing our affection on them: Passion doth easily blind our eyes, so that we first approve, and then imi-

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tate the things that are blameable in them. The true way to improve and ennoble our souls, is, by fixing our love on the divine perfections, that we may have them always before us, and derive an impression of them on ourselves, and *beholding with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory.* He who, with a generous and holy ambition, hath raised his eyes towards that uncreated beauty and goodness, and fixed his affection there, is quite of another spirit, of a more excellent and heroic temper than the rest of the world, and cannot but infinitely disdain all mean and unworthy things; will not entertain any low or base thoughts, which might disparage his high and noble pretensions. Love is the greatest and most excellent thing we are masters of; and therefore it is folly and baseness to bestow it unworthily: It is, indeed, the only thing we can call our own; other things may be taken from us by violence, but none can ravish our love: If any thing else be counted ours, by giving our love, we give all, so far as we make over our hearts and wills, by which we possess our other enjoyments: It is not possible to refuse him any thing, to whom, by love, we have given ourselves; nay, since it is the privilege of gifts to receive their value from the mind of the giver, and not to be measured by the event, but by the desire, he who loveth, may, in some sense, be said not only to bestow all that he hath, but all things else which may make the beloved person happy

py; since he doth heartily wish them, and would really give them if they were in his power: In which sense it is that one makes bold to say, *That divine love doth, in a manner, give God unto himself, by the complacency it takes in the happiness and perfection of his nature*: But though this may seem too strained an expression, certainly love is the worthiest present we can offer unto God, and it is extremely debased, when we bestow it another way.

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

Again, as *divine love* doth advance and elevate the soul; so it is that alone which can make it happy: The highest and most ra-

The advantages of divine love.

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visiting pleasures, the most solid and substantial delights that human nature is capable of, are those which arise from the endearments of a well-placed and successful affection. That which embitters love, and makes it ordinarily a very troublesome and hurtful passion, is the placing it on those who have not worth enough to deserve it, or affection and gratitude to requite it, or whose absence may deprive us of the pleasure of their converse, or their miseries occasion our trouble. To all these evils are they exposed, whose chief and supreme affection is placed on creatures like themselves; but the love of God delivers us from them all.

First, I say, love must needs be miserable, and full of trouble and disquietude, when there is not worth an excellency enough in the object to answer the vastness of its capacity. So eager and violent a passion cannot but fret and torment the spirit, when it finds not wherewith to satisfy its cravings: And, indeed, so large and unbounded is its nature, that it must be extremely pinched and straitened, when confined to any creature; nothing below an infinite good can afford it room to stretch itself, and exert its vigour and activity. What is a little skin-deep beauty, or some small degrees of goodness, to match or satisfy a passion which was made for God; designed to embrace an infinite good: No wonder lovers do so hardly suffer any rival, and do not desire that others should approve their passion by imitating it; They

They know the scantiness and narrowness of the good which they love, that it cannot suffice two, being in effect too little for one. Hence love, *which is strong as death*: occasioneth *jealousy which is cruel as the grave* the coals whereof are coals of fire, which hath a most violent flame.

But *divine love* hath no mixture of this gall. When once the soul is fixt on that supreme and all-sufficient good, it finds so much perfection and goodness, as doth not only answer and satisfy its affection, but master and overpower it too: It finds all its love to be too faint and languid for such a noble object, and is only sorry that it can command no more. It wisheth for the flames of a *seraph*, and longs for the time when it shall be wholly melted and dissolved into love; and because it can do so little itself, it desires the assistance of the whole creation, that angels and men would concur with it in the admiration and love of those infinite perfections.

Again, Love is accompanied with trouble, when it misseth a *The certainty to be beloved again.* suitable return of affection: Love is the most valuable thing we can bestow; and by giving it, we do, in effect, give all that we have; and therefore, it must needs be afflicting to find so great a gift despised, that the present which one hath made of his whole heart, cannot prevail to obtain any return. Perfect love is a kind of self-dedication, a wandering out of ourselves; it is a kind of voluntary death, wherein the lover dies

to himself, and all his own interests, not thinking of them, nor caring for them any more, and minding nothing but how he may please and gratify the party whom he loves: Thus he is quite undone, unless he meets with reciprocal affection; he neglects himself, and the other hath no regard to him: But if he be beloved, he is revived, as it were, and liveth in the soul and care of the person whom he loves; and now he begins to mind his own concerns, not so much because they are his, as because the beloved is pleased to own an interest in them; he becomes dear unto himself, because he is so unto the other.

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

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

In fine, a lover is miserable, if the person whom he loveth be so ; they who have made an exchange of hearts by love, get thereby an interest in one another's happiness and misery : And this makes love a troublesome passion, when placed on earth. The most fortunate person hath grief enough to mar the tranquillity of his friend ; and it is hard to hold it out, when we are attacked on all hands, and suffer not only in our own person, but in another's. But if God were the object of our love, we should share in an infinite happiness without any mixture,

The divine love makes us partake of an infinite happiness.

ture, or possibility of diminution; we should rejoice to behold the glory of God, and receive comfort and pleasure from all the praises wherewith men and angels do extol him. It should delight us, beyond all expression, to consider, that the beloved of our souls is infinitely happy in himself, and that all his enemies cannot shake or unsettle his throne; *That our God is in the heavens, and doth whatsoever he pleaseth.*

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

What an infinite pleasure must *He that loveth God,* it needs be, thus, as it were, to lose ourselves in him, and, being *finds sweetness in every dispensation.* swallowed up in the overcoming sense of his goodness, to offer ourselves a living sacrifice, always ascending unto him in flames of love. Never doth a soul know what solid joy and substantial pleasure is, till once, being weary of itself, it renounce all propriety, give itself up unto the author of its being, and feel itself become an hallowed and devoted thing, and can say, from an inward sense and feeling, *My beloved is mine,* (I account all his interest mine own) *and I am his:* I am content to be any thing for him, and care not for myself, but

but that I may serve him. A person, moulded into this temper, would find pleasure in all the dispensations of providence: Temporal enjoyments would have another relish, when he should taste the divine goodness in them, and consider them as tokens of love sent by his dearest Lord and Maker: And chastisements, though they be not joyous, but grievous, would hereby lose their sting, the rod as well as the staff would comfort him: He would snatch a kiss from the hand that was smiting him, and gather sweetness from that severity; nay, he would rejoice, that though God did not the will of such a worthless and foolish creature as himself, yet he did his own will, and accomplished his own designs, which are infinitely, more holy and wise.

The exercises of religion, which to others are insipid and tedious, *The duties of religion are* do yield the highest pleasure *delightful to* and delight to souls possessed *him.* with divine love. They rejoice

when they are called † *to go up to the house of the Lord,* that they may see his power and his glory, *as they have formerly seen it in the sanctuary.* They never think themselves so happy, as when, having retired from the world, and gotten free from the noise and hurry of affairs, and silenced all their clamorous passions, (those troublesome guests within) they have placed themselves in the presence of God, and entertain fellowship and communion with him: They delight to adore his perfections,

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and

and recount his favours,—and to protest their affection to him, and tell him a thousand times that they love him; to lay out their troubles or wants before him, and disburden their hearts in his bosom. Repentance itself is a delightful exercise, when it floweth from the principle of love. There is a secret sweetness which accompanieth those tears of remorse, those meltings and relentings of a soul returning unto God, and lamenting its former unkindness.

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

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

The

The next branch of the *divine Life*, is an universal charity and love. The excellency of this grace will be easily acknowledged; for what can be more noble and generous, than a heart enlarged to embrace the whole world, whose wishes and designs are levelled at the good and welfare of the universe, which considereth every man's interest as its own? He who loveth his neighbour as himself, can never entertain any base or injurious thought, or be wanting in expressions of bounty: He had rather suffer a thousand wrongs, than be guilty of one; and never accounts himself happy, but when some one or other hath been benefited by him: The malice or ingratitude of men is not able to resist his love: He overlooks their injuries, and pities their folly, and overcomes their evil with good: and never designs any other revenge against his most bitter and malicious enemies, than to put all the obligations he can upon them, whether they will or not. Is it any wonder that such a person be revered and admired, and accounted the darling of mankind? This inward goodness and benignity of spirit reflects a certain sweetness and serenity upon the very countenance, and makes it amiable and lovely: It inspireth the soul with a noble resolution and courage, and makes it capable of enterprising and affecting the highest things. Those heroic actions which we are wont to read with admiration, have, for the most part, been the effects of the love of one's country, or of particular

ticular friendships : And certainly, a more extensive and universal affection must be much more powerful and efficacious.

Again, As *charity* flows from a noble and excellent temper, so it is accompanied with the greatest satisfaction and pleasure : It delights the soul to feel itself thus enlarged, and to be delivered from those disquieting, as well as deformed passions, malice, hatred and envy ; and become gentle, sweet, and benign. Had I my choice of all things that might tend to my present felicity, I would pitch upon this, to have my heart possessed with the greatest kindness and affection towards all men in the world. I am sure this would make me partake in all the happiness of others ; their inward endowments and outward prosperity ; every thing that did benefit and advantage them would afford me comfort and pleasure : And though I should frequently meet with occasions of grief and compassion, yet there is a sweetness in commiseration, which makes it infinitely more desirable than a stupid insensibility : And the consideration of that infinite goodness and wisdom which governs the world, might repress any excessive trouble for particular calamities that happen in it : And the hopes or possibility of mens after-Happiness, might moderate their sorrow for their present misfortunes. Certainly, next to the love and enjoyment of God, that ardent charity and affection wherewith blessed souls do embrace one another

another, is justly to be reckoned as the greatest felicity of those regions above ; and did it universally prevail in the world, it would anticipate that blessedness, and make us taste of the joys of heaven upon earth.

That which I named as a *third* *The excellency of purity,* branch of Religion, was *purity* ; and you may remember I described it to consist in a contempt of sensual pleasures, and resoluteness to undergo those troubles and pains we may meet with in the performance of our duty. Now, the naming of this may suffice to recommend it as a most noble and excellent quality. There is no slavery so base, as that whereby a man becomes a drudge to his own lusts ; nor any victory so glorious, as that which is obtained over them. Never can that person be capable of any thing that is noble and worthy, who is sunk in the gross and feculent pleasures of sense, or bewitched with the light and airy gratifications of fancy : But the religious soul is of a more sublime and divine temper ; it knows it was made for higher things, and scorns to step aside one foot out of the ways of holiness, for the obtaining any of these.

And this *purity* is accompanied *The delight it affords.* with a great deal of pleasure : Whatsoever defiles the soul, disturbs it too ; all impure delights have a sting in them, and leave smart and trouble behind them. Excess and intemperance, and all inordinate lusts, are so much enemies to the health of the body,

body, and the interests of this present life, that a little consideration might oblige any rational man to forbear them on that very score; and if the religious person go higher, and do not only abstain from noxious pleasures, but neglect those that are innocent, this is not to be looked upon as any violent and uneasy restraint, but as the effect of better choice, that their minds are taken up in the pursuit of more sublime and refined delights, so that they cannot be concerned in these. Any person that is engaged in a violent and passionate affection, will easily forget his ordinary gratifications, will be little curious about his diet, or his bodily ease, or the diversions he was wonted to delight in. No wonder then, if souls overpowered with *divine love* despise inferior pleasures, and be almost ready to grudge the body its necessary attendance for the common accommodations of life, judging all these impertinent to their main happiness, and those higher enjoyments they are pursuing. As for the hardships they may meet with, they rejoice in them, as opportunities to exercise and testify their affection: And since they are able to do so little for God, they are glad of the honour to suffer for him.

The last branch of Religion is *The excellency of humility*; and however, to vulgar and carnal eyes, this may appear an abject, base and despicable quality, yet really the soul of man is not capable of an higher and more noble endowment. It is a silly ignorance that begets pride:

pride: But humility arises from a nearer acquaintance with excellent things, which keeps men from doting on trifles, or admiring themselves because of some petty attainments. Noble and well-educated souls have no such high opinion of riches, beauty, strength, and other such like advantages, as to value themselves for them, or despise those that want them: And as for inward worth and real goodness, the sense they have of the divine perfections, makes them think very meanly of any thing they have hitherto attained, and be still endeavouring to surmount themselves, and make nearer approaches to those infinite excellencies which they admire.

I know not what thoughts people may have of humility, but I see almost every person pretending to it, and shunning such expressions and actions as may make them be accounted arrogant and presumptuous, so that those who are most desirous of praise will be loth to commend themselves. What are all those compliments and modes of civility, so frequent in our ordinary converse, but so many protestations of the esteem of others, and the low thoughts we have of ourselves? And must not that humility be a noble and excellent endowment, when the very shadows of it are accounted so necessary a part of good breeding?

Again, This grace is accompanied with a great deal of happiness and tranquillity. The proud and arrogant person is a trouble to all that converse with

The pleasure and sweetness of an humble temper.

