



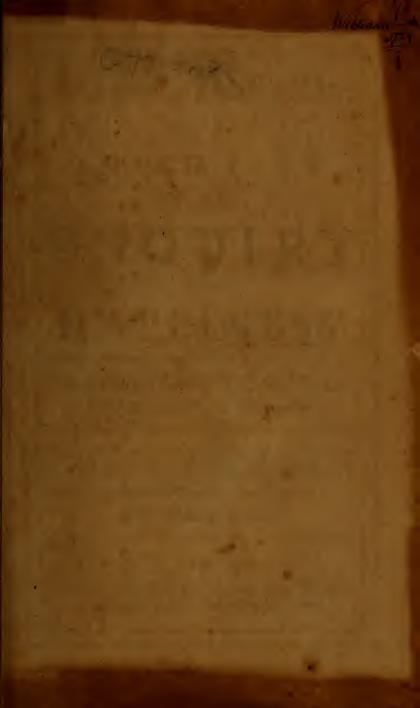


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Religious Perfection:

OR, A

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ENQUIRY

AFTER

HAPPINESS.

By RICHARD LUCAS, D.D. Late Prebendary of Westminster.

Therefore leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, let us go on to Perfection, Heb. 6. 1.

The fourth Edition.

L O N D O N:

Printed for W. INNYS, at the Prince's-Arms in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1717.

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TO

Whitelocke Bulstrode,

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INNER TEMPLE, Esquire.

Here present You, my dear Friend, with a Discourse, wherein I labour to advance the great and true Ends of Life, the Glory of God, and the Perfection and Happiness of Man. I cannot, I confess, pretend to have come up to the Dignity of my Subject; yet I have done what I could, and have attempted it with my utmost Force. I know You too well to imagine You fond of an Address of this publick Nature: You love the real and solid Satisfactions, not the Pomp and Shew, those splendid

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Incumbrances of Life: Your rational and vertuous Pleasures burn like a gentle and chearful Flame, without Noise or Blaze. However, I cannot but be consident, that You'll pardon the Liberty which I here take, when I have told You, That the making the best Acknowledgment I could to One, who has given me so many Proofs of a generous and passionate Friendship, was a Pleasure too great to be resisted. I am,

Dear Sir,

Unfeignedly Yours,

R. Lucas.



THE

CONTENTS

The INTRODUCTION, wherein is shewn the Connexion betwixt This, and the Author's former Treatises concerning an Enquiry after Happiness. A short Comparison between Secular and Religious Persettion. The Design of this Book declar'd, and justify'd from some Exceptions; and the Method of the Whole laid before the Reader. Page i.

SECT. I.

Of Religious Perfection in Generals

Chap. I. Perfettion, a confirm'd Habit of Holiness. This Notion conformable to Reason and Scripture.

The Nature of an Habit consider'd, according to Four Properties of it.

Chap. 2. This Notion of Perfection contenanced by all Parties, however different in their Expressions. Some short Restections upon what the Pelagians, the Papists, the Quakers, and the Mystical Writers have said concerning Perfection, p. 17

Chap. 3. Several Inferences deduced from the true Notion of Perfection. With a plain Method how Persons may judge of their present State. The Difference between the extraordinary Primitive Conversions, and those which may be expected in our Days. With a Remark about Insused Habits,

p. 27

A 3

Chap

The CONTENTS.

Chap. 4. Ageneral Account of the bleffed Fruits and Advantages of Religious Perfection; which is reduced to these Four Heads. 1. As it advances the Honour of the true and living God, and his Son Jesus in the World. 2. As it promotes the Good of Mankind. These Two treated of in the Chapter of Zeal. 3. As it produces in the perfect Man h sull Assurance of Evernal Happiness and Glory. 4. As it puts him in Possession of True Happiness in this Life. These Two last, Assurance, and present Happiness or Pleasure, handled in this Chapter. Where the Pleasures of the Sinner, and of the Perfect Christian, are compared, p. 44

Chap. 5. Of the Attainment of Perfection: With a particular Account of the manner, or the several Steps by which Man advances, or grows up to it: With Three Remarks to make this Discourse more useful, and to free it from some Scruples,

Chap. 6. Of the Means of Perfection. Five general Observations, serving for Directions in the Use of Gospel-Means, and Instrumental Duties. 1. The Practice of Wisdom and Vertue is the best Means to improve and strengthen both. 2. The Two general and immediate Instruments, as of Conversion so of Persection too, are The Gospel and the Spirit. 3. The Natural and Immediate Fruit of Meditation, Prayer, Eucharist, Psalmody, and good Conversation, or Friendship, is, the quickening and enlivening the Conscience; the fortifying and confirming our Resolutions; and the raising and keeping up an Heavenly Frame of Spirit. 4. The immediate Ends of Discipline, are the subduing the Pride of the Heart, and the reducing the Appetites of the Body. 5. Some kinds of Life are better suited to the great Ends of Religion and Vertue, than others,

Chap. 7. Of the Motives to Perfection. Several Motives fumm'd up in short, and that Great one, of having the other Life in our View, insisted upon,

p. 138

The CONTENTS.

SECT. II.

Of the several Parts of Persection, Illumination, Liberty, and Zeal, p. 145.

Chap. 1. F Illumination. 1. The distinguishing Charaeters of Illuminating Truths. 1. They purify us. 2. They nourish and strengthen us. 3. They delight us. 4. They procure us a glorious Reward. II. The Nature of Illuminating Knowledge. 1. It must be deeply rooted ed. 2. It must be distinct and clear. 3. It must be throughly concosted,

Chap. 2. Of the Fruits and Attainments of Illumination. That Illumination does not depend so much upon a Man's outward Parts, extraordinary Parts, acquir'd Learning, &t. as upon his Moral Qualifications; such as Humility, Impartiality, and Love of the Truth. 4. Directions for the Attainment of Illumination. 1. That we do not suffer our Minds to be engaged in quest of Knowledge foreign to our Purpose. 2. That we apply our selves with a very tender and sensible Concern to the Study of Illuminating Truths. 3. That we alt conformable to those Measures of Light which we have attain'd. 4. That we frequently address our selves to God by Prayer, for the Illumination of his Grace. The Chapter concluded with a Prayer of Fulgentius,

Chap. 3. Of Liberty in general. The Notion of it truly stated and guarded. The Fruits of this Liberty. 1. Sin being a great Evil, Deliverance from it is great Happiness. 2. A Freedom and Pleasure in the Alts of Righteousness and good Works. 3. The near Relation it creates between God and us. 4. The great Fruit of all, Eternal Life. With a brief Exhortation to endeavour after Deliverance from Sin, p. 205

Chap. 4. Of Liberty, as it relates to Original Sin. The Nature of which consider'd, chiefly with respect to its Corruption. How far this Distemper of Nature is curable. Which way this Cure is to be effected,

p. 269

A 4 Chap.

The CONTENTS.

Chap. 5. Of Liberty, with respect to Sins of Infirmity. An Enquiry into these Three Things. 1. Whether there be any such Sins, viz. Sins in which the most perfect live and dis. 2. If there are, what they be; or what distinguishes them from Damnable or Mortal Sins. 3. How far we are to extend the Liberty of the Perfect Man in relation to these Sins, p.296 Chap. 6. Of Liberty, as it imports Freedom or Deliverance

from Mortal Sin. What Mortal Sin is. Here the Perfect Man must be free from it; and which way this Liberty may be best attain'd. With some Rules for the Attainment of it, p. 316

Chap. 7. Of Unfruitfulness, as it consists in Idleness. Idleness, either Habitual or Accidental. Considerations to deter Men from the Sin of Idleness,

Chap. 8. Of Unfruitfulness, as it consists in Lukewarmness or Formality. The Causes from which Lukewarmness proceeds. The Folly, Guilt and Danger of a Laodicean State, p. 367

Chap. 9. Of Zeal. What in general is meant by Zeal; and what is that Perfection of Holiness in which it consists. Whether the Perfect Man must be adorned with a Confluence of all Vertues; and to what degree of Holiness he may be Suppos'd to arrive, p. 398

Chap. 10. Of Zeal, as it consists in Good Works. That our own Security demands a Zeal in these Good Works! So likewife do the Good of our Neighbour, and the Glory of God, which are much more promoted by Good Works, p. 418

Chap. 11. Of Humility. How necessary it is to Persection, p. 430

SECT. III.

Of the Impediments of Perfection.

IVE Impediments reckon'd up, and insisted on. 1. Too louse a Notion of Religion. 2. An Opinion that Perfection. is not attainable. 3. That Religion is an Enemy to Pleasure. 4. The Love of the World. 5. The Infirmity of the Flesh. The Whole concluded with a Prayer, D. 442.



THE

INTRODUCTION.

Y what Steps I am advanced thus far in my Enquiry after Happiness, and what Connexion or Coherence there is, between This and two other Discourses already published on That Subject, is very obvious. In the First, I endeavour to remove those Objections which represent all Enquiries and Attempts after true Happiness in this Life, either as fantastick or unnecessary, or, which is as bad, vain and to no purpose: And after I have afferted the Value and Possibility of Happiness, I do in general point out the true Reasons of our ill Success and Disappointment in Pursuit of it. In the Second, I state the true Notion of Human Life, infilt upon the several kinds of it, and shew what Qualifications and Vertues the Active and Contemplative Life demand; and then consider how Life may be prolonged and improved. In This Third, I profecute the same Design, which I had in the Two former; The promoting Human Happiness. For Life, Perfection, and Happinels have a close and inseparable Dependance on one another. For as Life, which is the Rational Exercise and Employment of our Powers and Faculties, does naturally advance on, and terminate in Perfection; fo Perfection, which is nothing else but the Maturity of Human Vertues, does naturally end in that Rest and Peace, that Tranquillity, Serenity, and Joy of Mind, which we call Happiness. Now Perfection in an Abstrafted and Metaphysical Notion of it, is a State that admits neither of Accession nor Diminution. But talking of it Practically, and in a manner accommodated to the Nature of Things, the Perfection of Man confifts in fuch Endowments and Attainments as Man is generally capable of in this Life. And because Man may be considered either in relation to This, or to another World, therefore Human Perfection may, I think, naturally enough be divided into Religious and Secular. By Secular, I mean that which regards our Interest in this Life: By Religious, That which secures it in Eternity. The one more directly and immediately aims at the Favour of Man; the other at the Favour of God: The one pursues that Happiness, whatever it be, that is to be found in outward and worldly Advantages: The other, That which flows from Vertue and a good Conscience. 'Tis easy now to discern, which of these Two Kinds of Perfection is the more desirable; the one purifies and exalts our Nature, the other polishes and varnishes it; the one makes a compleat Gentleman, the other a true Christian; the Success of the one is precarious, that of the other certain, having no Dependance on Time or Chance, the Humour or Fancy of Man; the Pleasure of the one is short and superficial; That of the other, Great and Lasting: The World admires the one, and God approves the other. To be throughly perfuaded of This, is a good Step towards true Wisdom, as being that, which will enable Man to steer the whole Course of Life aright. But while I prefer the one, I do not prescribe the Neglect or Contempt of the other; so far am I from it, that I am of Opinion, That Secular Perfection has very often some Influence upon our Spiritual State, as well as its Use and Advantage in reference to our temporal one: That the most admir'd Accomplishments of a Secular Life, are so far from being inconfishent with Religion, that they naturally spring from it, and thrive and flourish most when they are influenc'd and cultivated by it; and judging that it might be of some Service to the World to inform and convince them of This, I had it sometimes in my Thoughts to have treated here as well of Secular as Religious Perfection: But doubting how well this might fuit with my Function, and how far the best ObserObservations I could make on this Subject, might fall short of answering the Expectation of Men of worldly Parts and Experience, I laid aside the Design. Here then, I confine my Meditations wholly to Religious Perfection; I examine the Nature of it, both in General, and in Particular; not only stating the true Notion of it, but also descending to the several Branches and Parts of it; I free it from those Mistakes and Disputes that perplex and encumber it; I lay down the Motives to it, and prescribe

the Ways of obtaining it.

After this short Account of my Design; the next Thing I am to do, is to prevent, if I can, those Prejudices which may either wholly frustrate, or at least very much hinder and diminish the Success and Influence of it. Some are apt to startle at the very Mention of Perfection; they have entertain'd fuch humble Thoughts, not only of Human Nature, but, as it feems, of Divine Grace too, and Evangelical Righteousness, that all Talk of Perfection seems to them like the Preaching a New Gospel, and an obtruding upon the World a Fantastick Scheme of proud and pretending Morality. But this Fear will foon vanish, when I tell fuch, that I discourse of the Perfection of Men, not Angels: And, that I treat This, not like a Monk, or a sublime and fubtle School-man, but like one, who

have been daily conversant with the Doubts and Scruples, with the Fears and Frailties of Human Nature, and departing Souls. I do not pretend to bless the World with the Discovery of New Truths Is at any time I place Old ones in a better Light; if I wipe off the Dust, which Dispute and Time, and the Corruption of Manners, has here and there scattered upon them, 'tis the utmost I aim at.