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him,

him, but most of all unto himself: Every thing is enough to vex him; but scarce any thing sufficient to content and please him. He is ready to quarrel with every thing that falls out; as if he himself were such a considerable person, that God Almighty should do every thing to gratify him, and all the creatures of heaven and earth should wait upon him, and obey his will. The leaves of high trees do shake with every blast of wind; and every breath, every evil word will disquiet and torment an arrogant man: But the humble person hath the advantage, when he is despised, that none can think more meanly of him than he doth of himself: and therefore he is not troubled at the matter, but can easily bear those reproaches which wound the other to the soul. And withal, as he is less affected with injuries, so indeed he is less obnoxious unto them: *Contention which cometh of pride*, betrays a man into a thousand inconveniencies, which those of a meek and lowly temper seldom meet with. True and genuine humility begetteth both a veneration and love among all wise and discerning persons, while pride defeateth its own design, and depriveth a man of that honour it makes him pretend to.

But as the *chief exercises of humility* are those which relate unto Almighty God, so these are accompanied with the greatest satisfaction and sweetness. It is impossible to express the great pleasure and delight which religious persons feel in the lowest prostration of their souls before God, when having a deep sense of the di-

vine majesty and glory, they sink (if I may so speak) to the bottom of their beings, and vanish and disappear in the presence of God by a serious and affectionate acknowledgement of their own nothingness, and the shortness and imperfections of their attainments; when they understand the full sense and emphasis of the Psalmist's exclamation, *Lord! what is man?* and can utter it with the same affection: Never did any haughty and ambitious person receive the praises and applauses of men with so much pleasure, as the humble and religious do renounce them: *Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, &c.*

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

A PRAYER.

GOOD GOD! what a mighty felicity is this to which we are called? How graciously hast thou joined our duty and happiness together, and pre-
scribed

scribed that for our work, the performance whereof is a great reward ! And shall such silly worms be advanced to so great a height ? Wilt thou allow us to raise our eyes to thee ? Wilt thou admit and accept our affection ? Shall we receive the impression of thy divine excellencies, by beholding and admiring them,—and partake of thy infinite blessedness and glory, by loving thee, and rejoicing in them ? O the happiness of those souls that have broken the fetters of self-love, and disintangled their affection from every narrow and particular good ? whose understandings are enlightened by thy holy spirit, and their wills enlarged to the extent of thine ! who love thee above all things, and all mankind for thy sake ! I am persuaded, O G O D, I am persuaded, that I can never be happy, till my carnal and corrupt affections be mortified, and the pride and vanity of my spirit be subdued, and till I come seriously to despise the world, and think nothing of myself. But O when shall it once be ? O when shall it once be ? O when wilt thou come unto me, and satisfy my soul with thy likeness, making me holy as thou art holy, even in all manner of conversation ? Hast thou given me a prospect of so great a felicity, and wilt thou not bring me unto it ? Hast thou excited those desires in my soul, and wilt thou not also satisfy them ? O teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God ; thy spirit is good, lead me unto the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake, and perfect that which concerneth me : Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever, forsake not the works of thine own hands.

I HAVE hitherto considered wherein true Religion doth consist, and how desirable a thing it is ; but when one sees how infinitely distant the common temper and frame of men is from it, he may perhaps be

The despondent thoughts of some newly awakened to a right sense of things.

ready to dispond, and give over, and think it utterly impossible to be attained : He may sit down in sadness, and bemoan himself, and say, in the anguish and bitterness of his spirit, “ They are happy indeed whose souls are awakened unto the divine life, who are thus renewed in the spirit of their minds ; but alas ! I am quite of another constitution, and am not able to effect so mighty a change : If outward observances could have done the business, I might have hoped to acquit myself by diligence and care ; but since nothing but a new nature can serve the turn, what am I able to do ? I could bestow all my goods in oblations to God, or alms to the poor, but cannot command that love and charity, without which this expence would profit me nothing. † This gift of God cannot be purchased with money : ‡ If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned : I could pine and macerate my body, and undergo many hardships and troubles ; but I cannot get all my corruptions starved, nor my affections wholly weaned from earthly

† Acts viii. 20.

‡ Cant, viii. 7

things :

“ things : There is still some worldly desires.
 “ lurking in my heart, and those vanities that
 “ I have shut out of the doors, are always
 “ getting in by the windows. I am many
 “ times convinced of my own meanness, of the
 “ weakness of my body ; and the far greater
 “ weakness of my soul ; but this doth rather
 “ beget indignation and discontent, than true
 “ humility in my spirit : And though I should
 “ come to think meanly of myself, yet I can-
 “ not endure that others should think so too..
 “ In a word, when I reflect on my highest and
 “ most specious attainments, I have reason to
 “ suspect, that they are all but the effects of
 “ nature, the issues of self-love acting under
 “ several disguises ; and this principle is so pow-
 “ erful, and so deeply rooted in me, that I can
 “ never hope to be delivered from the domini-
 “ on of it. I may tols and turn as a door on
 “ the hinges, but can never get clear off, or
 “ be quite unhinged of *self*, which is still the
 “ center of all my motions ; so that all the ad-
 “ vantage I can draw from the discovery of
 “ Religion, is but to see, at a huge distance,
 “ that felicity which I am not able to reach ;
 “ like a man in a ship-wreck, who discerns the
 “ land, and envies the happiness of those who
 “ are there, but thinks it impossible for him-
 “ self to get ashore.”

These, I say, or such like de-
 The unrea- sponding thoughts, may arise in
 sonableness of the minds of those persons who
 these fears. begin to conceive some what more
 of

of the nature and excellency of Religion than before : They have spied the land, and seen that it is exceeding good, that it floweth with milk and honey ; but they find they have the children of *Anak* to grapple with, many powerful lusts and corruptions to overcome, and they fear they shall never prevail against them. But why should we give way to such discouraging suggestions ? Why should we entertain such unreasonable fears, which damp our spirits, and weaken our hands, and augment the difficulties of our way ? Let us encourage ourselves, my dear Friend, let us encourage ourselves with those mighty aids we are to expect in this spiritual warfare ; for greater is he that is for us, than all that can rise up against us ; *The eternal God is our refuge, † and underneath are the everlasting arms. Let us be strong in the Lord, and the power of his might,* for he it is that shall tread down our enemies. God hath a tender regard unto the souls of men, and is infinitely willing to promote their welfare ; He hath condescended to our weakness, and declared with an oath, that he hath no pleasure in our destruction. There is no such thing as despise or envy lodged in the bosom of that ever-blessed Being, whose name and nature is Love. He created us at first in a happy condition ; and now when we are fallen from it, ‡ *He hath laid help upon one that is mighty to save,* hath committed the care of our souls to no meaner person than the Eternal Son of his

† Deut. xxxiii, 27.

‡ Psal. lxxxix, 19.

love. It is he that is the Captain of our Salvation, and what enemies can be too strong for us, when we are fighting under his banners? Did not the Son of God come down from the bosom of his father, and pitch his tabernacle amongst the sons of men, that he might recover and propagate the divine life, and restore the image of God in their souls. All the mighty works which he performed, all the sad afflictions which he sustained, had this for their scope and design; for this did he labour^m and toil, for this did he bleed and die: † *He was with child, he was in pain, and hath he brought forth nothing but wind, hath he wrought no deliverance in the earth?* ‡ *Shall he not see of the travel of his soul?* Certainly it is impossible that this great contrivance of heaven should prove abortive, that such a mighty undertaking should fail and miscarry: It hath already been effectual for the salvation of many thousands, who were once as far from the kingdom of heaven as we can suppose ourselves to be, and our § *High Priest continueth for ever, and is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him*: He is tender and compassionate, he knoweth our infirmities, and had experience of our temptations: || *A bruised reed will he not break, and smoking flax will he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory*. He hath sent out his holy spirit, whose sweet but powerful breathings are still moving up and down in the world, to

† Isa. xxix. 18, 19

§ Heb. vii. 24, 25.

‡ Isa. liii. 11.

|| Matth. xii. 20.

quicken

quicken and revive the souls of men, and awaken them unto the sense and feeling of those divine things for which they were made, and is ready to assist such weak and languishing creatures as we are, in our essays towards holiness and felicity; and when once it hath taken hold of a soul and kindled in it the smallest spark of divine love, it will be sure to preserve and cherish, and bring it forth into a flame, † *which many waters shall not quench, neither shall the floods be able to drown it.* Whenever this day begins to dawn, ‡ *and the day-star to arise in the heart,* it will easily dispel the powers of darkness, and make ignorance and folly, and all the corrupt and selfish affections of men, flee away as fast before it as the shades of night, when the sun cometh out of his chambers: § *For the path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* || *They shall go on from strength to strength, till every one of them appear before God in Zion.*

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

† Cant. viii. 7.

§ Prov. iv. 18.

‡ 2 Pet. i. 19.

|| Psal. lxxiv. 7.

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

No sooner shall we take up arms in this holy war, but we shall have all the saints on earth, and all the angels in heaven, engaged on our party: The holy church throughout the world is daily interceding with God for the success of all such endeavours; and, doubtless, those heavenly hosts above are nearly concerned in the interests of religion, and infinitely desirous to see the divine life thriving and prevailing in this inferior world; and that the will of God may be done by us on earth, as it is done by themselves in heaven: And may we not then encourage ourselves, as the prophet did his servant, when he shewed him the horses and chariots of fire, ‡ *Fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that be against us.*

† Heb. xi. 34.

‡ 2 Kings vi. 16, 17.

Away then with all perplexing fears and desponding thoughts : To undertake vigorously, and rely confidently on the divine assistance, is more than half the conquest : † *Let us arise and be doing and the Lord will be with us.* It is true, Religion in the souls of men is the immediate work of God, and all our natural endeavours can neither produce it alone, nor merit those supernatural aids by which it must be wrought : The Holy Ghost must come upon us, and the power of the Highest must overshadow us, before that holy thing can be begotten, and Christ be formed in us. But yet we must not expect that this whole work should be done without any concurring endeavours of our own : We must not lie loitering in the ditch, and wait till Omnipotence pull us from thence. No, no, we must bestir ourselves, and actuate those powers which we have already received : We must put forth ourselves to our utmost capacities, and then we may hope that ‡ *our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* All the art and industry of man cannot form the smallest herb, or make a stalk of corn to grow in the field ; it is the energy of nature, and the influences of heaven, which produce this effect : It is God || *who causeth the grass to grow, and herb for the service of man ;* and yet no body will say, that the labours of the husbandman are useless or unnecessary. So,

† 1 Chron. xxii. 16. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 58. || Psal. civ. 14.

likewise, the human soul is immediately created by God: It is he who both formeth and enliveneth the child; and yet he hath appointed the marriage-bed as the ordinary means for the propagation of mankind. Though there must intervene a stroke of Omnipotence to effect this mighty change in our souls, yet ought we to do what we can to fit and prepare ourselves; † for we must break up our fellow ground, and root out the weeds, and pull up the thorns, that so we may be more ready to receive the seeds of grace, and the dew of heaven. It is true, God hath been found of some who sought him not; he hath cast himself in their way, who were quite out of his; he hath laid hold upon them, and stopt their course on a sudden: For so was *St Paul* converted in his journey to *Damascus*. But certainly this is not God's ordinary method of dealing with men: Though he hath not tied himself to means, yet he hath tied us to the use of them; and we have never more reason to expect the divine assistance, than when we are doing our utmost endeavours. It shall therefore be my next work, to shew what course we ought to take for attaining that blessed temper I have hitherto described. But here, if in delivering my own thoughts, I shall chance to differ from what is or may be said by others in this matter, I would not be thought to contradict and oppose them, more than physicians do, when they prescribe several remedies for the same disease, which per-

† Jer. iv. 3.

haps are all useful and good. Every one may propose the method he judges most proper and convenient ; but he doth not thereby pretend, that the cure can never be effected, unless that be exactly observed. I doubt it hath occasioned much unnecessary disquietude to some holy persons, that they have not found such a regular and orderly transaction in their souls, as they have seen described in books ; that they have not passed through all those steps and stages of conversion, which some (*who perhaps have felt them in themselves*) have *too peremptorily* prescribed unto others. God hath several ways of dealing with the souls of men, and it sufficeth if the work be accomplished, whatever the methods have been.

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

But now that I may detain you no longer, if we desire to have our souls moulded to this holy frame, to become partakers of the divine nature, and have Christ formed in our hearts, we must seriously resolve, and carefully endeavour, to avoid and abandon all vicious and
We must shun all manner of sin.
 sinful

sinful practices. There can be no treaty of peace, till once we lay down these weapons of rebellion wherewith we fight against heaven; nor can we expect to have our distempers cured, if we be daily feeding on poison. Every wilful sin gives a mortal wound to the soul, and puts it at a greater distance from God and goodness; and we can never hope to have our hearts purified from corrupt affections, unless we cleanse our hands from vicious actions. Now, in this case, we cannot excuse ourselves by the pretence of impossibility; for sure our outward man is some way in our power: We have some command of our feet, and hands, and tongue, nay, and of our thoughts and fancies too, at least so far as to divert them from impure and sinful objects, and to turn our mind another way; and we should find this power and authority much strengthened and advanced, if we were careful to manage and exercise it. In the mean while, I acknowledge our corruptions are so strong, and our temptations so many, that it will require a great deal of steadfastness and resolution, of watchfulness and care to preserve ourselves, even in this degree of innocence and purity.

We must know what things are sinful. And, *first*, let us inform ourselves well what those sins are from which we ought to abstain. And here we must not take our measures from the maxims of the world, or the practices of those whom in charity we account good men. Most people have very light apprehensions of these things, and
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are not sensible of any fault, unless it be gross and flagitious, and scarce reckon any so great as that which they call preciseness: And those who are more serious, do many times allow themselves too great latitude and freedom. Alas! how much pride and vanity, and passion, and humour, how much weakness and folly, and sin, doth every day shew itself in their converse and behaviour? It may be they are humbled for it, and striving against it, and are daily gaining some ground; but then the progress is so small, and their failings so many, that we have need to chuse an exacter pattern. Every one of us must answer for himself, and the practices of others will never warrant and secure us. It is the highest folly to regulate our actions by any other standard than that by which they must be judged. If ever we would *cleanse our way*, it must be *by taking heed thereto according to the word of God*†; and that word which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerners of the thoughts and intents of the heart‡, will certainly discover many things to be sinful and heinous, which pass for very innocent in the eyes of the world: Let us therefore imitate the Psalmist, who saith, *Concerning the works of men, by the words of thy lips, I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer*§. Let us acquaint ourselves with the strict and holy laws of our

† Psal. cxix. 9. ‡ Heb. iv. 12. § Psal. xvii. 4.

Religion: Let us consider the discourses of our blessed Saviour, (especially that divine sermon on the mount) and the writings of his holy apostles, where an ingenuous and unbiased mind may clearly discern those limits and bounds by which our actions ought to be confined: And then let us never look upon any sin as light and inconsiderable; but be fully persuaded, that the smallest is infinitely heinous in the sight of God, and prejudicial to the souls of men; and that if we had the right sense of things, we should be as deeply affected with the least irregularities, as now we are with the highest crimes.

We must resist the temptations to sin, by considering the evils they will draw on us. But now, amongst those things which we discover to be sinful, there will be some, unto which, through the disposition of our nature, or long custom, or the endearments of pleasure, we are so much wedded, that it will be like cutting off the right hand, or pulling out the right eye, to abandon them.

But must we therefore sit down and wait till all difficulties be over, and every temptation be gone? This were to imitate the fool in the poet, who stood the whole day at the river-side till all the water should run by. We must not indulge our inclinations, as we do little children, till they grow weary of the thing they are unwilling to let go. We must not continue our sinful practices, in hopes that the divine grace will one day overpower our spirits, and make us hate them for their own deformity.

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Let us suppose the worst, that we are utterly destitute of any supernatural principle, and want that taste by which we should discern and abhor perverse things; yet sure we are capable of some considerations which may be of force to persuade us to this reformation of our lives. If the inward deformity and heinous nature of sin cannot affect us, at least we may be frightened by those dreadful consequences that attend it: That same selfish principle which pusheth us forward unto the pursuit of sinful pleasures, will make us loth to buy them at the rate of everlasting misery. Thus we may encounter self-love with its own weapons, and employ one natural inclination for repressing the exorbitancies of another. Let us therefore accustom ourselves to consider seriously, what a fearful thing it must needs be to irritate and offend that infinite Being on whom we hang and depend every moment, who needs but to withdraw his mercies to make us miserable, or his assistance to make us nothing. Let us frequently remember the shortness and uncertainty of our lives and how that after we have taken a few turns more in the world, and conversed a little longer amongst men, we must all go down unto the dark and silent grave, and carry nothing along with us but anguish and regret for all our sinful enjoyments: And then think what horror must needs seize the guilty soul, to find itself naked and all alone before the severe and impartial Judge of the world, to render an exact account, not only of its more important and considerable transactions, but of every word that the tongue hath uttered, and

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the swiftest and most secret thought that ever passed through the mind. Let us sometimes represent unto ourselves the terrors of that dreadful day, † when the foundation of the earth shall be shaken, and the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the present frame of nature be dissolved, and our eyes shall see the blessed Jesus (who came once into the world in all humility to visit us, to purchase pardon for us, and beseech us to accept of it) now appearing in the majesty of his glory, and descending from heaven in a flaming fire, to take vengeance on those that have despised his mercy, and persisted in rebellion against him: When all the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the counsels of the heart shall be made manifest ‡: When those secret impurities and subtle frauds whereof the world did never suspect us, shall be exposed and laid open to public view, and many thousand actions which we never dreamed to be sinful, or else had altogether forgotten, shall be charged home upon our consciences, with such evident convictions of guilt, that we shall neither be able to deny nor excuse them. Then shall all the angels in heaven, and all the saints that ever lived on the earth, approve that dreadful sentence which shall be passed on wicked men; and those who perhaps did love and esteem them when they lived in the world, shall look upon them with indignation and abhorrence, and never make one

† 2 Pet. iii. 10.

‡ 1 Cor. iv. 5.

request for their deliverance. Let us consider the eternal punishment of damned souls, which are shadowed forth in scripture by metaphors taken from those things that are most terrible and grievous in the world, and yet all do not suffice to convey into our minds any full apprehensions of them. When we have joined together the importance of all these expressions, and added unto them whatever our fancy can conceive of misery and torment, we must still remember, that all this comes infinitely short of the truth and reality of the thing.

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

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

† Isa xxxiii. 14.

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We must keep a But it will not suffice to con-
constant watch sider these things once and again,
over ourselves. nor to form some resolutions of
 abandoning our sins, unless we
 maintain a constant guard, and be continually
 watching against them. Sometimes the mind
 is awakened to see the dismal consequences of a
 vicious life, and straight we are resolved to re-
 form; but, alas! it presently falleth asleep, and
 we lose that prospect which we had of things,
 and then temptations take the advantage; they
 solicit and importune us continually, and so
 do frequently engage our consent before we are
 aware. It is the folly and ruin of most people
 to live at adventure, and take part in every
 thing that comes in their way, seldom consi-
 dering what they are about to say or do. If
 we would have our resolutions take effect, we
 must take heed unto our ways, and set a watch
 before the door of our lips, and examine the
 motions that arise in our hearts, and cause them
 to tell us whence they come, and whether they
 go; whether it be pride, or passion, or any cor-
 rupt and vicious humour, that prompteth us to
 any design, and whether God will be offended,
 or any body harmed by it. And if we have
 no time for long reasonings, let us, at least,
 turn our eyes toward God, and place our-
 selves in his presence, to ask his leave and ap-
 probation for what we do: Let us consider our-
 selves under the all-seeing eye of that divine
 majesty, as in the midst of an infinite globe of
 light, which compasseth us about both behind
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and before, and pierceth to the innermost corners of our soul. The sense and remembrance of the divine presence is the most ready and effectual means, both to discover what is unlawful, and to restrain us from it. There are some things a person could make shift to palliate or defend, and yet he dares not look Almighty God in the face and adventure upon them.

If we look unto him, we shall be lightened; if we *set him always before us*; he will *guide us by his eye, and instruct us in the way wherein we ought to walk.*

This care and watchfulness over our actions must be seconded by frequent and serious reflections upon them, not only that we obtain the divine mercy and pardon for our sins, by an humble and sorrowful acknowledgement of them; but also that we may reinforce and strengthen our resolutions, and learn to decline or resist the temptations by which we have been formerly foiled. It is an advice worthy of a Christian, though it did first drop from a Heathen pen, 'That before we betake ourselves to rest, we renew and examine all the passages of the day; that we may have the comfort of what we have done aright, and may redress what we find to have been amiss, and make the ship-wrecks of one day be as marks to direct our course in another. This may be called the very art of virtuous living, and would contribute wonderfully to advance our reformation, and preserve our innocence.

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But, whithal, we must not forget to implore the divine assistance, especially against those sins that do most easily beſet us : And though it be ſuppoſed that our hearts are not yet moulded into that ſpiritual frame which ſhould render our devotions acceptable ; yet me thinks, ſuch conſiderations as have been propoſed to deter us from ſin, may alſo ſtir us up to ſome natural ſeriouſneſs, and make our prayers againſt it as earneſt, at leaſt, as they are wont to be againſt other calamities : And I doubt not but God, who hearſh the cry of the ravens, will have ſome regard even to ſuch petitions as proceed from thoſe natural paſſions which himſelf hath implanted in us. Beſide, that thoſe prayers againſt ſin, will be powerful engagements on ourſelves to excite us to watchfulneſs and care ; and common ingenuity will make us aſhamed to relapſe into thoſe faults which we have lately bewailed before God, and againſt which we have begged his aſſiſtance.

It is fit to reſtrain ourſelves in many lawful things.

Thus are we to make the firſt eſſay for recovering the divine life, by reſtraining the natural inclinations, that they break not out into ſinful praſtiſes. But, now, I muſt add, that Chriſtian prudence will teach us to abſtain from gratifications that are not ſimply unlawful, and that not only that we may ſecure our innocence, which would be in continual hazard, if we ſhould ſtrain our liberty to the utmoſt point ; but alſo, that hereby we may weaken the force of nature, and teach
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our appetites to obey. We must do with ourselves as prudent parents with their children, who cross their wills in many little indifferent things, to make them manageable and submissive in more considerable instances. He who would mortify the pride and vanity of his spirit, should stop his ears to the most deserved praises, and sometimes forbear his just vindication from the censures and aspersions of others, especially if they reflect only upon his prudence and conduct, and not on his virtue and innocence. He who would check a revengeful humour, would do well to deny himself the satisfaction of representing unto others the injuries which he hath sustained; and if we would so take heed to our ways, that we sin not with our tongue, we must accustom ourselves much to *solitude* and *silence*, and sometimes, with the Psalmist, *hold our peace even from good*, till once we have gotten some command over that unruly member. Thus I say, we may bind up our natural inclinations, and make our appetites more moderate in their cravings, by accustoming them to frequent refusals; but it is not enough to have them under violence and restraint.

Our next essay must be, to wean our affections from created things, and all the delights and entertainments of the lower life, which sink and depress

the souls of men, and retard their motions towards God and Heaven; and this we must do by

We must strive to put ourselves out of love with the world.

by possessing our minds with a deep persuasion of the vanity and emptiness of worldly enjoyments. This is an ordinary theme, and every body can make declamations upon it; but, alas! how few understand and believe what they say? These notions float in our brains, and come sliding off our tongues, but we have no deep impression of them on our spirits; we feel not the truth which we pretend to believe. We can tell, that all the glory and splendor, all the pleasures and enjoyments of the world are vanity and nothing; and yet these nothings take up all our thoughts, and ingross all our affections; they stifle the better inclinations of our soul, and inveigle us into many a sin. It may be in a sober mood, we give them the slight, and resolve to be no longer deluded with them; but these thoughts seldom out-live the next temptation; the vanities which we have shut out at the doors get in at a postern: There are still some pretensions, some hopes that flatter us; and after we have been frustrated a thousand times, we must continually be repeating the experiment: The least difference of circumstances is enough to delude us, and make us expect that satisfaction in one thing which we have missed in another; but could we once get clearly off, and come to a serious and real contempt of worldly things, this were a very considerable advancement in our way. The soul of man is of a vigorous and active nature, and hath in it a raging and unextinguishable thirst, an immaterial kind of fire, always catching

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ing at some object or other, in conjunction wherewith it thinks to be happy; and were it once rent from the world, and all the bewitching enjoyments under the sun, it would quickly search after some higher and more excellent object, to satisfy its ardent and importunate cravings; and being no longer dazzled with glittering vanities, would fix on that supreme and all-sufficient Good, where it would discover such beauty and sweetness as would charm and overpower all its affections. The love of the world, and the love of God, are like the scales of a balance; as the one falleth, the other doth rise: When our natural inclinations prosper, and the creature is exalted in our soul, religion is faint, and doth languish; but when earthly objects wither away, and lose their beauty, and the soul begins to cool and flag in its prosecution of them, then the seeds of grace take root, and the divine life begins to flourish and prevail. It doth, therefore, nearly concern us, to convince ourselves of the emptiness and vanity of creature-enjoyments, and reason our heart out of love with them: Let us seriously consider all that our reason, or our faith, our own experience, or the observation of others, can suggest to this effect; let us ponder the matter over and over, and fix our thoughts on this truth, till we become really persuaded of it. Amidst all our pursuits and designs, let us stop and ask ourselves, For what end is all this? At what do I aim? Can the gross and muddy pleasures of sense, or a heap of white and yellow earth, or

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the esteem and affection of silly creatures, like myself, satisfy a rational and immortal soul? Have I not tried these things already? Will they have a higher relish, and yield me more contentment to-morrow than yesterday, or the next year than they did the last? There may be some little difference betwixt that which I am now pursuing, and that which I enjoyed before; but sure, my former enjoyments did shew as pleasant and promise as fair, before I attained them; like the *rain-bow*, they looked very glorious at a distance, but when I approached I found nothing but emptiness and vapour. O what a poor thing would the life of man be, if it were capable of no higher enjoyments!