But how numerous, will fome fay, are the Controversies that have in every Age perplex'd this Subject? Grace and Nature, Perfection and Sin, Merit, Supererogation, &c. these are Themes that have exercised and embroil'd the Church of Christ, almost through all the feveral Ages of it down to this Day: And with how little Advantage to the Honour of Christianity, and the Interest of Vertue, have the brightest Parts, and the deepest Learning been here employ'd? To This, all I have to fay, is, I write Practically, and confult the Interest of Souls, not Parties. I cannot but fee, and that with Trouble and Regret, how much Christianity has in almost all Times suffered by those Nice and subtle, by those Obstinate and Passionate Disputes, with which Writers have even oppressed and stifled the most Practical Subjects; and do most earnestly desire to see the Spirit of Polemical Divinity cast out of the Church of Christ,

and

and That of a Practical and Experimental one established in the Room of it. Though therefore, I have considered those Controversies which concern my Subject, it was with no other Design, than to guard and fortify my Reader against the ill Insluence of several Errors, with which they abound. I decline all useless Speculations, and labour wholly to restore Religion to its Native Strength and Beauty; so that I think this Objection will not touch me, who do not propose to write a Learned, but a Useful Book.

If any Man be apprehensive, that 'tis impossible to affert the Dostrine of Perfection, without looking a little too favourably towards Pelagianism or Enthusiasm, or something of this kind; I do here affure such a one, that I advance no Perfection that raises Men above the Use or Need of Means, or invites them to neglect the Word, Prayer, or Sagraments, or is raised on any other Foundation than the Gospel of Christ. I revive not Pelagianism, nor clash with St. Austin; I need not those Concessions which he makes Calestius in the Close of his Book de Perfectione Justitia. I am persuaded that the Strength of Nature is too flight a Foundation to build Perfection on: I contend for Freedom from no other Sin than Actual, Voluntary, and Deliberate: And let Concupiscence, or any unavoidable Distemper, or

Dil

Disorder of our Nature, be what it will, all that I aim at here is, the Reducing, not Extirpating it. And finally, how earnestly soever I exhort to Perfection, I can very well content my self with St. Austin's Notion of it, namely, That it is nothing else, but a daily Progress towards That pure and unspotted Holiness, which we shall attain to in

another Life.

Thus, I think, I have fufficiently guarded this following Discourse against the Misapprehensions and Jealousies of all, who have any ferious Concern for Religion, how much soever they may be swayed by some particular Opinions. But after all, I do not expect that it should meet with a very obliging Reception from a great Part of the World. Many there are, who will ever openly rally and ridicule all Attempts of this kind: And there are Others, who will fecretly flight and inwardly despise them, as the vain and fond Projects of well-meaning indeed, but very weak and unexperienced Mortals. But this moves me little; these Men are generally too much Strangers to Sincerity, to be competent Judges of Perfection: Nor do I wonder, if the corrupt and vicious Part of Mankind be infected with as much Malice and Envy against extraordinary Goodness, as some are against Power and Greatness. The Consciousness of much Baseness and Corruption in one's self, is apt to make one strive to bring down all Men to the same Level, and to believe that there is nothing of Perfection in the World, but only a Groundless or Hypocritical Pretention to it. This is an Opinion that ill Men greedily embrace, because it gives them some kind of Peace, Security, and Considence; whereas the contrary Opinion, as it would be apt to make them ashamed of their Present State, so would it make them searful and apprehensive of their Future One. I write not therefore to such as these, nor can be much concerned what Censure they pass on a Design, against which they have an inveterate and obstinate Aversion.

The Method I observe in this Treatise is: In the First Section, I consider Perfection more generally: In the Second, The several Parts of it; And in the Last, The Obstacles and Impediments of our attaining it. In the Two first Sections, I always first six and explain the Notion of that State of Vertue which I discourse of. Next I proceed to the Fruits or Advantages of it; and in the last Place prescribe the Method by which it may be attained.



SECT. I.

Of Religious Perfection in General.

CHAP. I.

Persection a Confirmed Habit of Holiness.
This Notion conformable to Reason and Scripture. The Nature of an Habit considered, according to Four Properties of it.

fies arise from False and Mistaken Notions of the Matter under Debate; and so I could shew it has happened here. Therefore to prevent Mistakes, and cut off all Occasions of Contention (which serves only to defeat the Influence and Success of Practical Discourses) I think it necessary to begin here with a plain Account what it is I mean by Religious Perfection.

Religion is nothing else but the purifying and refining Nature by Grace, the raising and exalting our Faculties and Capacities by Wisdom and Virtue. Religious Perfe-

Etion,

Etion, therefore, is nothing else but the Moral Accomplishment of Human Nature; fuch a Maturity of Virtue as Man in this Life is capable of; Conversion begins, Perfection consummates the Habit of Righteousness: In the one, Religion is, as it were, in its Infancy; in the other, in its Strength and Manhood; so that Perfection, in short, is nothing else, but a ripe and fettled Habit of true Holiness. According to this Notion of Religious Perfection, He is a Perfect Man whose Mind is pure and vigorous, and his Body tame and obsequious; whose Faith is firm and steady, his Love ardent and exalted, and his Hope full of Assurance; whose Religion has in it That Ardour and Constancy, and his Soul That Tranquillity and Pleafure, which bespeaks him a Child of the Light, and of the Day, a Partaker of the Divine Nature, and raised above the Corruption which is in the World through Lust.

This Account of Religious Perfection, is fo natural and easy, that I fancy no Man will demand a Proof of it; nor should I go about one, were it not to serve some further Ends than the meer Confirmation of it. It has manifestly the countenance both of Reason and Scripture; And how contradictory soever some Ancient and Latter Schemes of Perfection seem to be, or really are, to one another; yet do they all agree in effect

in what I have laid down. If we appeal to Reason, no Man can doubt, but that an Habit of Virtue has much more of Excellence and Merit in it, than fingle accidental Acts, or uncertain Fits and Passions; since an Habit is not only the Source and Spring of the noblest Actions, and the most elevated Passions, but it renders us more regular and steady, more uniform and constant in every thing that is good. As to good natural Difpositions, they have little of Strength, little of Perfection in them, till they be raised and improved into Habits. And for our Natural Faculties, they are nothing else, but the Capacities of Good or Evil; they are undetermined to the one or other, till they are fix'd and influenc'd by Moral Principles. It remains then, that Religious Perfection must consist in an Habit of Righteousness. And to prevent all impertinent Scruples and Cavils, I add a Confirmed and well established one.

That this is the Scripture Notion of Perfection, is manisest; First, From the Use of this Word in Scripture. Secondly, From the Characters and Descriptions of the best and highest State which any ever actually attained, or to which we are invited and

1. From the Use of the Word: Whereever we find any mention of Perfection in Scripture, if we examine the place well,

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we shall find nothing more intended, than Uprightness and Integrity, an unblameable and unreproveable Life, a State well advanced in Knowledge and Virtue. Thus Upright and Perfect are used as terms equivalent, Job 1. And that Man was perfect and upright, fearing God and eschewing evil; and Psalm 37. 37. Mark the perfect Man and behold the upright Man, for the end of that Man is peace. Thus again when God exhorts Abraham to Perfection, Gen. 17. 1. I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect, all that he exhorts him to, is a steady Obedience to all his Commandments, proceeding from a lively Fear of, and Faith in him; and this is the general Use of this word Perfect, throughout the Old Testament, namely to fignify a fincere and just Man, that feareth God, and escheweth Evil, and is well fix'd and establish'd in his Duty. In the New Testament, Perfection fignifies the same thing which it does in the Old; that is, Universal Righteousness, and Strength, and Growth in it. Thus the Perfect Man, 2 Tim. 3. 17. is one who is throughly furnished to every good work. Thus St. Paul tells us, Colof. 4. 12. that Epaphras laboured fervently in payers for the Coloffians, that they might stand perfect and compleat in all the will of God. In James 1. 4. the Perfeet Man is one, Who is entire, lacking no. thing, i. e. one who is advanced to a Matu-

rity of Virtue thro' Patience and Experience, and is fortified and established in Faith, Love, and Hope. In this sense of the word Perfett, St. Peter prays for those to whom he writes his Epistle, 1 Pet. 5. 10. But the God of all grace, who called us into his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, fablish, strengthen, settle you. When St. Paul exhorts the Hebrews to go on to Perfection, Heb. 6. he means nothing by it, but that State of Manhood which confifts in a well fettled Habit of Wisdom and Goodness. This is plain, first from ver. 11, 12. of this Chapter, where he himself more fully explains his own meaning; and we defire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promise. Next from the latter end of the 5th Chapter; where we discern what gave occasion to his Exhortation; there distinguishing Christians into two Classes, Babes and Strong Men, i. e. Perfett and Imperfeet, he describes Both at large thus: For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat; for every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for B 3

he is a babe; but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. And though here the Apostle seems more immediately to regard the Perfection of Knowledge, yet the Perfe-Etion of Righteousness must never, in the Language of the Scripture, be separated from it. Much the same Remark must I add concerning the Integrity of Righteoufness, and the Christians Progress or Advance in it. Though the Scripture, when it speaks of Perfection, doth sometimes more directly refer to the one, and fometimes to the other; jet we must ever suppose that they do mutually imply and include one another; since otherwise the Notion of Perfection would be extreamly maimed and incompleat. I'll insist therefore no longer on the Use of the Words Perfect and Perfection in Scripture: But as a further Proof that my Notion of Perfection is truly Scriptural, I will shew,

2. That the utmost Height, to which the Scripture exhorts us, is nothing more than a steady Habit of Holiness; that the brightest Characters it gives of the Perfect Man, the loveliest Descriptions it makes us of the Perfectest State, are all made up of the Natural and confessed Properties of a Ripe Habit. There is no Controversy that I know of, about the Nature of a Habit, every

every Man's Experience instructs him in the whole Philosophy of it; We are all agreed that it is a Kind of Second Nature, that it makes us exert our felves with Desire and Earnestness, with Satisfaction and Pleafure; that it renders us fix'd in our Choice, and constant in our Actions, and almost as averse to those things which are repugnant to it, as we are to those which are distasteful and disagreeable to our Nature. And that, in a word, it so entirely and absolutely possesses the Man, that the Power of it is not to be relisted, nor the Empire of it to be shaken off; nor can it be removed and extirpated without the greatest Labour and Difficulty imaginable. All this is a confest and almost palpable Truth in Habits of Sin: And there is no reason why we should not ascribe the same Force and Efficacy to Habits of Vertue; especially if we consider that the Strength, Easiness, and Pleasure which belong naturally to these Habits, receive no small Accession from the Supernatural Energy and Vigour of the Holy Spirit. I will therefore in few words shew how that State of Righteousness which the Scripture invites us to, as our Perfection, directly answers this Account I have given of an Habit.

Is Habit in general a second Nature? This State of Righteousness is in Scripture called the New Man, Ephel. 4. 24. the New B 4

Creature, 2 Cor 5. 17. the Divine Nature, 2 Pet. 1.4. Does it consequently Rule and Govern Man? Hear how St. Paul expresses this Power of the Habit of Holiness in himself, Gal. 2. 20. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the sless, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. This is a constant Effect of Habits, and is equally discernable in Those of Vice and Vertue, that they sway and govern the Man they posses; Rom. 6. 16. Know ye not that 'to whom ye yield your selves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto

righteousness?

Shall I go on to a more distinct and particular Confideration of the Properties of an Habit? The first is, a great Aversion for those things which are contrary to it, or obstruct us in the Exercise of it. And this is directly the Disposition of the Perfect Man towards Temptations and Sins; he is now ashamed of those things which before he gloried in; he is filled with an holy Indignation against those things which before he took Pleasure in; and what before he courted with Fondness and Passion, he now shuns with Fear and Vigilance. In brief, the Scripture describes such an one as possessed with an utter Hatred and Abhorrence of every Evil way, and as an irre-concileable Enemy to every thing that is an Enemy to his Vertue and his God. Thus Psal. 119. 163. I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do Í love; and verse 128. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way. And this is a Genuine and Natural Effect of Integrity or Uprightness of Heart; whence 'tis the Observation of our Saviour, Matth. 6.24. No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. And indeed every where a Hatred, a perfect Hatred of Evil, is accounted as a necessary Consequence of the Love of God; Psal. 37. 10. Te that love the Lord, bate Evil: And therefore the Psalmist refolves to practife himself what he prescribes to others; Psal. 101. 2, 3. I will behave my self wisely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart: I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me. And how can this be otherwise? The Love of God must necessarily imply an Abhorrence of Evil; and that Habit which confirms and encreases the one, must confirm and increase the other too.

2. The Next Property of an Habit is, That the Actions which flow from it are (if we meet not with violent opposition) performed with Ease and Pleasure: What is Natural, is pleasant and easy, and Habit is a Second Nature. When the Love of Vertue, and the Hatred of Vice have once rooted themselves in the Soul, what can be more natural than to follow after the one, and shun the other? Since this is no more than embracing and enjoying what we love, and turning our backs on what we detest. This therefore is one constant Character of Perfection in Scripture: Delight and Pleasure are every where said to accompany the Practice of Vertue, when it is once grown up to Strength and Maturity: The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, Prov. 3. 17. Perfect love casteth out fear, I Joh. 4. 18. And to him that loves, the commandments of God are not grievous, I Joh. 5.3. Hence it is, that the good Man's delight is in the Law of the Lord, and that he meditates therein day and night, Pfal. 1. 2. Nor does he delight less in Action than Meditation, but grows in Grace as much as Knowledge; and abounds daily more and more in Good Works, as he increases in the Comfort of the Holy Ghost. Consonant to this Property of Perfection it is, that in Psulm 19, and 119, and elsewhere frequently, we hear the Pfalmist expressing a kind of inconceivable Joy and Transport in

in the Meditation and Practice of the Commands of God. So the first Christians, who spent their Lives in Devotion, Faith, and Charity, are said, Acts 2. 46. to have eaten their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. And 'tis a delightful Description we have of the Apostles, 2 Cor. 6. 10. as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet posses

sessing all things.

3. Vigour and Activity, or much Earnest-ness and Application of Mind, is a Third Property of an Habit. 'Tis impossible not to be intent upon those things for which we have even an Habitual Passion, if this Expression may be allow'd me; an Inclination which has gathered Strength and Authority from Custom, will exert it self with some warmth and briskness. Now certainly there is nothing more frequently required of, or attributed to the Perfett Man in Scripture, than Zeal and Fervency of Spirit in the Ways of God; and no wonder; for when Actions flow at once from Principles and Custom; when they spring from Love, and are attended by Pleasure, and are incited and quicken'd by Faith and Hope too; how can it be, but that we should repeat 'em with some Eagerness, and feel an Holy Impatience as often as we are hinder'd or disappointed? And as the Nature of the thing shews, that thus it ought

ought to be, fo are there innumerable Instances in the Old Testament and the New, which make it evident that thus it was. Shall I mention the Example of our Lord, who went about doing good, Acts 10. 38? Shall I propose the Labours and Travels of St. Paul? These Patterns it may be will be judged by fome too bright and dazling a Light for us to look on, or at least too perfect for us to copy after; and yet St. John tells us, That he who fays he abides in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked, 1 John 2. 6. And we are exhorted to be followers of the Apostles, as they were of Christ. But if the Fervency of Christ and St. Paul seemed to have soar'd out of the reach of our Imitation, we have Inferior Inflances enough, to prove the Zeal and Fruitfulness of Habitual Goodness. Thus David says of himself, Psal. 119. 10. With my whole heart have I sought thee. And Fosiah, 2 Kings 23.25. is said to have turned to the Lord with all his soul, and with all his might. How fervent was Anna, who departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day, Luk. 2.37. How charitable Tabitha, who was full of good Works and Alms-deeds which she did, Acts 9. 36? Where shall I place Cornelius? With what words shall I set out his Vertues? With what but those of the Holy Ghost, Acts 10. 2. He was a devout

Man, and one that feared God with all his House, which gave much Alms to the People, and prayed to God alway. But peradventure fome may imagine, that there is fomething fingular and extraordinary in these Eminent Persons, which we must never hope to equal; but must be content to follow them at a vast Distance. Well, let this be fo; What have we to fay to whole Churches animated by the same Spirit of Zeal? What are we to think of the Churches of Macedonia, whose Charity St. Paul thus magnifies, 2 Cor. 8. 2, 3. In a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep Poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality. For to their power I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves. And St. Paul declares himfelf persuaded of the Romans, that they were full of goodness, filled with all know-ledge, Rom. 15. 14. And of the Corinthians he testifies, That they were inriched in every thing, and came behind in no gift. I Cor. 1. 5, 6. That they did abound in all things, in faith, in diligence, &c. 2 Cor. 8. 7. I will stop here; 'tis in vain to heap up more Instances: I have said enough to shew, That Vigour and Fervency in the Service of God, is no miraculous Gift, no extraordinary Prerogative of some peculiar Favourite of Heaven, but the natural and inseparable Property of a well-confirmed Habit of Holiness. Last-

Lastly; Is Constancy and Steadiness the Property of an Habit? It is an undoubted Property of Perfection too. In Scripture Good Men are every where represented as standing fast in the faith; stedfast and unmoveable in the works of God; holding fast their Integrity: In one word, as constantly following after Righteousness, and maintaining a good Conscience towards God and Man. And so Natural is This to one Habitually good, that St. John affirms of fuch a one, that he cannot sin; 1 Joh. 3.9. Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. Accordingly, Job is said to have feared God, and eschewed evil; which must be understood of the constant Course of his Life. Zachary and Elizabeth are said to be righteous, walking in all the Commandments of God blameles, Luk. 1.6. Enoch, Noah, David, and other excellent Persons, who are pronounc'd by God Righteous, and Just, and Perfect, are said in Scripture, To walk with God, to serve him with a perfect Heart, with a full purpose of Heart to cleave to him, and the like. And this is that Constancy which Christians are often exhorted to; Watch ye, stand fast in the Faith, quit ye like Men, be strong, 1 Cor. 16. 13. And of which the first Followers of our Lord left us fuch remarkable Examples. The Disciples are faid faid to have been continually in the Temple blessing and praising God, Luk. 24. And the sirst Christians are said to have continued stedfastly in the Apostles Dostrine and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Pray-

ers, Acts 2. 42.

Thus I think I have sufficiently cleared my Notion of Perfection from Scripture: Nor need I multiply more Texts, to prove what I think no Man can doubt of, unless he mistake the main Design and End of the Gospel; which is to raise and exalt us to a steady Habit of Holines: The end of the Commandment, saith St. Paul, I Tim. I. 5. is Charity out of a pure Heart, and of a good Conscience, and of Faith unseigned. This is the utmost Perfection Man is capable of, to have his Mind enlighten'd, and his Heart purished; and to be inform'd, acted, and influenc'd by Faith and Love, as by a vital Principle: And all this is essential to Habitual Goodness.

If any one desire further Light or Satisfaction in this Matter, let him read the Eighth Chapter to the Romans, and he will soon acknowledge, that he there finds the Substance of what I have hitherto advanced. There, though the Word it self be not found, the Thing called Perfection is described in all the Strength and Beauty, in all the Pleasure and Advantages of it: There the Disciple of Jesus is represented

as one who walks not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit; as one whom the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set free from the Law of Sin and Death; one who & Opera, does not mind or relish the things of the Flesh, but the things of the Spirit; one in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells: He does not stand at the Door, and knock; he does not make a transient Visit; but here he reigns, and rules, and inhabits: One finally, in whom the Body is dead because of Sin, but the Spirit is Life because of Reghteousness. And the Result of all this is the Joy and Confidence, the Security and Transport that becomes the Child of God. Te have not received the spirit of Bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit it self beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: And now 'cis no wonder, if the Perfect Man long for the revelation of the glory of the fons of God; if he cry out in Rapture, If God be for me, who can be against me? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? and so on. If any one would see the Perfect Man described in Fener words, he needs but cast his eye on Rom. 6.22. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the CHAP. end everlasting life.

CHAP. II.

This Notion of Perfection countenanced by all Parties, however different in their Exprefiens. Some short Reflections upon what the Pelagians, the Papists, the Quakers, and the Mystical Writers; have said concerning Perfection.

Fter I have shewed that this Notion of Perfection is warranted by Reason and Scripture; I see not why I should be very folicitous whether it do or do not clash with the Opinions of Men. But the Truth is, if we examine not so much the Expressions and Words, as the Sense and Meaning of all Parties about this Matter, we shall find them well enough agreed in at the Bottom. And 'tis no wonder, if (notwithstanding several incidental Disputes) they should yet agree in the Main: Since the Experience of Mankind does eafily teach us what fort of Perfection Human Nature is capable of; and what can, or cannot actually be attained by Man. The Pelagians did not contend for an Angelical Perfection, nor St. Austin deny such a one as was truly suitable to Man: The one could not be so far a Stranger to Human Nature, as to exempt it in reality from those Errors and Defects which the best of Men

complain of, and labour against. Nor was St. Austin fo little acquainted with the Power of the Gospel, and of the Spirit, as not to be well enough affured that Man might be Habitually Good; and that fuch were influenced and acted by a firm Faith, and a fervent Love, and well-grounded Hope. The Dispute between Them then, concerning Perfection, did not consist in This, Whether Men might be Habitually Good? This was in reality acknowledged on Both Sides: Nor, Whether the Best Men were subject to Defects? For This too Both Sides could not but be fensible of: But in these two Things especially; First, What was to be attributed to Grace, what to Nature? And this relates not to the Definition or Essence of Perfection, but to the Source and Origine of it. Secondly, Whether those Irregular Motions, Defects, and Errors, to which the best Men were subject, were to be accounted Sins, or not? Neither the one Side nor the other then, as far as I can discern, did in truth mistake the Nature of Human Perfection: Each placed it in Habitual Righteousness; the one contended for no more, nor did the other contend for less in the Perfett Man. And when the one afferted him free from Sin, he did not affert him free from Defects: And while the other would not allow the best Man to be without Sin, they did not by

Sin understand any thing else, but such Disorders, Oppositions to, or Deviations from the Law of God, as the Pelagian himself must needs own to be in the Perfect Man. The Dispute then was not what Man might or might not attain to: For Both Sides agreed him capable of the same Habitual Righteousness; Both Sides allowed him subject to the same Frailties: But one Side would have these Frailties accounted Sins, and the other would not.

Numerous indeed have been the Controversies between the Popish and Reformed Churches, about Precept and Counsel, Mortal and Venial Sin, the Possibility of fulfilling the Law of God, the Merit of Good Works, and fuch like. But after all, if we enquire what that Height of Vertue is to which the best of Men may arrive; what those Frailties and Infirmities are, to which they are subject; 'twere, I think, easy to shew, that the Wife and Good are on all Hands agreed about this. Nor does it much concern my present Purpose, in what Sense, or on what Account Papists think some Sins Venial, and Protestants deny them to be fo; fince neither the one nor the other exempt the Perfett Man from Infirmities, nor affert any other Height of Perfection than what confifts in a consummate and well-established Habit of Vertue. Some Men may and do talk very extravagantly; but it is very hard to imagine that Sober and Pious Men should run in with them. Such, when they talk of Fulfilling the Law of God, and keeping his Commandments, must furely understand this of the Law of God in a Gracious and Equitable Sense: And this is no more than what the Scripture afferts of every fincere Christian. When they talk of I know not what transcendent Perfection in Monkery, they must surely mean nothing more, than that Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, are Heroick Instances of Faith and Love, of Poverty of Spirit, and Purity of Heart; and that an Ascetick Discipline is the most compendious and effectual way to a confummate Habit of Righteousness. Finally, By the Distinction of Precept and Counsel, such can never intend surely more than This, That we are obliged to some Things under pain of Damnation; to others, by the Hopes of greater Degrees of Glory: For tis not easy for me to comprehend, that any Man, whose Judgment is not enflaved to the Dictates of his Party, should deny either of these two Truths. 1. That whatever is neither forbidden nor commanded by any Law of God, is Indifferent. 2. That no Man can do more than love the Lord his God with all his Heart, with all his Soul, and with all his Might, and his Neighbour as himself. I say, there is no Degree or Instance of Obedience, that

Deum, Aug. Ench. cap. 121.

is not compriz'd within the Latitude and Perfection of these Words. But whatever some of the Church of Rome, or it may be the greater Part of it may think; This, 'tis plain, was the Sense of the Ancients.

St. Austin (a) could never understand any (a) Quantument or Excellence in those Things that cunq; non were matter of Counsel, not Precept, unless substitutely flow'd from, and had Regard to the li consilion Love of God and our Neighbour. And monentur, tum reste sunt, cum reservant ad diligendum Deum, & proximum propter

Cassian's (b) Excellent Monks resolved all the (b) Ac pro-Value of such Things to consist in their inde ea quibus qua-Tendency to promote Apostolical Purity hitates staand Charity. And Gregory Nazianzen (c) sucas vithought it very extravagant, to pretend to tempora; be Perfecter than the Rule, and Exacter & qua sic observata santisi-

cant, ut omissa non pulluant, Media esse manifestum est, ut puta Nuptias, agriculturam, divitias, solitudinis Remotionem, &c. Cassian. Colla. Patt. Talem igitur Definitionem supra Jejunii, &c. Nec in ipso spei nostræ terminum desigamus, sed ut per ipsum ad puritatem Cordis & Apostolicam Charitatem pervenire possimus; Ibid.

(c) Μηδέ τε νόμε νομιμότερΦ, μηδέ λαμπεότερΦ τε Φωίδς, μηδέ τε κανόνΦ δυθύτερΦ, μηδέ τ δήρλης ύψηλότερΦ. Greg. Nazian.