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

gourd; some secret and undiscerned grief, which may make a person deserve the pity of those who, perhaps, do admire or envy their supposed felicity. If any earthly comforts have got too much of your heart I think they have been your relations and friends; and the dearest of these are removed out of the world, so that you must raise your mind towards Heaven, when you would think upon them. Thus, God hath provided that your heart may be loosed from the world, and that he may not have any rival in your affection, which I have always observed to be so large and unbounded, so noble and disinterested, that no inferior object can answer or deserve it.

When we have got our cor- *We must do*
 ruptions restrained, and our na- *those outward*
 tural appetites and inclinations, *actions that*
 towards worldly things, in some *are com-*
 measure subdued, we must pro- *manded.*
 ceed to such exercises as have a
 more immediate tendency to excite and awaken
 the divine life: And *first*, let us endeavour con-
 scientiously to perform those duties which Reli-
 gion doth require and whereunto it would in-
 cline us, if it did prevail in our souls. If we
 cannot get our inward disposition presently
 changed, let us study, at least, to regulate our
 outward deportment: If our hearts be not yet
 inflamed with divine love, let us, however, own
 our allegiance to that Infinite Majesty, by at-
 tending his service, and listening to his word by
 speaking reverently of his name, and praising
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his goodness, and exhorting others to serve and obey him. If we want that charity, and those bowels of compassion which we ought to have towards our neighbours, yet must we not omit any occasion of doing them good: If our hearts be haughty and proud, we must nevertheless, study a modest and humble deportment. These external performances are of little value in themselves, yet they may help us forward to better things. The Apostle indeed telleth us, *that bodily exercise profiteth little*: But he seems not to affirm that it is altogether useless; it is always good to be doing what we can, for then God is wont to pity our weakness, and assist our feeble endeavours; and when true charity and humility, and other graces of the divine spirit, come to take root in our souls, they will exert themselves more freely, and with less difficulty, if we have before been accustomed to express them in our outward conversations.—Nor need we fear the imputation of hypocrisy, though our actions do thus somewhat outrun our affections, seeing they do still proceed from a sense of our duty; and our design is not to appear better than we are, but that we may really become so.

But as inward acts have a

<p><i>We must endeavour to form internal acts of devotion, charity, &c.</i></p>	<p>more immediate influence on the soul, to mould it to a right temper and frame, so ought we to be most frequent and sedulous in the exercise of them.</p>
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them. Let us be often lifting up our hearts toward God ; and if we do not say that we love him above all things, let us, at least, acknowledge, that it is our duty, and would be our happiness, so to do : Let us lament the dishonour done to him by foolish and sinful men, and applaud the praises and adorations that are given him by that blessed and glorious company above : Let us resign and yield ourselves up unto him a thousand times, to be governed by his laws, and disposed of at his pleasure : And though our stubborn hearts should start back and refuse, yet let us tell him, we are convinced that his will is always just and good ; and, therefore, desire him to do with us whatsoever he pleaseth, whether we will or not. And so, for begetting in us an universal charity towards men, we must be frequently putting up wishes for their happiness, and blessing every person that we see ; and when we have done any thing for the relief of the miserable, we may second it with earnest desires, that God would take care of them, and deliver them out of all their distresses.

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

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Consideration I shall mention but two o-
a great in- ther means for begetting that
strument of holy and divine temper of spirit
religion. which is the subject of the pre-
 sent discourse: And the first is
 a deep and serious consideration of the truths
 of our Religion, and that both as to the certain-
 ty and importance of them. The effort which
 is ordinarily given to divine truth is very faint
 and languid, very weak and ineffectual, flow-
 ing only from a blind inclination to follow that
 religion which is in fashion, or a lazy indiffe-
 rence and unconcernedness whether things be
 so or not. Men are unwilling to quarrel with
 the religion of their country, and since all their
 neighbours are Christians, they are content to
 be so too; but they are seldom at the pains to
 consider the evidences of those truths, or to pon-
 der the importance and tendency of them; and
 thence it is that they have so little influence on
 their affections and practice. Those *spiritless*
and paralytic thoughts (as one doth rightly term
 them) are not able to move the will, and direct
 the hand: We must, therefore, endeavour to
 work up our minds to a serious belief and full
 persuasion of divine truths, unto a sense and
 feeling of spiritual things: Our thoughts must
 dwell upon them, till we be both convinced of
 them, and deeply affected with them. Let us
 urge forward our spirits, and make them ap-
 proach the invisible world, and fix our minds
 upon immaterial things, till we clearly perceive
 that these are no dreams; nay, that all things
 are

are dreams and shadows besides them. When we look about us, and behold the beauty and magnificence of this goodly frame, the order and harmony of the whole creation, let our thoughts from thence take their flight towards that omnipotent, wisdom and goodness which did at first produce, and doth still establish and uphold the same. When we reflect upon ourselves, let us consider that we are not a mere piece of organized matter, a curious and well-contrived engine; that there is more in us than flesh, and blood, and bones, even a divine spark, capable to know, and love, and enjoy our Maker; and though it be now exceeding clogged with its dull and lumpish companion, yet ere long it shall be delivered, and can subsist without the body, as well as that can do without the cloaths which we throw off at our pleasure. Let us often withdraw our thoughts from this earth, this scene of misery and folly, and sin, and raise them towards that more vast and glorious world, whose innocent and blessed inhabitants solace themselves eternally in the divine presence, and know no other passion, but an unmixed joy and an unbounded love. And then consider how the blessed Son of God came down to this lower world to live among us, and die for us, that he might bring us to a portion of the same felicity; and think how he hath overcome the sharpness of death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and is now set down on the *right hand of the Majesty on high*†, and yet is not the

† Heb. i. 3.

less mindful of us, but receiveth our prayers, and presenteth them unto his Father, and is daily visiting his church with the influences of his Spirit, as the sun reacheth us with his beams.

The serious and frequent consideration of these, and such other divine truths, is the most proper method to beget that lively faith which is the foundation of religion, the spring and root of the divine life. Let me further suggest some particular subjects of meditation for producing the several branches of it. And *first*, To inflame our souls with the love of God, let us consider the excellency of his nature, and his love and kindness towards us.

To beget divine love, we must consider the excellency of the divine nature. The serious and frequent consideration of these, and such other divine truths, is the most proper method to beget that lively faith which is the foundation of religion, the spring and root of the divine life. Let me further suggest some particular subjects of meditation for producing the several branches of it. And *first*, To inflame our souls with the love of God, let us consider the excellency of his nature, and his love and kindness towards us. It is little we know of the divine perfections; and yet that little may suffice to fill our souls with admiration and love, to ravish our affections, as well as to raise our wonder: For we are not merely creatures of sense, that we should be incapable of any other affection but that which entereth by the eyes. The character of any excellent person whom we have never seen, will many times engage our hearts, and make us hugely concerned in all his interests: And what is it, I pray you, that engages us so much to those with whom we converse? I cannot think that it is merely the colour of their face or their comely proportions, for then we should fall in love with statues, and pictures, and flowers: These outward accomplishments may a little delight the eye, but would never be able to prevail so much

on the heart, if they did not represent some vital perfection. We either see or apprehend some greatness of mind, or vigour of spirit, or sweetness of disposition; some sprightliness, or wisdom, or goodness, which charm our spirit, and command our love. Now these perfections are not obvious to the sight, the eyes can only discern the signs and effects of them; and if it be the understanding that directs the affection, and vital perfections prevail with it, certainly the excellencies of the divine nature (the traces whereof we cannot but discover in every thing we behold) would not fail to engage our hearts, if we did seriously view and regard them. Shall we not be infinitely more transported with that almighty wisdom and goodness which fills the universe, and displays itself in all the parts of the creation, which establisheth the frame of nature, and turneth the mighty wheels of Providence, and keepeth the world from disorder and ruin, than with the faint rays of the very same perfections which we meet with in our fellow-creatures? Shall we dote on the scattered pieces of a rude and imperfect picture, and never be affected with the original beauty? This were an unaccountable stupidity and blindness: Whatever we find lovely in a friend, or in a saint, ought not to engross, but to elevate our affection; we should conclude with ourselves, that if there be so much sweetness in a drop, there must be infinitely more in the fountain; if there be so much splendor in a ray, what must the sun be in its glory?

Nor can we pretend the remoteness of the object, as if God were at too great a distance for our converse or our love: *He is not far from every one of us, for in him we live, move, and have our being* †: We cannot open our eyes, but we must behold some footsteps of his glory; and we cannot turn toward him, but we shall be sure to find his intent upon us, waiting as it were to catch a look, ready to entertain the most intimate fellowship and communion with us. Let us therefore endeavour to raise our minds to the clearest conceptions of the divine nature: Let us consider all that his works do declare, or his word doth discover of him unto us; and let us especially contemplate that visible representation of him, which was made in our own nature by his Son, who was *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person* ‡, and who appeared in the world to discover at once what God is, and what we ought to be. Let us represent him unto our minds as we find him described in the gospel; and there we shall behold the perfections of the divine nature, though covered with the vail of human infirmities; and when we have framed unto ourselves the clearest notion that we can of a Being infinite in power, in wisdom, and goodness, the author and fountain of all perfections, let us fix the eyes of our souls upon it §, that our eyes may affect our heart, and while we are musing the fire will burn ||.

† Acts xvii. 27.

§ Lam. iii. 51.

‡ Heb. i. 3

|| Psalm xxxix. 3.

Especially,

Especially, if hereunto we add the consideration of God's favour and good-will towards us; nothing is more powerful to engage our affection, than to find that we are beloved. Expressions of kindness are always pleasing and acceptable unto us, though the person should be otherwise mean and contemptible: But, to have the love of one who is altogether lovely, to know that the glorious Majesty of heaven hath any regard unto us, how must it astonish and delight us, how must it overcome our spirits, and melt our hearts, and put our whole soul into a flame! Now, as the word of God is full of the expressions of his love towards men; so all his works do loudly proclaim it: He gave us our being, and, by preserving us in it, doth renew the donation every moment. He hath placed us in a rich and well furnished world, and liberally provided for all our necessities; he raineth down blessings from heaven upon us, and causeth the earth to bring forth our provision; he giveth us our food and raiment, and while we are spending the productions of one year, he is preparing for us against another. He sweeteneth our lives with innumerable comforts, and gratifieth every faculty with suitable objects: The eye of his providence is always upon us, and he watcheth for our safety when we are fast asleep, neither minding him nor ourselves. But, lest we should think these testimonies of his kindness less considerable, because they are the easy issues of his

We should meditate on his goodness and love.

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omnipotent power, and do not put him to any trouble or pain, he hath taken a more wonderful method to endear himself to us ; he hath testified his affection to us by suffering as well as by doing ; and because he could not suffer in his own nature he assumed ours. The eternal Son of God did clothe himself with the infirmities of our flesh, and left the company of those innocent and blessed spirits, who knew well how to love and adore him, that he might dwell among men, and wrestle with the obstinacy of that rebellious race, to reduce them to their allegiance and felicity, and then to offer himself up as a sacrifice and propitiation for them. I remember one of the poets hath an ingenious fancy to express the passion wherewith he found himself overcome after a long resistance, That the god of love had shot all his golden arrows at him, but could never pierce his heart, till at length he put himself into the bow, and darted himself straight into his breast. Methinks this doth some way adumbrate God's method of dealing with men : He had long contended with a stubborn world, and thrown down many a blessing upon them ; and when all his other gifts could not prevail, he at last made a gift of himself, to testify his affection and engage theirs. The account which we have of our Saviour's life in the gospel, doth all along present us with the story of his love ; all the pains that he took, and the troubles that he endured, were the wonderful effects, and uncontrollable evidences of it. But O that last, that
dismal

dismal scene! Is it possible to remember it, and question his kindness, or deny him ours? Here, here it is (my dear Friend) that we should fix our most serious and solemn thoughts, *That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God*†.

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

† Eph. iii. 17, 18, 19.

depth of guilt and misery, this is the effect of their obstinate wickedness, and not the design of those benefits which he bestows.