The Quakers have made much Noise and Stir about the Doctrine of Perfection, and have reflected very severely on others, as subverting the great Design of our Redemption (which is Deliverance from Sin) and upholding the Kingdom of Darkness:

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But with what Justice, will easily appear when I have represented their Sense, which I will do very Impartially, and in as few (a) A Key and plain Words as I can. Mr. W. P. (d) opening, tells us, That They are so far Infallible and Perfect, as they are led by the Spirit. This is indeed true, but 'tis meer Trifling: For This is an Infallibility and Perfection which no Man denies, who believes in the Holy Ghost; since whoever follows His Guidance must be in the Right, unless the Holy Ghost himself be in the Wrong. He urges, 'tis true, a great Number of Scriptures to shew (they are his own Words) that a State of Perfection from Sin (though not in Fulness of Wisdom and Glory) is attainable in this Life; But this is too dark and short a Hint to infer the Sense of his Party from it. Mr. Ed. Burroughs (e) is more full: We believe (faith he) that the Saints upon Earth may receive Forgiveness of Sins, and may be perfectly freed from the Body of Sin and Death, and in Christ may be perfect and withciples of Truth, Crc. out Sin, and may have Victory over all Temptations, by Faith in Jesus Christ. And we believe every Saint that is called of God, ought to press after Perfection, and to overcome the Devil, and all his Temptations upon Earth: And we believe they that faithfully wait for it, shall obtain it, and shall be presented without Sin in the Image of the Father; And such walk not after the Flesh, but after

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the Spirit, and are in Covenant with God, and their Sins are blotted out, and remembered no more; for they cease to commit Sin, being born of the Seed of God. If by Sin here, he means, as he seems to do, Deliberate or Presumptuous Sin; I do not think any Establish'd Church, whether Protestant or Popish, teaches otherwise. Mr. Barclay (f) Apol. goes very Methodically to Work, and first fets down the State of the Question; then confutes those that differ from Him; answers their Objections out of Scripture; and, lastly, establishes his own Doctrine. As to the Perfection which he afferts, he lets us know, That it is to be derived from the Spirit of Christ; that it consists not in an Impossibility of Sinning, but a Possibility of not Sinning; And that his Perfect Man is capable of daily Growth and Improvement. When to This I have added, that he speaks all along of That which we call Wilful Sin, as appears from his Description of it; for he calls it Iniquity, Wickedness, Impurity, the Service of Satan, and attributes fuch Effects to it as belong not at all to what we call Sins of Infirmity; when, I say, This is added to render the Sense clear, I can readily subscribe to him: For, I know no such Doctrines in our Church as Those which he there opposes; namely, that the Regenerate are to live in Sin, and that their Good Works are Impure and Sin-C 4

ful. But then, he either mistakes the Main Point in Debate, or prudently de-clines it: For the Question is not, Whether good Men may live in Mortal or Wilful Sin, but whether good Men are not subject to Frailties and Infirmities, which are indeed Sins, though not imputable under the Covenant of Grace? Whether the Quakers are not in this Point Pelagians, I do not now enquire; because if they be, they are already confidered. Two Things there are in Mr. Barclay's State of the Question, which I cannot fo well approve of; the One is, that he expresses himself so injudiciously about the Growth and Improvement of his Perfect Man, that he seems to forget the Difference the Scriptures make between Babes and full Grown Men in Christ, and to place Perfection so low in reference to Positive Righteousness, or Vertue, as if it confisted in Negative only, or ceasing from Sin. The Other is, That though he does not peremptorily affirm a State of Impeccability attainable in this Life, yet he feems inclinable to Believe it, and imagines it countenanced by 1 John 3. 9. But he ought to have consider'd, That whatever Impeccability may be inferr'd from that Text; it is attributed, not to some extraordinary Persons, but to all whosoever they be that are born of God; but this is out of my Way. All that I am to observe upon

the whole is, that These Men place Perfection especially in refraining from Sin: I advance higher, and place it in a well-settled Habit of Righteousness. And I believe they will be as little distatisfied with me for this, as I am with them, for asserting the Perfect Man freed from Sin. For as Mr. Barclay expresses himself, I think he has in reality no Adversaries but Antinomians and Ranters.

As to That Perfection which is magnified by Mystical Writers, some of Them have only darken'd and obscur'd the plain Sense of the Gospel, by figurative and unintelligible Terms. Those of them which write with more Life and Heat than other Men ordinarily do, recommend nothing but that Holiness which begins in the Fear, and is consummate in the Love of God; which enlightens the Mind, purifies the Heart, and fixes and unites Man to his sovereign Good, that is, God: And I am sure I shall not differ with These.

There are, I confess, almost innumerable Sayings of the Fathers, which sufficiently testify how little Friends they were to Perfection, in such a Notion of it as is too generally embraced in the Church of Rome. The Primitive Spirit breathed nothing but Humility: It was a professed Enemy to all Self-confidence and Arrogance, to Supererogation and Merit; and it invited Men earnestly

earnestly to reslect upon the Sins and Slips of Life, and on that Opposition which the Law of the Body maintains against the Law of the Mind, in some degree or other, in the Best Men. This Consideration forced the Bishop of Condome to that plain and honest Confession; Itaque Justitia nostra, licet per Charitatis Infusionem sit vera, &c. Though our Righteousness, because of that Love which the Spirit sheds abroad in our Hearts, be sincere and real, yet it is not absolute and consummate, because of the Opposition of Concupiscence: So that it is an indispensable Duty of Christianity, to be perpetually bewailing the Errors of Life: Wherefore we are obliged humbly to confess with St. Austin, That our Righteousness in this Life consists rather in the Pardon of our Sins, than in the Perfection of our Vertues. All this is undoubtedly true, but concerns not me: I never dream of any Man's passing the Course of Life without Sin: Nor do I contend for such a Pefection as St. Austin calls Absolute, which will admit of no Increase, and is exempt from Defects and Errors. Though on the other Hand, I confess, I cannot but think, some carry this Matter too far; and while they labour to abate the Pride and Considence of Man, give too much Encouragement to Negligence and Presumption. I cannot see how frequent Relapses into Deliberate Acts of Wickedness, can consist with a well-settled

tled and established Habit of Goodness. The Heat of Dispute in some, and a fort of Implicite Faith for their Authority in others, has produced many unwary Expressions, and I doubt very unsound and pernicious Notions about this Matter.

CHAP. III.

Several Inferences deduced from the true Notion of Perfection. With a plain Method how Persons may judge of their present State. The Difference between the extraordinary primitive Conversions, and those which may be expected in our Days, with a Remark about Insufed Habits.

Aving in the two former Chapters fix'd the Notion of Religious Perfection, and prov'd it confonant to Reason and Scripture, and not so only, but also made it appear, that it is countenanced by the Unanimous Consent of All, who have ever handled this Subject. I have nothing now to do, but by way of Inference to represent the Advantages we may reap from it.

1. It is from hence plain, That Perfection must not be placed in Fantastick Speculations or Voluntary Observances, but in the solid and useful Vertues of the Gospel; in

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the Works of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope; in the Purity and Humility of a Child of Light; in the Constancy and Magnanimity which becomes one who has brought the Body into Subjection, and has fet his Affections on Things above. This State of Perfection is well enough described by the Rule of St. Bennet. Ergo his omnibus Humilitatis Gradibus ascensis, Monachus mox ad Charitatem, &c. The Monk having passed through these several Stages of Humility or Mortisication, will arrive at that Love of God which casteth out Fear; by which he will be enabled to perform all Things with Ease and Pleasure, and, as it were, Naturally, which before he perform'd with Reluctancy and Dread; being now moved and acted, not by the Terrors of Hell, but by a Delight in Goodness, and the Force of an excellent Habit: Both which, Christ by his Spirit vouchsafes to increase and exalt in his Servants now cleansed and purged from all Sin and Vice.

2. This Notion of Perfection proves all Men to lie under an Obligation to it: For as All are capable of an Habit of Holiness, so is it the Duty of all to endeavour after it, If Perfection were indeed an Angelical State; if it did consist in an Exemption from all Defects and Infirmities, and in such an Elevation of Vertue, to which nothing can be added; then I consess, all Distance of the provided in the second of the s

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courses of it, and much more all Attempts after it, would be vain and insolent too. If again, it did confist in some Heroick Pitch of Vertue, which should appear to have something so singular in it, as should make it look more like a Miracle than a Duty, it were then to be expected but once in an Age from some Extraordinary Person, called to it by Peculiar Inspirations, and Extraordinary Gifts. But if Christian Perfection be, as I have proved, only a well confirmed Habit in Goodness, if it differ from Sincerity only, when Sincerity is in its Weakness and Infancy, not when grown up, then 'tis plain, that every Christian lies under an Obligation to it. Accordingly the Scripture exhorts All to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God, to go on to Perfection, Heb. 6. and it assigns this as one great End of the Institution of a standing Ministry in the Churches of Christ, namely, the perfecting the Saints, the edifying the Body of Christ; till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the Fulness of Christ, Ephes. 4. 12, 13. And hence it is, that we find the Apostles pursuing this great End, by their Prayers and Labours, earnestly contending and endeavouring to present all Christians Perfect before God, 1 Thess. 3. 10. Night and Day praying exceedingly, that we might see your Face and might perfect that

that which is lacking in your Faith, Colos. 1. 28. Whom we preach, warning every Man, and teaching every Man in all Wisdom, that we may present every Man perfect in Christ Jesus, see 1 Pet. 5. 10. Colos. 4. 13. Nay further, the Scripture frequently puts us in mind, that they are in a State of Danger, who do not proceed and grow in Grace, and press on towards Perfection. Now all this is very easily accountable, taking Perfection for a well settled Habit of Holiness; but on no other Notion of it.

3. This Account of Perfection removes those Scruples which are often started about the Degrees of Holiness and Measures of Duty, and are wont to disturb the Peace, clog the Vigour, and damp the Alacrity of many well-meaning and good People. Nay, many of acute Parts and good Learning, are often puzzled about this Matter: Some teaching, that Man is not bound to do his best; others on the quite contrary, that he is so far bound to it, that he is always obliged to pursue the most Perfeet Duty, to chuse the most Perfect Means, and to exert the utmost of that Strength, and act according to the utmost of that Capacity with which God has endowed him. Now all these things, when we come to apply these General Doctrines to Particular Instances, and a vast Variety of Circumstances, have so much Latitude, Ambiguity,

and Uncertainty in them, that Men of Tender Consciences, and Defective Understandings, reap nothing from such high-Hown Indefinite Discourses, but Doubts and Scruples. It requires a strong and penetrating Judgment to resolve what is the utmost Extent of our Power and Capacity; What the best Mean, and what the most perfect Duty, when many present themselves to us, and all variously circumstantiated. But now, as I have stated Matters, we are bound indeed to pursue and labour after Growth and Improvement in the Love of God, and Charity towards our Neighbour, in Purity, Humility, and the like. And this we shall certainly do, if we be Sincere; in other Matters we are left to our Prudence, and if the Error of our Choice proceed only from an Error in Judgment, and a Corruption in our Hearts, we are safe enough.

4. Tis very easy to discern now where we stand in reference to Perfection; how remote we are from it, or how near to it. For the Nature of an Habit being plain and intelligible, the Effects and Properties of it, obvious to the meanest Capacity, 'tis easy to determine upon an Impartial Examination, whether we be Habitually Good or not, or what Approaches we have made towards it. And because this is a Matter of no small Importance, and Men are generally

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backward enough to advance too far into fuch Reflections and Applications, as may breed any Difturbance to their Peace, or any Diminution of their good Opinion for themfelves, tho' neither the one nor the other be too well grounded; I shall not think my Time mis speht, if I here take this Task upon me; and endeavour by several Particular Deductions, to lay every Man's State

as plainly open to his View as I can.

1. Then, from the Notion I have given of Perfection, it appears, That if a Man's Life be very Uneven, Unconstant, and Contradictory to it self; if he be to day a Saint, and to morrow a Sinner; if he yield to day to the Motives of the Gospel, and Impulses of the Spirit, and to morrow to the Sollicitations of the Flesh, and Temptations of the World, he is far from being Perfect; fo far, that there is not Ground enough to conclude him a Sincere or Real, tho' Imperfect Convert. The only certain Proof of Regeneration is Victory; he that is born of God, overcometh the World, I Joh. 5. 4. Faith, tho' it be True, is not presently Saving and Justifying till it have subdued the Will, and captivated the Heart, i. e. till we begin to Live by Faith; which is evident from That Corn in the Parable, which tho' it shot up, yet had it not Depth of Earth, nor Root enough, and therefore was withered up, and brought forth no Fruit. Regret

and Sorrow for Sin is an Excellent Passion, but till it has fubdued our Corruptions, changed our Affections, and purified our Hearts, 'tis not that Saving Repentance in the Apostle, 2 Cor. 7. 10. Godly Sorrow worketh Repentance, not to be repented of. We may have sudden Heats and Passions for Vertue; but if they be too short liv'd to implant it in us, this is not that Charity or Love which animates and impregnates the New Creature mentioned, Gal. 5. 6. Faith working by Love. Lastly, we may have good Purposes, Intentions, nay, Resolutions; but if these prove too weak to obtain a Conquest over our Corruptions, if they prove too weak to relist the Temptations we are wont to fall by, 'tis plain that they are not such as can demonstrate us Righteous, or entitle us to a Crown, which is promised to him that overcometh. And here I cannot but remark, to how little purpose Controversies have been multiplied about the Justification of Man. 'Tis one thing for God to justify us, i. e. to pardon our Sins, and account us Righteous, and his Children; and another for us to know, or be affured that he does fo. If we enquire after the former, 'tis plain to me that no Man can be accounted Righteous by God, till he really is so: And when the Man is Sanctified throughout in Spirit, Soul, and Body; then is he certainly Justified, and not

not till then. And this I think is confessed by all except Antinomians; and whatever Difference there is amongst Christians in this Matter, it lies in the Forms and Variety of Expression. They that contend earnestly for the Necessity of Good Works, do not, I suppose, imagine, that the Works are Holy, before the *Heart* is so; for as is the Fountain, such will be its Streams; as is the Tree, such will be its Fruits. What Absurdity then is there in admitting that Men are justified before they bring forth Good Works; if they cannot bring forth Good Works till they be fanctified and changed? On the other hand, they who contend so earnestly for Justification by Faith without Works, do not only suppose that the Man is throughly changed, by the Infusion of Habitual Grace, but also that this Grace as foon as it has Opportunity, will exert and express it self in good Works: And they do readily acknowledge that the Faith which does not work by Love, is an Historical Unanimated Faith. And if so, how natural is it to comprise in that Holiness which justifies, not only the Change of the Heart, but of the Actions? But here I think it is well worth the confidering, whether that thorough Change in the Nature of a Sinner, which is called Holiness, be now effected at once, and in a Moment, and not rather gradually and in Time? For this may give fome

fome Light to the Doctrine of Justification, and draw us off from Speculations and Theories, to more Useful and Practical Thoughts and Discourses about it. 'Tis true, in the Primitive Times, when the Conviction of a Sinner was wrought by a dazling Light, by furprizing Miracles, by Exuberant Influxes of the Spirit, and the Concurrence of many extraordinary things, Sanctification (as in the Goaler and his Family, Acts 16.) might be begun and finished in the same Hour. But I doubt it is rarely so with us at this Day; our Vices are not fo suddenly subdued, nor our Virtues fo suddenly implanted. Our Convictions in the Beginning of Conversion, are feldom so sull and clear as Theirs: And, if we may judge by the Effects, 'tis but seldom that the Principle of a new Life is infused in the same Plenty and Power it appears to have been in Them. And if so, then these things will follow; 1. Though in the first Plantation of the Gospel Men being converted, as it were in a Moment, ingrafted by Baptism into Christ, and receiving the Holy Ghost, the Earnest of their Justification or Acceptance with God, and their future Glory: We may very well fay of them, that they were not only Justified, but also knew themselves to be so, before they had brought forth any other Fruit of Righteousness, than what was implied in