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

<p><i>To beget charity, we must remember that all men are nearly related unto God.</i></p>	<p>We shall find our hearts enlarged in charity toward men, by considering the relation wherein they stand unto God, and the impressions of his image which are stamped upon them. They are not only his creatures, the workmanship of his hands, but such of whom he taketh special care,</p>
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and for whom he hath a very dear and tender regard, having laid the designs of their happiness before the foundation of the world, and being willing to live and converse with them to all the ages of eternity. The meanest and most contemptible person whom we behold, is the offspring of heaven, one of the children of the Most High; and however unworthy he might behave himself of that relation, so long as God hath not abdicated and disowned him by a final sentence, he will have us to acknowledge him as one of his, and as such, to embrace him with a sincere and cordial affection. You know what a great concernment we are wont to have for those that do any ways belong to the person whom we love; how gladly we lay hold on every opportunity

opportunity to gratify the child or servant of a friend; and sure, our love towards God would as naturally spring forth in charity towards men, did we mind the interest that he is pleased to take in them, and consider that every soul is dearer unto him than all the material world; and that he did not account the blood of his Son too great a price for their redemption.

Again, As all men stand in a near relation to God, so they *That they*
 have still so much of his image *carry his*
 stamped on them as may oblige *image upon*
 and excite us to love them. In *them.*
 some this image is more eminent and conspicuous, and we can discern the lovely traces of wisdom and goodness; and though in others it may be miserably sullied and defaced, yet it is not altogether razed, some lineaments at least do still remain. All men are endowed with rational and immortal souls, with understandings and wills capable of the highest and most excellent things; and if they be at present disordered, and put out of tune by wickedness and folly, this may indeed move our compassion, but ought not, in reason, to extinguish our love. When we see a person of a rugged humour, and perverse disposition, full of malice and dissimulation, very foolish and very proud, it is hard to fall in love with an object that presents itself unto us under an idea so little grateful and lovely: But when we shall consider these evil qualities as the diseases and distempers of a soul,

soul, which, in itself, is capable of all that wisdom and goodness wherewith the best of saints have ever been adorned, and which may, one day, come to be raised to such heights of perfection as shall render it a fit companion for the holy angels, this will turn our aversion into pity, and make us behold him with such resentments as we should have when we look upon a beautiful body that were mangled with wounds, or disfigured by some lothsome disease; and however we hate the vices, we shall not cease to love the man.

To beget purity, we should consider the dignity of our nature.

In the next place, for purifying our souls, and disentangling our affections from the pleasures and enjoyments of this lower life, let us frequently ponder the excellency and dignity of our nature, and what a shameful and unworthy thing it is for so noble and divine a creature as the soul of man, to be sunk and immersed in brutish and sensual lust, or amused with airy and fantastical delights, and so to lose the relish of solid and spiritual pleasures; that the beast should be fed and pampered, and the man and the Christian be starved in us. Did we but mind who we are, and for what we were made, this would teach us, in a right sense, to reverence and stand in awe of ourselves; it would beget a modesty and shamefacedness, and make us very shy and reserved in the use of the most innocent and allowable pleasures.

It will be very effectual to the same purpose, that we frequently raise our minds toward heaven, and represent to our thoughts the joys that are at God's right hand, those pleasures that endure for evermore; *We should meditate oft on the joys of heaven.* for every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure †. If our heavenly country be much in our thoughts, it will make us, as *strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lust, which war against the soul,* and keep ourselves *unspotted from this world,* that we may be fit for the enjoyments and felicities of the other. But then we must see that our notions of heaven be not gross and carnal, that we dream not of a *Mahometan* paradise, nor rest on those metaphors and similitudes by which these joys are sometimes represented: For this might perhaps have a quite contrary effect: It might entangle us further in carnal affections, and we should be ready to indulge ourselves in a very liberal fore-taste of those pleasures wherein we had placed our everlasting felicity. But when we come once to conceive aright of those pure and spiritual pleasures; when the happiness we propose to ourselves is from the sight, and love, and enjoyment of God, and our minds are filled with the hopes and fore-thoughts of that blessed estate; O how mean and contemptible with all things here below appear in our eyes! With what disdain shall we reject the gross and muddy plea-

† 1 John iii. 3.

asures that would deprive us of those celestial enjoyments, or any way unfit and indispose us for them!

Humility arises from the consideration of our failings.

The last branch of Religion is *humility*, and sure we can never want matter of consideration for begetting it. All our wickednesses and imperfections, all our follies and our sins, may help to

pull down that fond and overweening conceit which we are apt to entertain of ourselves. That which makes any body esteem us, is their knowledge or apprehension of some little good, and their ignorance of a great deal of evil that may be in us; were they thoroughly acquainted with us, they would quickly change their opinion. The thoughts that pass in our heart, in the best and most serious day of our life, being exposed unto public view, would render us either hateful or ridiculous: And now, however we conceal our failings from one another, yet sure we are conscious of them ourselves, and some serious reflections upon them would much qualify and allay the vanity of our spirits. Thus holy men have come really to think worse of themselves, than of any other person in the world: Not but that they knew that gross and scandalous vices are, in their nature, more heinous than the surprisals of temptations and infirmity; but because they were much more intent on their own miscarriages than on those of their neighbours, and did consider all the aggravations of the one, and every thing that might

might be supposed to diminish and elevate the other.

But it is well observed by a pious writer, that the deepest and most pure humility doth not so much arise from the consideration of our own faults and defects, as from a calm and quiet

Thoughts of God give us the lowest thoughts of ourselves.

contemplation of the divine purity and goodness. Our spots never appear so clearly, as when we place them before this infinite light; and we never seem less in our own eyes, than when we look down upon ourselves from on high. O how little, how nothing do all those shadows of perfection then appear, for which we are wont to value ourselves! That humility, which cometh from a view of our own sinfulness and misery, is more turbulent and boisterous; but the other layeth us full as low, and wanteth nothing of that anguish and vexation wherewith our souls are apt to boil when they are the nearest object of our thoughts.

There remains yet another means for begetting a holy and religious disposition in the soul; and that is, *fervent and hearty prayer*. Holiness is the gift of God,—indeed the greatest gift he doth bestow, or we are capable to receive; and he hath promised his holy Spirit to those that ask it of him. In prayer we make the nearest approaches to God, and lie open to the influences of heaven: Then it is that the Sun

Prayer another instrument of Religion.

of righteousness doth visit us with his directest rays, and dissipateth our darkness, and imprinteth his image on our souls. I cannot now insist on the advantages of this exercise, or the disposition wherewith it ought to be performed; and there is no need I should, there being so many books that treat on this subject. I shall only tell you, that as there is one sort of prayer wherein we make use of the voice, which is necessary in public, and may sometimes have its own advantages in private; and another, where-

The advantages of mental prayer.

in, though we utter no sound, yet we conceive the expressions, and form the words, as it were, in our minds; so there is a third and more sublime kind of prayer, wherein the soul takes a higher flight, and having collected all its forces by long and serious meditation, it darteth itself (if I may so speak) towards God in sighs and groans, and thoughts too big for expression. As when, after a deep contemplation of the divine perfections appearing in all his works of wonder, it addresseth itself unto him in the profoundest adoration of his majesty and glory: For, when after sad reflections on its vileness and miscarriages, it prostrates itself before him with the greatest confusion and sorrow, not daring to lift up its eyes, or utter one word in his presence; or when having well considered the beauty of holiness, and the unspeakable felicity of those that are truly good, it panteth after God, and sendeth up such vigorous and ardent desires as no words

can sufficiently express, continuing and repeating each of these acts as long as it finds itself upheld by the force and impulse of the previous meditation.

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

Thus (my dear Friend) I have briefly proposed the method which I judge proper for moulding the soul into a holy frame; and the same means which serve to beget this divine temper, must still be practised for strengthening

Religion is to be advanced by the same means by which it is begun.

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and advancing it ; and therefore I shall recommend but one more for that purpose, and it is the frequent and conscientious

The use of the holy sacrament. use of that holy sacrament, which is peculiarly appointed to nourish and increase the spiritual life, when once it is begotten in the

soul. All the instruments of Religion do meet together in this ordinance ; and while we address ourselves unto it, we are put to practise all the rules which were mentioned before. Then it is that we make the severest survey of our actions, and lay the strictest obligations on ourselves ; then are our minds raised to the highest contempt of the world, and every grace doth exercise itself with the greatest activity and vigour ; all the subjects of contemplation do there present themselves unto us with the greatest advantage ; and then, if ever, doth the soul make its most powerful sallies toward heaven, and assault it with a holy and acceptable force. And certainly the neglect or careless performance of this duty, is one of the chief causes that bedwarfs our religion, and makes us continue of so low a size.

But it is time I should put a close to this letter, which is grown to a far greater bulk than at first I intended : If these poor papers can do you the smallest service, I shall think myself very happy in this undertaking ; at least I am hopeful you will kindly accept the sincere endeavours of a person who would fain acquit himself of some part of that which he owes you.

A P R A Y E R.

A N D now, O most gracious G O D, Father and Fountain of mercy and goodness, who hast blessed us with the knowledge of our happiness, and the way that leadeth unto it ! excite in our souls such ardent desires after the one, as may put us forth to the diligent prosecution of the other. Let us neither presume on our own strength, nor distrust thy divine assistance ; but while we are doing our utmost endeavours, teach us still to depend on thee for success. Open our eyes, O G O D, and teach us out of thy law. Bless us with an exact and tender sense of our duty, and a knowledge to discern perverse things. O that our ways were directed to keep thy statutes, then shall we not be ashamed when we have respect unto all thy commandments. Possess our hearts with a generous and holy disdain of all those poor enjoyments which this world holdeth out to allure us, that they may never be able to inveigle our affections, or betray us to any sin : Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou us in thy law. Fill our souls with such a deep sense, and full persuasion of those great truths which thou hast revealed in the gospel, as may influence and regulate our whole conversation ; and that the life which we henceforth live in the flesh, we may live through faith in the Son of God. O that the infinite perfections of thy blessed nature, and the astonishing expressions of thy goodness and love, may conquer and overpower

power our hearts, that they may be constantly rising toward the inflames of devoutest affection, and enlarging themselves in sincere and cordial love towards all the world for thy sake ; and that we may cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in thy fear, without which we can never hope to behold and enjoy thee. Finally, O GOD ! grant that the consideration of what thou art, and what we ourselves are, may both humble and lay us low before thee, and also stir up in us the strongest and most ardent aspiration toward thee. We desire to resign and give up ourselves to the conduct of thy holy spirit ; lead us in thy truth, and teach us, for thou art the GOD of our salvation ; guide us with thy counsel, and afterwards receive us unto glory, for the merits and intercession of thy blessed Son our Saviour.

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F O R M S

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P R A Y E R.

I.

A SHORT PRAYER, at first rising in the Morning.

IT becomes me, O Lord, before the thoughts of this world get possession of my mind, to lay hold on the first opportunity this day affords me, of worshipping thee my Creator and Governor. I adore the perfections of thy nature; and acknowledge thine undeserved goodness to me. I bless thee for every instance of it through my whole life; and, at this time particularly, for the watchful care of thy good providence, by which I have been secured from the dangers of the last night. I intreat of thee alone, as the Father and Judge of mankind, the pardon of every transgression, and omission of

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my duty through my whole life. I beg this upon those terms only, which the holiness of thy nature, and the declarations of Jesus Christ, have marked out to us. I here acknowledge myself thy creature and thy servant, and the disciple of thy Son; and, as such, obliged by all the strictest ties of duty, gratitude and interest, sincerely to search out and perform thy will, and never wilfully to offend against thy holy laws. I now intreat thy fatherly goodness towards me. I beg of thee, the Governor of the world, protection and favour; professing before thee, my entire dependence upon thy wisdom, power and goodness. Defend me, I beseech thee, this day, from all dangers, and sad accidents. Guard me, by the dispositions of thy good providence, from all the ways of sin; and lead me forward in the paths of all virtue, towards the true perfection and happiness of a reasonable creature. Accept, O Lord! this my first service of this day, according to thy goodness and mercy in Christ Jesus, thine only Son, our Lord; in whose name, and in whose words, I farther call upon thee,

“Our father who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: For thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever.” *Amen.*

2. *A SHORT PRAYER, at night, just before going to bed.*

O GOD, my great Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor! I approach thee with the sincerest reverence and humility, to pay the last acknowledgements of this day to thee, before my eyes are closed with sleep. I praise and magnify thy name for all thy mercies: Particularly, at this time, for thy preservation of me through the past day; and for that tender care and guidance of thy merciful providence, by which I have been defended from the great evils, both of sin and calamity, with which this imperfect state so much abounds. Whatever of good or happiness I enjoy, to thee I give the praise of it, and to thy favour. My sinful imperfections and failings, my transgressions and neglects, in many instances of thy law and my duty, I truly repent of. I take the shame of them to myself, and seek the pardon of them from thy fatherly mercy and goodness alone. Forgive me, I beseech thee, upon the terms of thy Son's gospel, whatsoever thou hast seen amiss, in any part of my conduct, through the past day; and take me, and all in whom I am concerned, into thy care and protection through this night. Defend us, if it be thy holy will, from the designs of evil men, and from every thing terrible and hurtful: And lead us all in the paths of holiness, through thy fatherly goodness, and thy love to mankind, declared by thy Son Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom be glory forever. *Amen.*

3. *A Longer PRAYER, to be used at any other time of the day.*

O G O D, who are the Father and Lord of all Beings, and glorious in all perfections! I thine unworthy creature and servant, in the deepest sense of my own manifold imperfections, approach thy divine Majesty; beseeching thee, out of the abundance of thy goodness, to be merciful to me. I acknowledge, that many have been my failings and neglects through the course of my life; and that, if thou should'st be *extreme to mark* and, punish *what is*, in every degree and every instance, *amiss*, I could not hope for any portion of thy favour: But, O Lord, the goodness of thy nature, and the holy gospel preached by thy Son Jesus Christ, encourage me to hope in thee for mercy and forgiveness; and therefore, as his disciple, in expectation of thy favour upon the terms declared in that gospel, I earnestly beseech thee to forgive every thought, every word, and every action, by which I have in the least degree offended thee, or transgressed the rules of virtue and true religion, from the beginning of my life to this hour. And this I beg sincerely, resolving to endeavour after a greater degree of perfection, and a greater conformity to thy holy will, for the time to come; and hoping, on this condition alone to be received by thee to favour here and eternal happiness hereafter.