the Dedication of themselves to Christ by that solemn Rite of Baptism; but at this Day, when Conversion is not effected in the same manner; when Faith and good Works do mutually cherish one another; when Righteousness is not brought forth into Victory, but by long Labour and Travel; I see not why Faith and Good Works may not be pronounced jointly and antecedently necessary to our Justification. 2. The Doctrine of Infused Habits has been much ridiculed and exposed, as absurd by some Men and I must confess, if it be Essential Men; and I must confess, if it be Essential to a Habit, to he acquired by length of Time, and Repetition of the same Acts, then an Infused Habit is a very Odd Expresfion: But why God cannot produce in us those strong Dispositions to Vertue in a Moment, which are naturally produced by Time; or why we may not ascribe as much Efficacy to Infus'd Grace, as Philosophers are wont to do to repeated Acts, I cannot see? Nor can I fee why fuch Dispositions, when Infus'd, may not be called Habits, if they have all the Properties and Effects of an Habit. And that fuch excellent Dispositions were on a sudden wrought in the Minds of Christians in the Beginning of Christianity, is too plain from the History of those Times to need a Proof. But whether fuch Changes are ordinarily effected fo fuddenly at this Day, we have much Reason to doubt:

doubt; nay, I think it appears from what I have faid, there is sufficient Reason to deny it. And if so, the Infusion of Habits, cannot be so properly insisted on now as then; and we may be more subject to make unwarrantable Inferences from the Doctrine of Infus'd Habits, than they were in those bright and Miraculous Days. 3. As our Progress to Santtification must be flower than formerly, as it must be longer before the Grace that is infused, so far master our Corruption, and dilate and diffuse it self through our whole Nature, as that we may justly be denominated Holy and Righteous from the Prevalence of this Holy Principle: So by a necesfary Consequence, our Justification must commence later. But after all, I know not why we should be so inquisitive after the Time of our Justification by God. The Comfort of a Christian does not result immediately from God's Justifying him, but from his knowing that he does fo. And if this be the Thing we are now fearching after, namely, what rational Assurance we can have of our Justification, and when, as indeed it is; then, though I do not pretend to determine, that Man is not, or may not be justified or accounted righteous by God, upon a thorough Change of Mind or Soul, before this Change discovers it self in a Series of Victories over those Temptations by which he was led Captive before; yet I assert,

First, That the true and solid Proof of the Sanctification of the Heart, is Sanctity of Life. Next, when I talk of Victory, I suppose Man engaged, I suppose him encountered by Temptations and Enemies; and then I affirm, that the Faith which is not ftrong enough to Conquer, is not strong enough to Justify. If any Man demand, May not that Faith which is foil'd to Day, Conquer to Morrow? I answer, I must leave this to God? I can pronounce nothing of the Sincerity of the Heart, but by the outward Deportment and Success. And if this be the proper way of judging of a Man's Sincerity, I am fure I may with much more Confidence affirm, that nothing less than Victory can be a clear Argument of Perfection. My Business therefore shall ever be to be Holy, and then I'm fure I shall be Justified. If I be Holy, God, who cannot err, will certainly account me so; and if I cease to be so, God must cease to account me so. And this is all which I defign by this long Paragraph: That is, to render Men more careful and diligent in making their Calling and Election fure, and to prevent Prefumption and groundless Confidence, And that nothing that I have here said may be perverted to a contrary Purpose; that no Man from some passionate Resolutions or sudden Changes of his own Mind, may be tempted to conclude too hastily of his being

Justified, as if the Change wrought in him, were equal to that commonly effected in the first Converts of Christianity; I think it not amiss to put such a one in mind, that even These were not Justified, unless they did profess Christ with the Mouth, as well as Believe in him with the Heart; and that this publick Profession of Christianity in those Days, was equivalent to many Good

Works in These.

2dly, He that feels in himself little or no Fervency of Spirit, little or no Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness, has Reason to suspect, that his Regularity is little more than common Decency and Civility, and to doubt, lest his Religion be nothing else but Custom or common Prudence. I see not how so much Indifference and Sluggishness can consist with a firm Belief and Expectation of a Crown, with a fincere Love of God and Righteousness. But if we may suppose such a one restrained from Evil, and preserved in the way of Duty, after a fort, by the Fear of God, and a Desire of Heaven, yet certainly this can be but the Infancy of the New Creature at most: And the best Advice that can be given such a one, is surely that of St. Peter, that by adding one degree of Vertue to another, he would use all Diligence to make his calling and election sure, 2 Pet. 1. 10.

3 dly, If a Man's Religion produce very few Good Works, or such only as put him

to little Travel or Expence, we may conclude that this Man is not Perfect; his Charity is too weak, too narrow to be that of an exalted Christian: The best that we can think of fuch a one is, That he is yet taken up in the Discipline of Mortification, that he is contending with his Lusts and Pasfions, which are not yet so far reduced, so far subdued and brought under, as to leave him in a State of Liberty and Peace, and in a Capacity of extending and enlarging his Charity. This Remark, that the Inconsiderableness of our Good Works is Reason enough to question, not only one's Perfe-Etion, but Sincerity, holds good in Such Cafes only, where neither the Opportunity nor Capacity of higher and nobler Performances is wanting. I dare not pronounce, that no Man can be a Christian, unless he be fit to be a Martyr: 'Tis true, the lowest Degree of Sincerity must imply a Purpose and Resolution of Universal Obedience, in Defiance of all Temptations; but yet That Grace, for ought I can prove to the contrary, may be fufficient to Save a Man, that is sufficient to master the Difficulties he is to encounter with, altho' he should not be able to grapple with the Distempers and Tryals to which the Body and the State of another Man may be subject. Surely the Wisdom and the Faithfulness of God can be no further concern'd, than to qualify any one for the Difcharge

charge of those Duties which he thinks fit to call him to: And if the Discharge of such Duties be not a sufficient Proof of our Sincerity, we can never have any, but must be always held in Suspence and Torture about our future State. I see no Reason to Question, but that the Disciples of our Lord were in a State of Grace before the Resurrection, and the following Pentecost: And yet I think I have plain Reason to believe, that they were not fit to be Martyrs and Confesfors till then; the Grace they had before might, I doubt it not, have enabled them to live Virtuously amidst common and ordinary Temptations: But it was necessary that they should be endow'd with Power from on High, before they could be fit to encounter those fiery Tryals, to which the Preaching of the Gospel was to expose them. To this furely our Master refers, when he tells the Pharisees, That the children of the Bridechamber were not to fast while the bridegroom mas with them: When he tells his Disciples, I have many things to say, but you cannot bear them yet: When he asked the Sons of Zebedee, Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? Matth. 20.21. If this be true Divinity, as I am (I had almost said) confident it is, then I am confident, that which requires very unaccountable Tests of a Man's Sincerity, is very extravagant.

travagant. For Example, when Men talk at this rate, that a fincere Christian should have such an Abhorrence for Sin, as to sear Guilt more than its Punishment: Such a Love of God, as rather than offend Him, to be content to precipitate and plunge himself into the Jaws, not of Death, like the

Martyrs, but of Hell it self.

4thly, If the Duties of Religion be very troublesome and uneasy to a Man, we may from hence conclude, that he is not Perfect: For though the Beginning of Wisdom and Vertue be generally harsh and severe to the Fool and Sinner, yet to him that has conquered, the Yoke of Christ is easy, and his Burthen light; to him that is filled with the love of God, his commandments are not grievous; hence is that Observation of the Son of Sirach, Ecclus. 4. 17, 18. For at the first she will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his Soul, and try him by her Laws 3 then will she return the straight way unto him, and comfort him, and shew him her secrets. The Reason of this Assertion is palpable; it is the Nature of an Habit to render difficult Things easy, harsh Things pleasant, to fix a floating and uncertain Humour, to Nurse and Ripen a weak and tender Disposition into Nature. And 'tis as reasonable to expect these Effects in Religious, as in any other forts of Habits. Lastly,

Lastly, He who does not find Religion. full of Pleasure, who does not glory in God, and rejoice in our Lord Jesus, he who is not filled with an humble Affurance of the Divine Favour, and a Joyful Expectation of Immortality and Glory, does yet want something; he is yet defective, with respect either to the brightness of Illumination, the Absoluteness of Liberty, or the Ardor of Love; he may be a Good Man, and have gone a great way in his Christian Race; but there is something still behind to compleat and perfect him; some Error or other creates him groundless Scruples, some In-cumbrance or Impediment or other; whether an Infelicity of Temper, or the Incommodiousness of his Circumstances, or a little too warm an Application towards fomething of the World, retards his Vigour, and abates his Affections.

I have now finished all that I can think necessary to form a general Idea of Religious Perfection: For I have not only given a plain Definition or Description of it, and confirmed and sortified that Description by Reason and Scripture, and the concurrent Sense of all Sides and Parties; but have also by various Inferences, deduced from the General Notion of Perfection, precluded all groundless Pretensions to it, and enabled Men to see how far they are removed and distant from it, or how near they approach

it. The next Thing I am to do, according to the Method I have proposed, is, to consider the Fruits and Advantages of Perfection. A Consideration which will furnish us with many great, and, I hope, effectual Incitements or Motives to it; and demonstrate its Subserviency to our Happiness.

CHAP. IV.

A general Account of the Blessed Fruits and Advantages of Religious Perfection. Which is reduced to these Four Heads. 1. As it advances the Honour of the True and Living God, and of his Son Jesus, in the World. 2. As it promotes the Good of Mankind. These two treated of in the Chapter of Zeal. 3. As it produces in the perfect Man a full Assurance of Eternal Happiness and Glory. 4. As it puts him in Possession of True Happiness in this Life. These two last, Assurance, and present Happiness, or Pleasure, handled in this Chapter. Where the Pleasures of the Sinner, and of the perfect Christian are compared.

F the two former, I shall say nothing here; designing to insist upon them more particularly in the following Section, under

under the Head of Zeal, where I shall be obliged by my Method to consider the Fruit of it; only I cannot here forbear remarking, That Perfection while it promotes the Honour of God, and the Good of Man, does at the same time promote our own Happiness too; since it must on this account most effectually recommend us to the Love of the One and the Other; Them that honour me, faith God, I will honour, 1 Sam. 2.30. And our Saviour observes, that even Publicans and Sinners love those who love them, Matth. 5. 46. Accordingly St. Luke tells us of Christ, Luke 2. 52. That Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and Man; and of those eminently Devout and Charitable Souls, Acts 2. that they had favour with all the People; so resistless a Charm is the Beauty and Loveliness of Perfect Charity, even in the most deprav'd and corrupt Times. And what a Bleffing now, what a Comfort, what a Pleasure is it, to be the Favourite of God and Man!

The Third and Fourth I will now discourse of, and that the more largely, because as to Assurance, it is the Foundation of that Pleasure which is the richest Ingredient of Human Happiness in this Life. And, as to our present Happiness, which is the fourth Fruit of Persection, it is the very Thing for the sake of which, I have engaged in my present

fit that I should render the Tendency of Perfection to procure our present Happiness, very conspicuous. Beginning therefore with Assurance, I will affert the Possibility of attaining it in this Life; not by embroiling my self in the Brakes of several nice and subtle Speculations with which this Subject is over-grown, but by laying down in a Practical manner, the Grounds on which Assurance depends; by which we shall be able at once to discern the Truth of the Doctrine of Assurance, and its Dependence upon Perfection.

Now Assurance may relate to the Time Present, or to Come: For the Resolution of two Questions, gives the Mind a perfect Ease about this Matter. The first is, Am I assured that I am at present in a State of Grace? The second, Am I assured that I shall continue so to my Life's End? To begin with the first: The Answer of this En-

quiry depends on three Grounds;

First, A Divine Revelation, which declares in general, who shall be Saved; namely, They who Believe and Repent. Nor does any Sect doubt but that Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as St. Paul speaks, are the indispensable Conditions of Life. 'Tis true, the Notion of Repentance is miserably perverted by some, and that of Faith by others:

others: But what Remedy is there against the Lusts and Passions of Men? The Scripture does not only require Repentance and Faith, but it explains and describes the Nature of Both, by fuch Conspicuous and Infallible Characters, that no Man can be mistaken in these two Points, but his Error must be owing to some Criminal Prejudices or Inclinations that byass and pervert him. Good Men have ever been agreed in these Matters: And Catholick Tradition is no where more uncontroulable than here: The General Doctrine of all Ages hath been, and in this still is, that by Repentance we are to understand a New Nature and New Life: And by Faith, when distinguished from Repentance (as it sometimes is in Scripture) a Reliance upon the Mercy of God through the Merits and Intercession of Fesus, and Atonement of his Blood. Heaven lies open to all that perform these Conditions; every Page of the Gospel attests this; this is the Substance of Christ's Commission to his Apostles, that they should Preach Repentance and Remission of Sins through his Name amongst all Nations. And this is one bleffed Advantage, which Revealed Religion has above Natural; that it contains an express Declaration of the Divine Will, concerning the Pardon of all Sins whatsoever upon these Terms. Natural Religion indeed teaches us that God is Merciful;

Merciful; but it teaches us that he is Just too; and it can never assure us, what Bounds God will set to the Exercise of the one or the other; and when Justice, and when Mercy shall take place: What Sins are, and what are not capable of the Benefit of Sacrifice and Repentance. And this Uncertainty, considering the Sins of the best Life, was ever naturally apt to beget Despondencies, Melancholy, and sometimes a Superstitious Dread of God.