Accept, likewise, the acknowledgements of my heart and mouth, which are so indispensably
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due to the perfections of thy creatures. I adore and celebrate the unalterable glories of thy power, adorned and directed by unerring wisdom and goodness; and bless and praise thee, for every instance of thy tender regard to me and to all the children of men. I bless thee, that when it pleased thee to bring me unto being, I was made capable of knowing and imitating thee, and of enjoying thy favour. I bless thee, that I have been called to the knowledge of a religion, from which I have received many and great advantages, assistances and opportunities, towards answering the end and true design of my creation. I bless thee, that by the dispositions of thy good providence, I have been led to a just sense of the excellence of virtue, and of the importance of true religion; and that this sense hath been improved by the best examples and sentiments of others, and by many peculiar instances of thy merciful care and goodness.

I praise thy holy name for all that thy Son, Jesus Christ, did, and taught, and suffered in this world; in order to redeem mankind from the power and punishment of their sins; and to lead them more effectually to the knowledge of thee, and the practise of their duty; and to confirm to them the reasonable hope of being immortally happy hereafter. For these and all thy mercies, which respect another and a better life than the present, let my soul magnify thee, O Lord! and all the powers within me praise thy holy name.

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Nor ought I to neglect to thank thee for those many instances of thy mercy, by which thou hast made my estate, in this short and uncertain life, much happier than it could have been without them; for affording me not only all the necessary supports, but many of the most desirable conveniencies of such a state. Continue, O Lord, I beseech thee, these thy temporal favours to me, if thou see'st it consistent with my chief and eternal good: If not, lead me to eternal life in whatever paths thou see'st fit. I resign myself, and all my concerns into thine hands; and entreat thee to be my Guide, and my Governor, unto death. Let the sense of these thine undeserved mercies, inspire me with such a gratitude as may shew itself in the suitable returns of a good life and holy conversation; and with such a love of thee, as may express itself in the keeping thy commandments.

Whatever moral imperfections there are still in me, direct me to the knowledge of them, and to the proper means of putting an end to them: And assist me, by all the methods of thy wisdom and goodness, in the great work I have to do, the perfecting my mind in all that is truly excellent, and the working out my salvation in the methods agreeable to thy holy will, and to the obligations of a reasonable creature.

I beseech thee, likewise, to be merciful to the whole world. Enlighten the dark corners of it with the true knowledge of thee, and of thy gospel in its simplicity; and sow thee seeds of all virtue and happiness in all parts of it. Lead
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all professed Christians to truth, and righteousness, and peace; that so they may be an honour to the religion they profess. Put an end to idolatry and superstition, and all spiritual tyranny and oppression. Give an open check to all that pride and ambition which disturb the world. Quiet the turbulent spirits, and compose the unchristian animosities of mankind.

Look down, with much mercy, upon this my native country. Cure our evil tempers, and conquer our unchristian and uncharitable dispositions; and grant that, at length, mutual love and charity may flourish and abound amongst us, amidst our greatest differences. Pour down all blessings, spiritual and temporal, upon our King, and his royal family. Endow him, and those who are called to any office under him for the administration of justice or government amongst us, with all gifts and abilities necessary for the discharge of their great trust; and prosper and protect them in the due execution of it. Lead all the ministers of thy gospel to teach thy truth in simplicity; and, by their example and doctrine, to bring themselves and those who hear them, to eternal life.

Extend thy mercy and compassion to all afflicted persons, of whatsoever sort or degree their afflictions may be; to all who are in a state of uneasiness of mind, or pain of body, a state of want or sorrow, of persecution or oppression; giving to them all the supports and assistances suitable to their several distresses, and, in thy good time, an happy issue out of all their calamities.

lamities. Bless all in whom I am nearly concerned, with every thing truly good for them. Shower down thy mercies on my friends and benefactors, granting them all happiness here and hereafter. Forgive all my enemies, if such there be, and shew thy mercy to them.

Finally, O Lord! pardon all my past sins; guide and govern me by thy holy spirit, in my sincere endeavours to attain everlasting life. Promote my true happiness, as thou seeest fit; and mercifully receive me, and my imperfect services, according to thy goodness, declared by thy well beloved Son, Jesus Christ: In whose name I offer up all my addresses to thy throne, and ascribe to thee all glory and praise, now and for ever. *Amen.*

4. *A Large Form of PRAYER, for more particular occasions.*

O GOD the Supreme Maker and Governor of the world, perfect in all that is truly great and lovely! I, thine unworthy servant, appear before thee, under a deep sense of thy glorious perfections, and of my own great and many failings and imperfections. Under this sense, the great support and satisfaction to my mind is, That thou art ready to accept of the sincere endeavours of thy creatures, to reform whatever has been amiss in their past conduct; and that thou hast sent thy Son *Jesus Christ* into the world, to *save us from our sins*, and to declare to us plainly the terms of thy forgiveness

forgiveness and favour: In his name, therefore, I present myself before thee; and, as his disciple, I intreat of thee the pardon of whatsoever thou hast seen amiss in me, from the beginning of my life unto this day. Forgive, O Lord, every thought of my mind which has been disagreeable to thy nature and precepts; every word of my mouth unworthy of a man, or a Christian; every instance of my behaviour which has been displeasing to thee, or my own conscience; every offence, of whatsoever sort or degree, against thee my neighbour, or myself. Forgive me all the sins which I myself can now call to my own remembrance, *particularly* †. And forgive me, likewise, all those transgressions of thy holy will, which may now be out of the reach of my memory, but have been open to thine all-seeing eye, and are known to thee with all their circumstances and aggravations.

Pardon me, O Lord, according to thy loving kindness, and the declarations made by thy Son Jesus Christ: And grant me that forgiveness, which I neither ask nor expect, but upon those terms and conditions which thy holiness and mercy have laid down in his gospel. Behold, O Lord, I heartily forgive all who have, in any instance, or in any degree, offended or injured me: Without which I ought to enter-

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† Here it may be proper for a person to mention any remarkable instances, if he be conscious of any such; but highly improper to confess sins, of which he knows not himself to have been guilty.

tain no hopes of my own forgiveness. And if I have myself injured any person, I am as truly disposed and ready to make all possible reparation, as I am to entreat thy favour to myself. And as I am sensible that no forgiveness can be expected, according to thy *gospel*, without amendment of life, I seriously renounce all communication with whatsoever is displeasing to thee; and sincerely resolve, through thy grace, to correct everything that is a mis in my temper and behaviour, and to bring myself still nearer to thy holiness and happiness. Forgive me, therefore, as thou hast promised, by thy Son. Accept me to thy mercy; and give success, I earnestly beseech thee, by thy gracious favour, to these purposes and designs of my soul.

And now, O Lord, according to the same goodness to thy creatures, graciously receive the earnest petitions which I offer to thee for every good that it is fit for me to pray for. I acknowledge thee to be thee Great Author of all our beings, the Original of all our happiness, the Giver of all good gifts, and Disposer of all events; and therefore profess my dependence upon thee alone for every thing I ought to wish for, or desire. I am sensible, O Lord, that to thee intirely I must owe every degree of happiness I can ever enjoy, or hope for: I am sensible that thou art the tenderest Father, and best Friend, to thy creatures; disposed to lead them to their greatest good, and ready to promote and assist their sincere endeavours after it. And therefore, before thee, and in thy presence,
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I willingly lay open the desires and wishes of my soul, which I think agreeable to reason and thy holy will.

I esteem it the glory of our nature, that we are made capable of such an exalted and rational happiness as results from the knowledge of thee, and the imitation of thy moral perfections. And as thou hast more fully assured us of this in the Christian Religion, let the serious consideration of that grace and mercy, which hath appeared in that dispensation, effectually lead me to the good end proposed in it. Let the holy precepts of that perfect institution by which I profess to be guided, and the unspotted example of that Great Master, whose follower I desire to be accounted, engage me to live, in all respects, as becometh the gospel, and the disciple of *Jesus Christ*. Particularly, O Lord, let the consideration of the peculiar genius of that gospel, and of those virtues which the Great Author of it accounted the glory of his own life, influence me to endeavour to excel in them: And engage me to love the whole race of mankind with an universal charity, and beneficent disposition; to rejoice at all opportunities of doing good either to the souls or bodies of men, and of adding to the satisfaction and happiness of all about me; to stoop even to the lowest offices of kindness to others; to be ready to forgive the sharpest and most undeserved injuries, and to return pity and good-will for them; and to be ever willing to condescend and yield for the good of others: That so,

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the truest humility, and the most extensive charity, may adorn every action and circumstance of my life; and all pride and passion, and uncharitableness, may be checked and subdued by the power of religion, and the loveliness of the contrary virtues.

Let the sense of my own many failings, and the imperfections of our nature, dispose me to be willing to put a candid and favourable interpretation upon all those actions of others which can justly and reasonably demand it, or admit of it; as well as to be ever ready to forgive the offences of others towards myself: And let the sense of thy goodness, in allowing me still time and opportunity for perfecting my soul in all that is praise-worthy, induce me to study more constantly and uniformly to please and imitate thee.

My outward condition with respect to the good things of this world, it is my happiness, as well as duty, to refer wholly to thy wise will and pleasure: But as thou hast ordained us to belong to this world, as well as to expect another, and hast framed us so that we cannot but be sensibly affected with our good and bad estate here below; of thee, therefore, it becomes us to beg, with submission to thy providence, the security and continuance of the good things we already enjoy; and the increase of them, if that be truly good and needful. And as, by thy appointment, I have already experienced, in this world, many evils and afflictions, and have been witness to many more around me, suffer me to
implore

implore the gracious regards of thy fatherly affection towards me, and to pray to thee with respect to them, according to the pattern of thy Son Jesus Christ, *Father if it be possible*; if it be consistent with and agreeable to thy wise and gracious purposes, secure me, and all in whose happiness I am most nearly concerned, from all sad accidents, and calamitous events; from all tormenting pains, and grievous diseases; and from every thing inconsistent with such an happiness as may lawfully be desired in this transitory world; *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt*: And therefore, O Lord, if thy unerring wisdom shall otherwise determine, let the serious meditation, on the example of Christ himself, and that innumerable company of the best of men who have gone before me in this conflict, inspire me with a zeal to imitate their patience; and let the contemplation of thy fatherly goodness engage me to an hearty and rational submission to all thy dispensations, remembering what an happiness it is to be under the government of a Being who knows what is in all respects best, and who cannot afflict his creatures but for wise and good ends. And let the sense of thy gracious design in all my afflictions lead me to the true and right use of them; to disengage my affections more and more from this world, and to seek for happiness in a better and never-changing state.

Let the consideration of the certainty of death, the end of all temporal evils, influence me to endeavour to make it happy, by such a virtuous life

as may give me a well grounded hope in thy mercy. Let the review of those uncertainties and troubles I have met with in this world, render me the more ready and contented, at thy appointed time, to leave it: And let the prospect of glory and happiness hereafter, exalt my mind above any fond regard to this vain and transitory life; and enable me to act, as becomes one who truly believes life and immortality to be brought to light through the *gospel*.

Finally, O Lord, my great and chief request for myself, is, That, by thy favour, I may obtain everlasting happiness hereafter; and that the state of this world, with respect to me, may be so ordered, and the trials to be appointed for me in it may be so proportioned to my condition and powers, as most effectually to promote and secure my eternal and greatest good, after the few days of this life are past away. Deny to me, therefore, out of thy great goodness, whatsoever is truly bad or unfit for me; though I should be so weak as to desire and wish for it. And grant me every thing that is truly good for me; though I should be so blind, and so void of wisdom, as not to see, or ask it. As far as my petitions are reasonable, and agreeable to the eternal laws of wisdom, and the purposes of thy governing providence, and the holy gospel, so far only I entreat thy favourable consent to them: As far as they are not so, I utterly renounce them, and submit my own will entirely to thine; and, in a deep sense of my own imperfections, beg of thee to accept of the sincerity

rity of my heart; and out of thine abundant goodness, to overlook and pass by all defects of my services.

To these *petitions* it becomes me to add the indispensable tribute of the sincerest praises and thanksgivings of my soul; due to the glories of thy nature, and to thy goodness to thy creatures. I know, O God, that thy perfections are far exalted above all that can be conceived or expressed by us, and that thy mercies are above all our thanks; and that thy unalterable attributes stand not in need of any homage we can pay, but it becomes us to acknowledge and celebrate them.

The glories of thy nature are the glories of perfect power, adorned with perfect goodness and holiness, and guided by unerring wisdom and knowledge; such glories as are in themselves, worthy of our highest admiration and praises, as well as the foundation of all the happiness we ourselves can possibly enjoy or hope for.

And as it becomes us to celebrate the lovely perfection of thy *nature*, as it is in itself; so are we indispensable obliged to pay thee our most grateful acknowledgements for the display of those perfections in all thy dispensations towards thy creatures, and for every instance of thy tender regard towards us. Accept therefore, O gracious Lord and merciful Father, the poor tribute of mine unfeigned thanks for the manifold experiences which I have had of thy loving kindness, and the many marks I have
received

received of thine undeserved favour. To thee I owe my being, and, together with it, all the faculties and powers that distinguish our nature from that of the brute part of the creation. And when I consider what it is to be made capable of knowing thee, the foundation of all good; of imitating thee, the great original of all perfection; and of enjoying thy favour, the foundation of all lasting and substantial happiness; I must acknowledge thine undeserved goodness, and for ever praise thee for making me capable of so inestimable blessings.

I must remember likewise, with the highest gratitude, before thee, that, in order to secure and carry forward this gracious end of our creation the more effectually, it hath pleased thy goodness to send thy Beloved Son into the world to teach, and live, and die, in order to save us from our sins, and to conduct us effectually to true and everlasting happiness. I bless thee for the divine instructions he hath given his followers concerning the certain method of obtaining eternal life; for the blameless and perfect example of holiness and patience he hath set before us; for his *humbling himself even to the death upon the cross, and shedding his blood even for the remission of our sins*; and for his plain declarations of the gracious acceptance of all such as sincerely receive him for their Saviour and their Lord, and heartily endeavour to know, and comply with his terms. I bless thee for the mighty evidences he gave, that he was truly sent by thee on so gracious an errand, by
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the purity of his doctrine, by the integrity of his life, by the nature and number of his miracles, by the glory of his resurrection after an ignominious death, by his ascension into heaven, and by his pouring down from thence the wonderful gifts of the Holy Spirit, in order to the propagation of his religion, and the settlement of his church; by all these arguments establishing our minds in peace and truth.

I bless thee, that the joyful sound of thy gospel hath arrived to this part of the world; that it hath here, by the peculiar favour of thy good providence, been reformed from many gross abuses under which it long laboured, and now lies open to the view and study of all men; That by thy merciful appointment, I have been called to the knowledge of it, as it is in itself; and so am the better assured of the true way to happiness; the more forcibly engaged to follow after it; and the more likely to obtain great degrees of it, if it be not wanting to myself: For all which instances of thine undeserved and inestimable goodness, no words can sufficiently express the grateful sentiments which ought to fill and possess my soul.

Accept likewise, O God, my most hearty and unfeigned thanks, for the constant regards of thy good providence towards me; to which I am indebted for many singular and peculiar happinesses. To thee I owe, that I was born in a country where Christianity is securely professed; that I have been instructed in the principles of true religion and virtue; and my mind led to
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the knowledge of the most useful and important truths: And particularly, that I have been secured, by thy goodness, from many of those great and hazardous trials which have so often proved fatal to others. To thee I owe whatever opportunities I have enjoyed of improving myself in what is truly praise-worthy; whatever peculiar advantages there are in that condition, in which it hath pleased thee to place me, with respect to this world, towards attaining the greatest good and happiness of a reasonable creature. To thee, the Great Creator and Governor of the world, I owe all these blessings; and to thee I offer up my sincerest acknowledgements for them.

I bless thee for that daily care of thy government over this world, by which I have been preserved, ever since I was born, from innumerable dangers; many more than I can number, and many more than I know of. A mercy! which I ought thankfully to acknowledge, not merely with respect to this life, but to a better: as by this means I have greater opportunities of advancing yet farther in the paths of virtue, and obtaining an increase of happiness in the world to come.

I desire likewise to offer up my unfeigned thanks for all those temporal blessings and conveniencies, by which thou hast made my passage through this world much more tolerable and easy than it could otherwise have been; for the use of my reason and understanding preserved to me, without which other blessings are vain;
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for that measure of health and strength, that ease and freedom from pain, which I have enjoyed; for the supports of friendship and society; for the comforts of food, and raiment, and habitation; and for all the good things with which thou hast in mercy surrounded me, and those in whose good estate I am nearly concerned. Whilst so many others pass their lives under the heavy pressure of the contrary evils.

What can I render unto thee, O Lord, for all the numberless instances of thy favour which I have experienced? I praise and magnify thy great and glorious name; and acknowledge myself under the strictest and most indispensable obligations to live; and act in all respects, as becomes one that hath tasted so largely of thy loving kindness. I profess, O Lord, my hearty resolution of endeavouring to do so; and offer up my sincere desires, that, by the consideration of what I have now remembered before thee; I may be led to make returns in some degree, suitable to so many and so great instances of thy goodness.

Let the serious contemplation of thy glories and perfections, incite me to endeavour constantly to adorn my own nature with those moral perfections, which I acknowledge to be so worthy of praise; and engage me to imitate what appears so truly lovely and glorious. Let the consideration of thy merciful design in making me capable of knowing thee, and being eternally happy in thy favour, powerfully move me to make such an use of those faculties:

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thou hast endowed me with, as I may be led to a due sense of thy happiness, and conducted safe to the possession of those pleasures which are at thy right hand. Let thy unspeakable mercy, in sending thy Son into the world for the securing and promoting my happiness, effectually influence me to embrace his offers, to fulfil his commands, to imitate his example, and to live in all respects as becometh his disciple. Let the sense of those peculiar advantages which I have by thy especial favour, enjoyed, lead me to such a careful use and improvement of them that they may be the happy occasions of more than ordinary degrees of perfection and glory hereafter.

Let the consideration of thy gracious design, in affording me so many temporal good things, and so many comforts, in this imperfect state, influence me to use them all to thy glory, as uncertain goods; to be enjoyed with temperance; and to be employed for the use and support of others, as well as my own. And let the serious remembrance of all thy great and undeserved goodness to me, open and enlarge my heart toward others; lead me to imitate what I praise and celebrate so much in thee; and teach me to be ready to do good to all; to pity the follies and miseries of mankind; and, as far as I am able, to promote the happiness of all around me: That, by such a return to all the instances of thy goodness and mercy I may shew myself truly sensible of them, and sincerely thankful for them.

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With theſe prayers and praifes, I beſeech thee O God, to accept the ſincere expreſſions of my charity and good-will towards thy whole rational creation ; which I now offer to thee, the father of all, as a member of the whole ſociety of mankind,---and more particularly as a member of the church of Chriſt, founded in love and charity. As ſuch, I ſincerely rejoice before thee in every degree of happineſs enjoyed by any of my fellow-creatures here below, and heartily beſeech thee to diſpenſe more and larger communications of it to this lower world ; to increaſe it in all thoſe who enjoy it in any meaſure, and to impart ſome portions of it to all who are in any ſort of miſery and diſtreſs.

Look, in great mercy, upon the ſad eſtate of that part of mankind who know not thy nature, nor worſhip thee as becomes thy perfections. Put an end to their idolatry and ſuperſtition, by ſhewing them the light and evidence of thy goſpel in its ſimplicity ; and, by bringing them to the knowledge of thy truth, lead them to eternal life and ſalvation. Have pity, likewise, on the remains of thy ancient people the *Jews*, and all others who are better inſtructed in the belief and worſhip of thee than the *Pagan* world ; and guide them to a yet greater degree of true knowledge, by directing their way to the knowledge of thy Son, and the praſtiſe of his laws ; and bring them by this means, to the happineſs of Chriſtians

Viſit with a more eſpecial grace and favour, the whole Chriſtian world ; all who are called
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by the name of thy Son, and profess his holy religion. Behold, O Lord, a large scene of spiritual *evils*, worthy of thy gracious and merciful interposition :---In many places, the *faith* once delivered to the saints in purity and simplicity, enervated by vain and groundless traditions, or darkened by the inventions of men; the worship of thee, *O Father*, expressly established by thy Son *Jesus Christ*, in *spirit and in truth*, over-clouded by numberless superstitions, and even destroyed by idolatry itself; the moral laws which thy Son came to rescue from the corruptions of men, and to enforce upon his followers, rendered ineffectual by many human devices, false notions of religion, set up instead of them; and the progress of thy holy *gospel* stopt and hindered by the wicked lives and scandalous behaviour of those who profess it!

Interpose, I beseech thee, and put an effectual stop to these great and unchristian evils.---- Confound the devices of all such as behold or encourage any degree of superstition, for base and secular ends. Give a powerful check to all sorts and all degrees of persecution and oppression, so scandalous and destructive to thy holy religion, which mistaken or wicked men pretend to promote by such impious methods. Put a stop to all spiritual tyranny, and to all usurpation over the consciences of men; and dissipate those clouds of ignorance which dispose people to abase and ignominious slavery to the dictates of men, rather than to a rational enquiry

quiry into thy holy will which lies open to them: And, above all, exert thine almighty arm in vindication of the cause of piety and virtue, leading all professed Christians to such a sense of the importance of it, as that they may study to adorn their lives with a behaviour suitable to their holy profession; and recommend it to the experience and approbation of the unbelieving world, by the integrity and unblameableness of their whole conversation.

Particularly, grant that all Christians who have departed from the gross corruptions of Popery, may depart intirely from the *spirit* of it: That as they profess to make the *scripture* the rule of faith, so they may without reserve leave it as such to all their neighbours: That as they have nobly contended for their own religious liberty and Christian rights, so they may not lose the glory of this, by contradicting it in their behaviour toward others; but that they may, by their exemplary deportment, and by their steady adherence to the principles of righteousness, peace, and mutual forbearance, manifest to all the world the sincerity of their reformation, and reap the fruit of it, by studying to excel in all that is praise-worthy.

Nor ought I to forget; O Great Governor of the universe, the civil estate of the kingdoms of the earth. Put an end, O Lord, at length, to the disorders and confusions occasioned by the weak and ambitious lords of this world, and shew thyself indeed King of kings and Lord of lords. Permit no longer the happiness of
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human society to be in any part of thy creation ruined and laid waste by the inferior government of men, which was instituted solely for the support and comfort of it: Bring public disgrace and confusion upon all tyrants and oppressors; and honour, with particular marks of thy favour, all princes who sincerely study to answer the ends of their institution; that so the triumphs of insatiable ambition may at length cease from the earth, and the blessings of good government be felt throughout the world.

Amongst all the kingdoms of the earth, look, I beseech thee, with a particular favour, upon this to which, by the disposal of thy providence, I belong; and for which, therefore, I am obliged in an especial manner to shew my concern, by the heartiest wishes of my soul. Pardon our many and crying sins; and in order to avert thy judgments, lead every sinner amongst us to such a sense of his sins, as may engage him heartily to renounce and forsake them. Continue and confirm to us that peculiar form of government so wonderfully hitherto preserved to us, by which we are most effectually secured against the extremities of confusion and arbitrary power than many other nations, and of which we enjoy the happy fruits every moment of our lives.

Preserve and establish us in the free enjoyment of the light of thy holy gospel, and the secure profession of our religion. What errors still remain amongst Protestants do thou effectually remove, and especially such as may have a
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bad influence upon the conduct of men's lives ; and strengthen their common interest against their common enemy. To this end, give a check to the mutual violences and hatreds, and uncharitable behaviour of men of evil dispositions on every side. Kindle, once again, the fire of love and charity amongst us ; and permit not our differences in religious matters, to extinguish this fire, or to blow up another to our intestine destruction.

Pour down the choicest of thy blessings upon our King and his royal family ; and bless all who have any part in the administration of our government. Assist him, and them, in the great and important business of their stations : Guide them into the best and wisest measures ; and give success to all their counsels and labours for the advantage of this nation, or for the relief and support of any of our injured neighbours.