The Second Ground of Assurance, as it relates to our present State, is an Application of the Conditions of Life laid down in the Gospel to a Man's own Particular Case, thus; They that Believe and Repent shall be faved; I Believe and Repent, therefore I shall be laved. Now that a Man upon an Examination of himfelf, may be throughly assured that he does Believe and Repent, is evident from Scripture, which does not only exhort us to enter upon this Examination, but also afferts, that Assurance, Joy, and Peace, are the natural Fruits of it: But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, I Cor. 11.28. Examine your selves whether you be in the Faith; prove your own selves: Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? 2 Cor. 15.5. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that

that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear, 1 Pet. 3. 13. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments, I John 2. 3. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then bave we confidence towards God, 1 John 3. 2. 'Tis true, Men do often deceive themselves, and entertain a more favourable Opinion of their State than they ought. But whence proceeds this? Even from too Partial or Superficial Reflections on themselves, or none at all. And therefore the Apostle teaches us plainly, that the only way to correct this Error, is a sincere and diligent Search into our selves: For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself: But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in him-felf alone, and not in another, Gal. 6. 34. But it is Objected against all this, That the Heart of Man is so deceitful, that it is a very difficult matter to make a thorough discovery of it. We often think our selves Sincere, when the Success of the next Temptation gives us just reason to call this Sincerity into question; such is the contradictious Composition of our Nature, that we often act contrary to our inward Convictions, and frequently fail in the execution of those Designs, in the performance of those Resolutions, which we have thought very well grounded; and this being not to be char-E ged

ged upon the Insufficiency of God's Grace, but the Levity or Infincerity of our own Hearts, how can we safely frame any right Opinion of our Selves from those Affections and Purposes which are so little to be rely'd upon? To this I Answer. First, We are not to conclude any thing concerning our Progress or Perfection too hastily; we are not to determine of the final Issue of a War by the success of one or two Engagements; but our Hopes and Assurances are to advance flowly and gradually in proportion to the abatement of the Enemy's Force, and the increase of our own; so that we may have time enough to examine and prove our own Hearts. Secondly, A Sincere Christian, but especially one of a Mature Virtue, may easily discern his spiritual State by the inward Movings and Actings of the Soul, if he attend to them: For is it possible that such a one should be ignorant, what Impressions Divine Truths make upon him? Is it posfible he should be ignorant, whether his Faith stands firm against the shock of all carnal Objections; whether he earnestly defire to please God, as loving him above all Things; whether he thirst after the Consolation and Joy of the Spirit, more than after that of fensible Things? Is it possible the Soul should bewail its Heaviness and Driness which the best are liable to at some feason or other? Is it possible that the Soul should

should be carried upwards frequently on the Wings of Faith and Love, that it should maintain a familiar and constant Conversation with Heaven, that it should long to be delivered from this World of trouble, and this Body of Death, and to enter into the Regions of Peace, of Life, and Righteousness? Is it possible, I say, that these should be the Affections, the Longings and Earnings of the Soul, and yet that the Good Man, the Perfect Man, who often enters into his Closet, and Communes with his own Heart, should be ignorant of them? It cannot be. In a word, can the Relu-Stances of the Body, and the Allurements of the World, be disarm'd, weaken'd, and reduc'd? Can the Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness be very eager, the Relish of spiritual Pleasure brisk and delightful, and the contempt of worldly Things be really and thoroughly fettled, and yet the Man be insensible of all this? It cannot be. But if we feel these Affections in us, we may safely conclude, that we are Partakers of the Divine Nature; that we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust; and that the New Creature is at least growing up into a Perfect Man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Thirdly, The surest Test of a State of Grace, is our abounding in Good Works: You shall know the tree by its fruit, is our Master's own Rule, E 2 and

and it can never deceive us: He that doth righteousness is born of God. If then we be frequent and fervent in our Devotion towards God; if we be modest and grateful in the Successes, patient and religned, calm and ferene under the Croffes and Troubles of Life: If we be not only Pun-Etual, but Honourable in our Dealings; if we be Vigorous and Generous in the Exercifes of Charity; if we be not only just and true, but meek, gentle and obliging in our Words; if we retrench not only the sinful, but something from the innocent Liberties and Gratifications of Sense, to give our felves more intirely up to the Duties and Pleasures of Faith: If finally, we never be ashamed of Virtue, nor flatter, compliment, nor wink at Vice; if we be ready to meet with Death with Comfort, and retain Life with some degree of Indisference: If these Things, I say, be in us, we have little reason to doubt of the Goodness of our State: For good Works being the natural Fruit of Grace, it is impossible we should abound in the one without being possessed with the other. One would think now, that there should be nothing further needful to establish the Consolation of a Chrifian; and yet God out of regard, no doubt, to the vast Importance and happy Influence of Assurance, has furnished us with another ground of it, which is,

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The 3d and Last, namely, the Testimony of the Spirit. This Spirit, as it assifts us in our Examination, so it ratifies and consirms our Sentence by its Suffrage, fortifying our Assurance, and increasing our Joy. All this the Scripture expressly teaches us; for the Spirit is called, The earnest of our Inherttance, the seal of our Redemption, Eph. 1.
13, 14. Eph. 4. 30, 31. 2 Cor. 2. 10.
2 Cor. 5. And though it be not improbable, but that these, and such like Places, may relate more immediately to the Spirit of Promise which was conspicuous in Miracles, and feems to have accompanied all that believed in the Infancy of the Church, according to those Words of our Saviour, And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out Devils, &c. Mark 16. 17. Yet there are Texts enough which affure us, that the Spirit of God should be imparted to Believers through all fucceeding Ages, and that this should be one Effect of it to comfort us, and be a Pledge to us of the Divine Favour: Thus, Rom. 15. 13. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. and Rom. 8. 15, 16. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba father; the spirit it self beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children E 3

of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. If it be here demanded what this Testimony of the Spirit is: I answer, 'Tis a powerful Energy of the blessed Spirit, shedding abroad and increasing the love of God in our hearts, Rom. 5. Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope, and hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. This is the Spirit of Adoption, the Spirit of Oblignation, the Spirit of Glory, and the Spirit of Love; happy is he who is partaker of it, he has attained the Maturity of Perfection and Pleasure. I can scarce forbear going in with some of the Fathers, who thought that fuch as these could never finally fall. I can scarce forbear applying to fuch, those words, Rev. 20. 6. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power. Thus far I have considered Assurance as it relates to the present time. But,

2. Assurance may regard the Time to come; and it conduces very little less to the Peace and Pleasure of a Christian to be assured that he shall persevere in a good State, than that he is now in one. Let us therefore in the next place examine what grounds the Persett Man may have for such a Persuasi-

on: Now these are likewise Three.

First,

First, The Propension and Favour of God for the Perfect Man.

Secondly, The Sufficiency of Divine Assistance. And,

Thirdly, The Conscience of his own Integrity.

1. The Favour of God. I need not go about to prove that God will be ever ready to affift the Perfett Man; I need not prove that his eyes are always upon the righteous, and that his Ears are always open to their prayers; that they are the dear Objects of his Delight and Love: Reason and Scripture both do abundantly attest this, and the repeated Promises of God to good Men, encourage them to hope from God whatever beloved Children may from a tender and kind Father. Is not this enough then to inspire the Perfect Man with great and confident Hopes? He knows, not only, that God is an immutable God, free from all Levity and Inconstancy; and therefore, that nothing less than Presumption and Obstinacy, Habitual Neglect, or Wickedness, can tempt him to recal his Gifts, or repent him of his Favours: He knows not only that God is faithful, and will not suffer him to be tempted above what he is able; but he knows also, that he has a powerful Intercessor at the Right-hand of God, an Advocate with the Father.

Father, who cannot but prevail. Nor is this all yet; he has a great many Things that plead for him with God: There are his Tears which are Bottled up; there are his Prayers and Alms which are gone up for a Memorial before God; there is a Book of Remembrance written wherein all his pious Discourses are registred; and God is Faithful, and cannot forget his Works and Labour of Love. The Spirit of God will not soon quit the Bosom that it so long resided in; it will not suffer it self to be divided from that Person with whom it had entred into fo close an Umon, that it seemed as it were inanimated or incorporated with him, and become effential to his Being: Whence it is that the Spirit is faid to be grieved when he is forced and compelled to retire.

2. The Second Ground of Assurance for the time to come, is the sufficiency of Divine Assistance. The good Man is well assured, that God will never refuse the Protection of his Providence, or the Aid of his Spirit: And what can be too difficult for such a one? Providence can prevent a Temptation, or remove it; the Spirit can support him under it, and enable him to vanquish it; nay, it can enable him to extract new Strength and Vigour from it; my grace is sufficient for thee, 2 Cor. 12. 9. the Truth of which Assertion has been illustriously proved by the Victories of Martyrs and Confessors, who

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triumphed over the United Force of Men and Devils. Though then the Conscience of Human Frailty may awaken in the best of Men Fear and Caution, the Assurance of Divine Assistance cannot but beget in them an holy Considence; the Snares and Temptations of the World, the subtilty and vigilance of the Devil may justly create a Sollicitude in the best of Men; but when they consider themselves encompassed with the Divine Favour, they can have no rea-

fon to despond.

3. The Conscience of his own Integrity is a Third Ground of a good Man's Confidence; he knows that nothing but crying Provocations can quench the Spirit, and oblige God to defert him; and he has reason to hope, that this is that he cannot be guilty of. He is sure, that presumptuous Wickedness is not only repugnant to his Principles; but to the very bent of his Nature, to all the Inclinations and Passions of his Soul: I speak here of the Perfect Man; can he ever wilfully dishonour and disobey God, who loves him above all Things, and has done so long? Can he forsake, and betray his Saviour, who has long rejoiced and gloried in him; who has been long accustomed to look upon all the Glories and Satisfactions of this Life, as Dung and Drofs in comparison of him? Can he, in one word, ever he seduced to renounce and hate Reli-

gion, who has had fo long an Experience of the Beauty, and of the Pleasure of it? Good Habits when they are grown up to Perfection and Maturity, feem to me as natural as 'tis possible Evil ones should be: And if so, 'tis no less difficult to extirpate the One than the Other. And I think I have the Scripture on my side in this Opinion: Does the Prophet Jeremy demand, Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? then may you that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well, Jer. 13. 23. St. John on the other hand does affirm, Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God, 1 John 3. 9. Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not, v. 6. These are the Grounds of Assurance with respect of the time to come. As to Perfonal and Peremptory Predestination to Life and Glory, 'tis at least a controverted Point, and therefore unfit to be laid as the Foundation of Assurance. But suppose it were granted, I fee not which way it can affect our present Enquiry, since the wifest amongst those who stickle for it, advise all to govern themselves by the general Promises and Threats of the Gospel; to look upon the Fruits of Righteousness as the only solid Proof of a State of Grace; and if they be under the Dominion of any Sin, not to presume upon Personal Election, but to look

look upon themselves as in a State of Dam-nation, till they be recovered out of it by Repentance. Thus far all Sides agree; and this I think is abundantly enough; for here we have room enough for Joy and Peace, and for Caution too; room enough for Confidence, and for Watchfulness too: The Romanists indeed, will not allow us to be certain of Salvation, Certitudine fidei cui non potest subesse falsum, with such a Certainty as that with which we entertain an Article of Faith, in which there is no room for Error; i. e. we are not so sure that we are in the Favour of God, as we are, or may be, that there is a God. We are not so sure, that we have a Title to the Merits of Christ, as we are, or may be, that Jesus is the Christ. Now if this Asfertion be confined to that Assurance which regards the time to come, as it generally is; and do not deny Assurance in general, but only certain Degrees or Measures of it; then there is nothing very absurd or intolerable in it. For a less Assurance than that which this Doctrine excludes, will be sufficient to secure the Pleasure and Tranquillity of the Perfect Man. But if this Affertion be design'd against that Assurance which regards our present State, then I think it is not found, nor agreeable, either to Reason, Scripture, or Experience. For first, the Question being about a Matter

ter of Fact, 'tis in vain to argue that cannot be, which does appear manifestly to have been: And certainly they who rejoiced in Christ with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory, were as fully persuaded, that they were in a State of Grace and Salvation, as they were that Jesus was Risen from the Dead. Secondly, 'Tis one thing to balance the Strength and Degrees of Assurance; and other to balance the Reasons of it. For it is very possible that Assurance may be stronger, where the Reason of it may not be so clear and evident as where the Assurance is less. Thus for Example; the Evidence of Sense seems to most Learned Men to be stronger than that of Faith: And yet through the Assistance of the Spirit, a Man may embrace a Truth that depends upon Revelation, with as much Confidence and Certainty as one depending upon Sense. And so it may be in the Case of Assurance: The Spirit of God may by its Concurrence raise our Assurance as high as he pleases; although the Reason on which it be built, should not be Divine and Infallible, but merely Moral, and subject at least to a possibility of Error. But Thirdly, Why should not the Certainty I have concerning my Present State, be as Divine and Infallible, as that I have concerning an Article of Faith? If the Premises be Infallible, Why Should not the Conclusion? He that Believes

and Repents is in a State of Grace, is a Divine, an Infallible Propolition: And why may not this other, I Believe and Repent, be equally Infallible, though not equally Divine? What Faith and Repentance is, is revealed; and therefore there is no room for my being here mistaken: Besides, I am affisted and guided in the Trial of my Self by the Spirit of God. So that the truth of this Proposition, I Believe and Repent, depends partly upon the Evidence of Sense; and I may be us fure of it, as of what I do, or leave undone: Partly upon the Evidence of inward Senfation, or my Consciousness of my own Thoughts; and I may be as fure of it as I can be of what I love or hate, rejoice or grieve for: And lastly, It depends upon the Evidence of the Spirit of God, which assists me in the Examination of my Self according to those Characters of Faith and Repentance, which he hath himself revealed. And when I conclude from the two former Propolitions, that I am in a State of Grace, he confirms and ratifies my Inference. And now, let any one tell me, What kind of Certainty that is, that can be greater than this? I have taken this Pains to set the Doctrine of Asfurance in a clear Light, because it is the great Spring of the Perfect Man's Comfort and Pleasure, the Source of his Strength and Joy. And this puts me in mind of that other other Fruit of Perfection, which in the beginning of this Chapter, I promised to insist on, which is,

Its Subserviency to our Happiness in this Life.