Permit not the disposal of the lives and properties of thy people ever to come to the hands of ignorant or partial men : But manifest thy great concern for justice here below, in such a manner as that the guilty may ever meet with their due punishment, and the injured and oppressed find a sure redress in the courts of judicature. Direct all the magistrates amongst us to a deep sense of their duty ; to give all encouragement to virtue, and all possible discouragement to vice, both by their example, and the due execution of their offices.

Lead all those to whom the great concerns of religion, and of the salvation of mankind, are more peculiarly committed, to such a knowledge of all necessary truths, such an exemplary and Christian conversation, such a prudent and constant discharge of their holy office, as may effectually promote the happiness of themselves, and of those committed to their care. Encourage and promote amongst us, the means and methods of such a virtuous and laudable education as attends to sound learning and religion to the reformation of this age, and the better estate of future generations.

I desire likewise to express before thee, the real sense I have of the miseries and calamities of the distressed part of mankind, and the sincere desire I have of contributing to their ease and relief. O thou Father of mercies, and God of all consolation! what can we do for that multitude of deplorable objects of compassion who are out of the reach of our knowledge, or of our ability to relieve, but offer up our earnest wishes to thee, the great Disposer of prosperity and adversity? I desire, O Lord, to sympathize with all the distressed, *and weep with them that weep*; and do earnestly beg of thee, for all the afflicted, of what sort or degree soever, whatever I could reasonably beg for myself were I in their condition. Assist them all in their several trials and conflicts; and guide them to such a degree of contentment, resignation, and patience, as may render their present afflictions the happy occasion of their greater future glory; and,

and, as far as it is consistent with the purposes of thy wisdom, put an end to their present distresses and troubles.

Restore light and comfort to the dark, melancholy, and distracted minds of those who have lost the use of their reason in any instance, or any degree. Pity the destitute condition of those who are in want of any of the necessary circumstances of life; particularly of those who are fallen from the comforts of a prosperous condition to the miseries of adversity; and raise them up friends, and patrons, in their low estate. Relieve, by thy good providence, the wants of the poor and needy. Be a Father to the fatherless, plead the cause of the helpless widow, and regard the afflicted estate of all who mourn the loss of those in whom in any part of their happiness was placed.

Strengthen and assist, in an especial manner, all who suffer, any where, for the love of truth or the testimony of a good conscience; and do thou so proportion to their strength, the measure and duration of their sufferings, that they may work for them a more exceeding weight of glory. Hear the groans of all who are oppressed and barbarously treated by the tyrants of this world, and grant a redress to all their calamities. Attend to the sighs and tears of such as are in captivity and slavery, and open a way to their liberty and security.

Visit, with thy light and comfort, all who are afflicted with bodily pain, or any sort of sickness; and bring to their mind all such con-
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considerations and assistances as are necessary and proper to support them in their distressed condition, or to dispose and fit them for their passage into another state. Remove, in much compassion, all those unreasonable doubts and dependencies with which many sincere and honest minds are in this world disturbed and overclouded; and direct them to such just notions of thee, and of thy holy gospel, as may establish them in a course of chearful and hearty obedience to the laws of it.

Succeed the endeavours of all who honestly and industriously labour after a convenient livelihood in this world, and are useful members of the common-wealth; and bring to nought the designs of all who either privately or openly live upon the spoil of their neighbours, and are the plague and terror of human society.

Requit, in the course of thy good providence, the kindness of all who have at any time, or in any degree, endeavoured to contribute to the advantage of my mind, body, or outward estate. Upon all who have either done, or designed me good, of any sort, shower down thy rewards and favour: And if there be any who have either designed, or done me real mischief, in return to their evil I beg and intreat for thy pardon and thy blessings. Correct the evil disposition of all such minds, and plant, instead of it, a temper worthy of men and Christians. Let the consideration of their own eternal interest lead them all to charity and love; and engage them to put on those dispositions,
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which only can fit them for the blessed society above.

Bless all in whom I am more nearly concerned, or in whose happiness I take a particular part, with such a measure of health, success, and prosperity, as may best carry forward the designs of thy goodness toward them, and most effectually promote their happiness here and hereafter. But whatever be thy dispensations toward them, with respect to this life, lead them all, I beseech thee, into those paths which will infallibly convey them to thine heavenly kingdom in the world to come.

Finally, O Lord ! I wish and pray for all good things to the whole race of mankind. I rejoice in every degree of virtue and happiness to be seen here below. I mourn for every degree and every instance, of vice and misery. Let thy kingdom come, I beseech thee, and shew thine almighty power by establishing true religion amongst men, and putting a stop to all the calamities of this lower world.

Accept, O Lord ! I most earnestly beseech thee, the sentiments and desires of heart, which I have now poured out before thee, under a sense of thy presence, and of thy providence over-ruling and directing all things. Favourably receive the acknowledgements I have made of my sins and moral imperfections ; and grant me pardon and peace upon the terms of thy gospel. Hear and answer the petitions I have offered up, for the obtaining all things truly good, and the averting all things evil. Let the praises
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and thanksgivings which my heart hath sent up, as the homage due to thy perfections and goodness, be acceptable to thee: And reject not the intercessions I have made for the temporal and eternal happiness of all my fellow-creatures.

And now, O Lord! take me, I once more intrcat thee, into thy powerful and wise protection; and guide me, by thy good spirit, to the knowledge and performance of thy holy will here, and to the enjoyment of that eternal and unalterable happiness hereafter, which thou hast reserved for thy faithful servants, and promised by thy well-beloved Son *Jesus Christ*. In his name I trust for acceptance of myself, and all my sincere, though imperfect services, who is the only Mediator between God and men, our Advocate with the Father, and the Propitiation for our sins. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever- *Amen*.

5 *A PRAYER, for a Family, for Morning or Evening.*

O LORD, perfect in wisdom, goodness and power, glorious in all that can be truly called perfection! We thy creatures, and thy servants, prostrate ourselves before thee, in a deep sense of our own unworthiness, and of thy lovely and incomprehensible perfections; acknowledging the glories of thy nature, as it is in itself; and thy great goodness to us, and to the whole world of thy creatures.

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We desire to be truly sensible of the great happiness of knowing thee, and of imitating thee, and of enjoying the communication of thy favour: Upon which account, it highly becomes us to praise thee for that act of goodness in our creation, by which thou hast endowed us with faculties fitted for the attainment of this unspeakable happiness, and for the enjoyment of the highest good.

We praise thee for thy great goodness in our preservation here, ever since we were brought into being; not only as it respects this world in which we now live, but as by it we are enabled to make the better provision for our everlasting interests in the world to come; and have greater opportunities of improving our souls in virtue, and of securing our happiness for ever. More particularly, we now bless thee for the care of thy providence over us by which we have been preserved in safety through the past (*day or night*), and mercifully defended from all dangers and distresses.

It becomes us likewise to acknowledge thy bounty and goodness, manifested to us through every part of our lives to this time; to thank thee for that measure of health, and strength, and quiet, which we have hitherto enjoyed; for the comforts and supports of all those necessities and conveniencies, without which we should be much more unhappy in this state than we now are; and for all other circumstances and advantages of life, which help to make our passage through this world more happy, or more tolerable than otherwise it could be.

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But, above all, we bless and magnify thy great and glorious name, for thy tender regards to our everlasting happiness in a better state hereafter; for sending thy Son into the world, to declare to us the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments; and for all that he did and taught, and suffered, in order to reconcile us to thee, and to guide us to eternal life and glory: For the great happiness of a good and virtuous education; and for those peculiar dispositions of thy providence which have often guarded us from many particular and hazardous trials and temptations. For these, and for all thy other mercies, which concern our great and eternal interest, we sincerely thank thee, O Lord, and will ever praise thy holy name.

It is with shame and grief that we reflect upon the returns we have made to so much mercy. We confess, O Lord, that we have not lived as becomes reasonable creatures called to the knowledge of such a God, and of such a Saviour. Many have been our failings; many have been our omissions and neglects in the performance of our duty, and in the perfecting ourselves in all virtue; many have been our offences in thought, word, and deed, against thy divine majesty; and many are still our imperfections. But, O merciful Father! we beseech thee, in the name of thy Son *Jesus Christ*, to pardon us now returning to thee with the full purpose of regarding more strictly the obligations of gratitude and obedience we are under;

der ; and of living, for the time to come, more like thy servants, and like Christians.

And now, O Lord, confessing and renouncing all our sins, and hoping for the pardon of all that is past through thy Son *Jesus Christ*, as far only as we sincerely endeavour to reform and amend whatsoever we know to be amiss in ourselves ; we beseech thee, so to assist us by thy merciful providence and good Spirit, that, in the future conduct of our lives, we may better answer the ends of our most holy religion, and adorn the gospel which we profess to believe.

Let the experience of thy repeated mercies inflame us with a resolution of making suitable returns to them. Let the belief of future glories raise our minds above the sordid views of this world. Let the consideration of thine infallible wisdom, and undoubted goodness, teach us heartily and quietly to submit ourselves to all the dispensations of thy providence towards us, as to the will of one who hath always wise and excellent purposes to serve, and knows what is best for us, infinitely better than we possibly can. Let the example of our blessed Saviour, ever placed before our eyes direct our steps in every station of life, and every instance of duty ; and let our hopes and affections be unmoveably fixed upon those rewards which are laid up in heaven for all who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek after glory and immortality. Finally, Let the consideration of thy holy presence, every where, govern all our thoughts, words and actions, as under the eye
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of thy majesty, and lying open to thee, our supreme Governor and Judge : that so our irregular passions may lose their power over us, and we may daily proceed to greater degrees of all holiness and virtue.

We now particularly desire to put ourselves under thy protection, this (*day or night*), and to implore thy fatherly care over us ; that no evil may approach us ; but that our souls and bodies may be safe under that good and powerful providence in which we entirely trust.

We extend likewise our regards to all the world of reasonable creatures, and pray for the happiness and good estate of all mankind, that they may all know, and worship, and obey thee, as they ought ; and particularly, that all who name the name of *Christ* may depart from iniquity, and live as becomes his holy gospel. Put a stop to the calamities occasioned by ambition and tyranny, whether temporal or spiritual : Put an end to every degree of idolatry and superstition, persecution and oppression ; and give success to the labour of all who study the happiness of thy creatures, and preach the gospel of thy Son in simplicity and love.

Regard, with much mercy, these nations to which we belong Pardon our crying sins : And lead all sinners amongst us to true and unfeigned repentance ; that iniquity may not be our ruin, or prevent the mercies we might otherwise hope for. Pour down the choicest of thy blessings upon our King, and his royal family ; and so direct him, and all that are in authority

authority under him, by thy gracious guidance, that they may faithfully discharge the great trust reposed in them, by being a terror to evil doers only, and a praise to all that do well. Let the remembrance of the great and solemn account to come, engage all orders of men amongst us, conscientiously to perform their duties in their several places and stations with all faithfulness and charity.

Bless, we beseech thee, with all blessings of soul and body, our relations and friends ; leading them to all virtue and happiness, and to eternal life hereafter. Requit the kindness of all who have done or designed us any good : And pardon the malice of all who have done or wished us any evil, guiding them to repentance, and shewing thy mercy upon them.

We have a deep sense, O Lord of the troubles experienced in this world ; of the wants of the poor and needy ; of the sicknesses, the pains, and distresses of the afflicted part of mankind : We truly sympathize with them, and intercede for them, that in thy providence, they may find relief, and have reason to rejoice at the end, for the days wherein they have seen adversity.

And now, O Lord, we again commend ourselves, and all belonging to us, to thy gracious protection and care, referring ourselves wholly to thee for what is truly necessary and good for us in this world ; and, above all, intreating thee effectually to dispose the way of thy servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation.

vation in the world to come; and beseeching thee to hear and to accept us as the disciples of thy Son *Jesus Christ* our Lord, in whom thou art well pleased, and in whom we desire always to be found. *Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

6. *The LORD'S PRAYER. paraphrased in the Words of the Shorter Catechism.*

OUR Father who art in Heaven: We desire to draw near to thee with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, able and ready to help us; and, with ourselves, we pray also for others.

Hallowed be thy name: We pray, that thou wouldst enable us, and others, to glorify thee, in all that whereby thou makest thyself known; and that thou wouldest dispose of all things to thy own glory.

Thy kingdom come: We pray, that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced; ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven: We pray, that thou wouldest make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to thy will, in all things, as the angels do in heaven.

Give

Give us this day our daily bread: We pray, that, of thy free gift, we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and may enjoy thy blessing with them.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us: We pray, that thou, for Christ's sake, wouldest freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by thy grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: We pray, that thou wouldest either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted.

For thine is the kingdom the power and the glory, for ever, Amen. We take our encouragement in prayer from thee only: And in our prayers we praise thee, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory to thee: And in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, Amen.

FINIS.