That Happiness increases in proportion with Perfection, cannot be denied, unless we will at the same time deny the Happiness of a Man, to exceed that of an Infant, or the Happiness of an Angel that of Man. Now this Truth being of a very great Importance, and ferving fingly instead of a thousand Motives to Perfection, I will confider it impartially, and as closely as I can. Happiness and Pleasure, are generally thought to be only two Words for the same thing: Nor is this very remote from Truth; for let but Pleasure be solid and lasting, and I cannot see what more is wanting to make Man Happy. The best way therefore, to determine how much Perfection contributes to our Happiness, is to examine how much it contributes to our Pleasure.

If with the Epicurean, we think Indolence our supream Happiness, and define Pleasure by the absence of Pain, then I amsure the Persect Man will have the best claim to it. He surely is freest from the Mistakes and Errors, from the Passions and

Follies,

Follies, that embroil Human Life: He creates no evil to himself, nor provokes any unnecessary danger. His Virtue effectually does that which Atheism attempts in vain; dispels the terror of an invisible Power: He needs not drown the Voice of Conscience by Wine, or Noise, or the Toil of Life; it speaks nothing to him, but what is kind and obliging; it is his Comforter, not his Persecutor: And as to this World, he reaps that Satisfaction and Tranquillity from the Moderation of his Affections, which Ambition and Avarice do in vain promise themselves from Preferments, or the increase of Wealth. If therefore there were any State on this side Heaven exempt from Evil, it must be that of the Perfect Man. But he knows the World too well to flatter himself with the Expectation of Indolence, or an undisturb'd Tranquillity here below; and is as far from being deluded by vain Hopes, as from being scar'd by vain Fears, or tortur'd and distended by vain Desires. He knows the World has its Evils, and that they cannot wholly be avoided; he knows it, and dares behold them with open Eyes, survey their Force, and feel and try their Edge. And then when he has collected his own Strength, and called in the Aid of Heaven, he shrinks not, nor desponds; but meets Evil with that Courage, and bears it with that evenness of Mind, that he seems, even in his Affli-

Afflictions, nearer to Indolence, than the Fool and Sinner in his Prosperity. So that I cannot forbear professing, there appears fo much Beauty, fo much Loveliness in the Deportment of the Perfect Man, with respect to the Evils of Life, that for that reafon alone, were there no other, I should admire and prefer his Virtue above any Pofseffion or Enjoyment of Life. Give me leave to compare the Saint and Sinner on this occafion; and but very briefly: The wife man's eyes, faith Solomon, Ecclef. 2. 14. are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness. The Wife Man fees that he has Enemies, I mean Evils; and therefore he informs himfelf well of their Strength, observes their Motion, and prepares for the Encounter: But Ignorance and Stupidity, is the greatest bleffing of the Sinner's Life; and his most admir'd Quality is not to be apprehensive of Evil, till it crush him with its Weight. But if the Sinner be not fool enough to arrive at this degree of Brutality, then as foon as the Report of the most distant Evil, or the most inconsiderable, reaches his Ear, how it fills his Imagination, how it shakes his Heart, and how it embitters his Pleafures! And to what poor and despicable Arts, to what base and dishonourable Shifts does his Fear force him? When on the fame Occasion we discover nothing in the Perfect Man, but a beautiful mixture of HumiHumility and Faith, Devotion and Confidence, or Assurance in God; He is not afraid of evil tidings; his Heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, Psal. 112. a Frame of Spirit, which to those who have Opportunity and Sense to observe it, renders him both more below'd and rever'd. Lastly, If we consider the Wicked and the Good Man, actually under the Weight and Pressure of Evel, how much unlike is the State of the one in reality to that of the other, even while the outward Circumstances are the fame? What Chearfulness, what Courage, what Resignation, what Hopes adorn the One! What Instruction to all, what Satisfaction to his Friends and Relations does his Deportment afford! And how does it inspire and warm the Breasts of those that converse with him, with an Esteem for, and Love of Goodness, and himself! What Charm, what Delight is there in those gracious Speeches, that proceed at this time out of a good Man's Mouth! I know that my Redeemer liveth: The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the name of the Lord: Thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be afflicted: God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever: And fuch like. And how often does he pour out his Heart in secret before God! How often does he reflect on the gracious and wise Ends of Divine Chastisement! And F

how often does he, with Desire and Thirst, meditate on that Fulness of Joy which expects him in the Presence of God! But let us cast our Eye now on the Voluptuary, on the Ambitious, on the Covetous, or any other fort of Sinner, under Disgrace, Poverty, Sickness, or any such Calamity; what a mean and despicable Figure does such a one make! What Impatience, what Despondency, what Guilt, what Pusillanimity does every Word, every Action betray! Or it may be, his Insolence is turned into Crouching and Fawning; his Rudeness and Violence, into Artifice and Cunning; and his Irreligion into Superstition. Various indeed are the Humours, and very different the Carriage of these unhappy Men in the Day of Tryal; but all is but Misery in a different Dress; Guilt and Baseness under a different Appearance. Here I might further remark, that that Faith which produces Patience in Adversity, produces likewise Security and Confidence in Prosperity. I will lay me down (may every good Man fay in the Words of the Psalmist) and sleep, and rise again, for thou, Lord, shalt make me dwell in safety. And surely the one is as serviceable to the Ease of Human Life as the other. But I think I have faid enough to shew, that if Pleasure be supposed to imply no more than Indolence, the Perfect Man has without Controversy a far greater Share

Share of it than any other can pretend

But let us take Pleasure to be, not a meer Calm, but a gentle Breeze; not to confist in meer Rest and Quiet, but a delightful Motion; not in the meer Tranquillity of the Mind, but in the Transport of it, or something nearly approaching it. Perfection, I'm confident, will fuffer nothing by this Change of the Notion of Pleasure. How many Pleas fures has the Wife Man, which depend not on Fortune, but Himself, (I mean his Diligence and Integrity) and to which the Sinner is an utter Stranger! What Pleasure, what Triumph is equal to that of the Perfect Man, when he glories in God, and makes his Boast of him all Day long? When he rejoyces in the Lord with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory? When being fill'd with all the fulness of God, transported by a Vital Sense of Divine Love, and strengthened and exalted by the mighty Energy of the Spirit of Adoption, he maintains a Fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus? All Communion with God, confifts in this Joy of Love and Assurance, and has a Taste of Heaven in it. Let the most Fortunate, and the wifest Epicurean too, ransack all the Store-houses and Treasures of Nature; let him muster together all his Legions of Pleasure, and let him, if he can, consolidate and incorporate them all; and after

all, being put into the Scale against This alone, they will prove lighter than Vanity it self. To be the Care, the Delight, the Love of an Almighty God, to be dear to him, who is the Origin and Fountain of all Perfections; Lord, what Rest, what Confidence, what Joy, what Extafy, do these Thoughts breed! How fublime, how lofty, how delightful and ravishing are those Expressions of St. John! 1 Epist. 3. 1, 2. Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall fee him as he is. And those again of the Psalmist, I am continually with thee; thou dost hold me by my right hand: Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me into glory, Psal. 73. 23, 24. But I will descend to cooler and humbler Pleasures. It is no small Happiness to the Perfect Man, that he is himself a proper Object of his own Complacency. He can reflect on the Truth and Justice, the Courage and Constancy, the Meekness and Charity of his Soul, with much Gratitude towards God, and Contentment in himself. And this surely he may do with good Reason: For the Perfections of the Mind, are as justly

o be preferr'd before those of the Body, as hose of the Body before the Gifts of Forune. Nor is it a Matter of small Importince to be pleas'd with one's self: For grant iny one but this, and he can never be very Oneasy, or very Miserable. But without this, here are very few Things which will not lifturb and discompose; and the most obiging Accidents of Life will have no Relish n them. 'Tis true, Folly and Vanity does ometimes create a Self-Complacency in the Sinner; why, even then, 'tis a pleasing Error. But there is as much Difference beween the Just and Rational Complacency of a Wise Man in himself, and the mistaken one of a Fool, as there is between the false and fleeting Fancies of a Dream, and the olid Satisfactions of the Day. This will De very manifest upon the slightest View we can take of those Actions, which are the rue Reason of the Good Man's Satisfaction n himself, and render his Conscience a continual Feast to him.

It is commonly said, That Vertue is its pun Reward: And though it must be acknowledged, this is a reward which is not sufficient in all Cases, nor great enough to vanquish some sorts of Temptations; yet there is a great deal of Truth and Weight in this Saying. For a State of Vertue is like a State of Health, or Peace, of Strength and Beauty; and therefore desirable on its own

Account. And if Pleasure, properly speaking, be nothing else but the agreeable Exercife of the Powers of Nature about their proper Objects; and if it be then absolute and compleat, when these Powers are raised, and the Exercise of them is free and undisturb'd, then certainly Vertue, which is no. thing else but the Perfett Action of a Perfect Nature, as far as the One and the Other may be admitted in this State of Mortality, must be a very considerable Pleasure. Acts of Wisdom and Charity, the Contemplation of Truth, and the Love of Goodness, must be the most natural and delightful Exercise of the Mind of Man: And because Truth and Goodness, are Infinite and Omniprefent, and nothing can hinder the Perfect Man from contemplating the one, and loving the other; therefore does he in his Degree and Measure participate of his Self-Sufficiency, as he does of other Perfections of God; and enjoys within himself an inexhaustible Spring of Delight. How many, how various are the Exercises and Employments of the Mind of Man! And when it is once polished and cultivated, how agreeable are they all! To invent and find out, to illustrate and adorn, to prove and demonstrate, to weigh, discriminate and distinguish, to deliberate calmly and impartially, to act with an absolute Liberty, to despise little Things, and look boldly on Dangers; to do all

Things dexteroully, to converse with a fiveet and yet a manly Air, in honest and open, yet taking, obliging Language! How delightful are these Things in themselves! How much do they conduce to the Service, the Beauty, and Dignity of Humane Life! To these accomplished Minds we owe Histories, Sciences, Arts, Trades, Laws. From all which, if others reap an unspeakable Pleasure, how much more the Authors, the Parents of them? And all this puts me in mind of one great Advantage which the Perfect Man enjoys above the most Fortunate Senfualist; which is, that he can never want an Opportunity to employ all the Vigour of his Mind, usefully and delightfully. Whence it is that Retirement, which is the Prison and the Punishment of the Fool, is the Paradise of the Wise and Good.

But let us come at length to that Pleafure which depends upon External Objects; where, if any where, the Fool and Sinner, must dispute his Title to Pleasure with the Wise and Good. How many Things are there here which force us to give the Preference to the Wise Man? I will not urge, that a narrow, a private Fortune can furnish Store enough for all the Appetites of Vertue; that a Wise Man need not at any time purchase his Pleasure at too dear a rate; he need not lie, nor cheat, nor crouch, nor fawn: This is the Price of sinful Pleasure. I will F 4

not, I say, urge these and the like Advantages, fince the World thinks it want of Spirit to be content with a little; and want of Wit not to practife those Arts, let them be never fo base, by which we may compass more. I'll only remark these sew things. First, the Wise Man's Prospect is enlarged. He is like an Artist or Philosopher, which discovers a thousand Pleasures and Beauties in a Piece, wherein the Ideot can see none: He fees in all the Works, in all the Providences of God, those Depths, those Contrivances, which the Fool cannot fathom; that Order, that Harmony, which the Sinner is insensible of. Next, The Pleasure of Sense, that is not refined by Vertue, leaves a Stain upon the Mind: 'Tis coarse and turbulent, empty and vexatious. The Pleafure of Vertue is like a Stream, which runs indeed within its Banks, but it runs smooth and clear; and has a Spring that always feeds the Current: But the Pleasure of Sin is like a Land-flood, impetuous, muddy, and irregular: And as foon as it forfakes the Ground it overflow'd, it leaves nothing behind it, but Slime and Filth. Lastly, The Wise Man forming a true Estimate of the Objects of Sense, and not looking upon them as his ultimate End, enjoys all that is in them, and is not fool'd by an Expectation of more. Thus having confider'd the Obiects

plain: First, That the Perfect Man has many Sources or Fountains of Pleasure, which the Sinner never taltes of, which he cannot relish, which he is a Stranger to: Next, As to outward Things, that He has even here, many Advantages above the other. But what is more considerable yet, is,

All the Claim the Sinner lays to Pleasure, is confined to the Present Moment, which is extreamly (bort, and extreamly uncertain; the Time that is Past and to Come, he quits all Pretensions to, or ought to do so. As to the Time Past, the Thing is self-evident: For the Sinner, looking back, fees his Pleafures and Satisfactions; the Good Man his Tryals and Temptations past and gone: The Sinner sees an End of his Beauty and his Strength; the Good Man of his Weaknesses and Follies: The one when he looks back is encounter'd with Sin and Folly, Wickedness and Shame; the other with Repentance and Good Works: Guilt and Fear haunt the Reflections of the one, Peace and Hope attend those of the other. As to the Time to come, the Atheist hath no Prospect at all beyond the Grave, the Wicked Christian a very dismal one, the Weak and Imperfect a doubtful one; only the Wise and Perfect an assured, joyful, and delightful one. And this puts me in mind of that which is the proper Fruit of Perfection, and the truest and greatest greatest Pleasure of Humane Life, that is, Assurance, Assurance of the Pardon of Sin, Assurance of the Divine Favour, Assurance

of Immortality and Glory.

Need I prove, That Assurance is an unspeakable Pleasure? One would think, that to Man, who is daily engaged in a Conflict with some Evil or other, it were superfluous to prove that it is a mighty Pleasure to be raised, though not above the Assault, though not above the Reach, yet above the Venom and Malignity of Evils: To be filled with Joy, and Strength, and Confidence; to ride triumphant under the Protection of the Divine Favour, and see the Sea of Life, swell and toss it self in vain, in vain threaten the Bark it cannot fink, in vain invade the Cable it cannot burst. One would think, that to Man, who lives all his Life long in Bondage for fear of Death, it should be a furprizing Delight to see Death lie gasping at his Feet, naked and impotent, without Sting, without Terror: One would, finally, think, that to Man, who lives rather by Hope than Enjoyment, it should not be necessary to prove, that the Christian's Hope, whose Confidence is greater, its Objects more glorious, and its Success more certain than that of any worldly Fancy or Project, is full of Pleasure; and that it is a delightful Prospect to see the Heavens opened, and Jesus, our Jesus, our Prince and Saviour, sitting at the Right Hand of God. Thus Thus I have, I think, sufficiently made out the Subserviency of Perfection to the Happiness of this present Life, which was the thing proposed to be done in this Chapter. Nor can I imagine what Objections can be sprung to invalidate what I have said; unless there be any thing of Colour in these Two.

1. To reap the Pleasure, will some one fay, which you have described here, it requires fomething of an exalted Genius, fome Compass of Understanding, some Sagacity and Penetration. To this I answer, I grant indeed that some of those Pleasures which I have reckoned up as belonging to the Perfect Man, demand a Spirit raised a little above the Vulgar: But the richest Pleasures, not the most Polished and Elevated Spirits, but the most Devout and Charitable Souls are best capable of. Such are the Peace and Tranquillity which arises from the Conquest and Reduction of all inordinate Affections; the Satisfaction which accompanies a fincere and vigorous Discharge of Duty, and our Reflections upon it; the Security and Rest which flows from Self-resignation, and Confidence in the Divine Protection: And lastly, the Joy that springs from the full Assurance of Hope..

But 2dly, It may be objected, 'Tis true all these things seem to hang together well enough in Speculation; but when we come

to examine the Matter of Fatt, we are almost tempted to think, that all which you have said to prove the ways of Wisdom, ways of Pleasantness, and all her paths Peace, amounts to no more than a pretty Amusement of the Mind, and a Visionary Scheme of Happiness. For how few are there, if any, who feel all this to be Truth, and experiment the Pleasure you talk of? How few are they in whom we can discover any Signs of this Spiritual Joy, or Fruits of a Divine Tranquillity or Security? I anfwer, in a word, The Examples of a perfect and mature Vertue are very few; Religion runs very low, and the Love of God and Goodness in the Bosoms of most Christians fussers such an Allay and Mixture, that it is no Wonder at all, if so imperfect a State breed but very weak and imperfect Hopes, very faint and doubtful Joys. But I shall have Occasion to examine the Force of this Objection more fully, when I come to the Obstacles of Perfection.

CHAP. V.

Of the Attainment of Perfection: With a particular Account of the Manner, or the several Steps, by which Man advances or grows up to it: With three Remarks to make this Discourse more Useful, and to free it from some Scruples.

Have in the First, Second, and Third Chapters explain'd the Notion of Religious Pèrsetion. In the Fourth Chapter I have infisted on two Effects of it, Assurance and Pleasure: My Method therefore now leads me to the Attainment of Persection. Here I will do Two Things. 1st, I will trace out the several Steps and Advances of the Christian towards it, and draw up, as it were, a short History of his Spiritual Progress, from the very Infancy of Vertue, to its Maturity and Manhood. 2dly, I will discourse briefly of the Motives and Means of Persection.

Of the Christian's Progress towards Perfection.

Many are the Figures and Metaphors by which the Scripture describes this; alluding one while to the Formation, Nourishment, and Growth of the Natural Man; another while to that of Plants and Vegetables:

One while to the dawning and increasing Light, that shines more and more to the perfect Day. Another while to that Succession of Labours and Expectations which the Husbandman runs thro' from Ploughing to the Harvest. But of all the Similies which the Spirit makes use of to this End, there is one especially that seems to me to give us the truest, and the liveliest Image of the Change of a Sinner into a Saint. The Scripture represents Sin as a State of Bondage, and Righteousness as a State of Liberty; and teaches us, that by the fame Steps by which an enflaved and oppressed People arrive at their Secular, by the very same does the Christian at his Spiritual Liberty and Happiness.

First then, As soon as any Judgment or Mercy, or any other sort of Call, awakens and penetrates the Sinner; as soon as a clear Light breaks in upon him, and makes him see and consider his own State, he is presently agitated by various Passions, according to his different Guilt and Temper, or the different Calls and Motives by which he is wrought upon: One While Fear, another while Shame; one While Indignation, another While Hope, fills his Soul: He resents the Tyranny, and complains of the Persecution of his Lusts; he upbraids himself with his Folly, and discovers a Meanness and Shamefulness in his Vices, which he did

not reflect on sufficiently before; he is vex'd and troubled at the Plagues and Mischiefs his Sin and Folly have already procured him, and thinks he has Reason to fear, if he persist, others far more intolerable. Then he calls to mind the Goodness, the Long-suffering of God, the Love of Fesus, the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power; and how distant soever he be from Vertue, he discerns there is a Beauty and Pleasure in it; and cannot but judge the Righteous happy. These Thoughts, these Travels of the Mind, if they be not strangled in the Birth by a Man's own Wilfulness or Pusillanimity, or unhappily diverted upon some Temptations, do kindle in the Bosom of the Sinner, the Desires of Righteousness and Liberty; they fill him with Regret and Shame, cast him down, and humble him before God, and make him finally resolve on shaking off the Yoke. This may be called a State of Illumination; and is a State of Preparation for, or Disposition to Repentance: Or if it be Repentance it self, 'tis yet but an Embrio: To perfect it, 'tis necessary,

Secondly, That the Sinner make good his Resolutions, and actually break with his Lusts, he must reject their Sollicitations, and boldly oppose their Commands; he must take part with Reason and Religion,

keep

keep a Watch and Guard over his Soul, and must earnestly labour by Mortification and Discipline, by Meditation and Prayer to root out Vice, and plant Vertue in his Soul. This in the Language of the Prophet is ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well, Isa. 1. 16, 17. He that has proceeded thus far, though he feel a great Conflict within; though the Opposition of Lust be very strong, and consequently the Discharge of his Duty very difficult, he is nevertheless in a State of Grace, but in a State of Childhood too; he is sincere, but far from being perfect. And yet this is the State which many continue in to the End of their Lives, being partly abused by false Notions, and taught to believe from Rom. 7. that there is no higher or perfecter State; partly intangled and incumbered by fome unhappy Circumstances of Life: Or, it may be, the Force or Impetus of the Soul towards Perfection, is much abated by the Satisfaction of Prosperity, and the many Diversions and Engagements of a Fortunate Life: But he that will be Perfect, must look upon this State as the Beginning of Vertue. For it must be remember'd, that a stubborn and powerful Enemy will not be fubdued and totally brought uuder in a Moment. The Christian therefore must prosecute this War till he has finished it; I will not fay by

extirpating, but disabling the Enemy. But here I would have it well observ'd, that the reducing the Enemy to a low Condition, is not always effected by an uninterrupted feries of Victories; for feldom is any so fortunate, or so brave, so wise, or so watchful, as to meet with no check in the long course of a difficult War; 'tis enough if he be not discourag'd, but instructed and awaken'd by it. And to prevent any fatal Difaster, two Errors must carefully be avoided. First, A hasty and fond confidence in our selves, with an over-weening Contempt and Neglect of the Enemy: And next, all false and cowardly Projects of Truces and Accommodations: Nor is the fitting down content with poor and low Attainments very far removed from this latter. This is the second Stage of the Christian's Advance toward Perfection; and may be call'd the State of Liberty. The third and last, which now follows, is the State of Zeal, or Love, or as Mystick Writers delight to call it, the State of Union.

The Yoke of Sin being once shaken off, the Love of Righteousness, and a delight in it, is more and more increased: And now the Man proceeds to the last Round in the Scale of Perfection. The Wisdom, Courage, and Vigour of a Convert, is generally at first employed in subduing his Corruptions, in conquering his ill Habits;

and

and defeating his Enemies; in watching over his own Heart, and guarding himself against Temptations. But this being once done, he is in full Liberty to pursue the Works of Peace and Love. Now he may advance from necessary to voluntary Acts of Self-denial, which before would have been putting new wine into old bottles, contrary to the Advice of our Master, Mat. 9.17. Now he may enlarge his Knowledge, and exchange the milk of the word for strong meat, for the Wisdom and the Mysteries of it: Now he may extend his Watchfulness, his Care; and whereas they were before wisely, for the most part, confined to his own Safety, he may now, like our Saviour, go about doing good, Act. 10.38. protecting, strengthning, and rescuing his weak Brethren; propagating the Faith, and inflaming the Bosoms of Men with the Love of Jesus and his Truths. Now, in a word, he may give himself up to a Life of more exalted Contemplation, Purity and Charity, which will be natural and easy now, though it were not so in the beginning. And this Life is accompanied with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; with Confidence and Pleasure: Now the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light; now he rejoices with joy unspeakable, and hopes full of glory. Now 'tis not so much he that lives, as Christ that lives in him: For the life which he now leads, is intirely

tirely the product of Faith and Love; and his greatest Business is to maintain the Ground which he has got, and to hold fast the Stedfastness of his Hope unto the end.

To render this short Account of the Growth of Virtue, from its very Seed to Maturity, the more useful, and to free it from some Scruples, which it may otherwise give occasion to; I will here add two or three Remarks. 1. That the State and Habit of Perfection, is a different Thing from fome sudden Flights, or Efforts of an extraordinary Paffion; and so is the fixt and establish'd Tranquillity of the Mind, from some sudden Guits, and short-liv'd Fits of spiritual Joy. No Man attains to the Habits of Virtue and Pleasure but by degrees; and the natural Method and Order by which he advances to either, is that which I have fet down. But as to some Sallies of the most pure and exalted Passions, as to short-liv'd Fits of Perfection, as to tranfient Tastes, short and sudden Transports of spiritual Pleasure, it is very often otherwise. God fometimes, either to allure the Frailty of a new Convert, or to fortify his Resolution against some hazardous Trial, does raife him to an extraordinary Heighth, by more than usual Communications of his bleffed Spirit; and ravishes him by some Glances, as it were, of the Beatifick Vision. G 2 Raptures 84

Raptures of Love, the melting Tenderness of a pious Sorrow, the Strength of Refolution and Faith, the Confidence and Exultancy of Assurance, do sometimes accompany some fort of Christians in the beginnings of Righteousness, or in the State of Illumination. Where the Conviction is full, the Imagination lively, and the Paffions tender, it is more easy to gain Perfe-Etion, than to preserve it. When a profligate Sinner in the day of God's Power is Inatch'd like a Firebrand out of the Fire, rescued by some amazing and surprizing Call, like Ifrael by Miracles out of Egypt; I wonder not, if fuch a one loves much, because much has been forgiven him; I wonder not if he be swallowed up by the deepest and the liveliest Sense of Guilt and Mercy; I wonder not, if fuch a one endeavour to repair his past Crimes by Heroick Acts, if he make haste to redeem his lost time by a Zeal and Vigilance hard to be imitated, never to be parallel'd by others. Hence we read of Judah's love in the day of her espousals, Jer. 2. 2. And of the first love of the Church of Ephesus, Rev. 2. 4. as the most perfect. And in the first times of the Gospel, when Men were converted by astonishing Miracles; when the Presence and Example of Jesus and his Followers; when the Perspicuity and Authority, the Spirit and Power, the Lustre and Surprize

of the Word of Life and Salvation dazzled, over-power'd and transported the Minds of Men, and made a thorough Change in a Moment; and when again, no Man professed Christianity, but he expected by his Sufferings and Martyrdom to feal the Truth of his Profession; I wonder not if Vertue ripened fast under such miraculous Influences of Heaven; or if Assurance sprung up in a Moment from these bright Proofs of an unshaken Integrity. But we, who live in colder Climates: who behold nothing in so clear and bright a Light as those happy Souls did, must be content to make Thorter and slower Steps towards Perfectiou, and fatisfy our felves with a natural not miraculous Progress. And we, whose Vertues are so generally under grown, and out Tryals no other than common ones, have no reason to expect the Joys of a Perfect Assurance, till we go on to Perfection.

2dly, As Perferction is a Work of Time, fo is it of great Expence and Cost too; I mean, 'tis the Essect of much Labour and Travel, Self-denial and Watchfulness, Resolution and Constancy. Many are the Dangers which we are to encounter thro' our whole Progress towards it; Why essect who exhorted, to learn to do good? To perfect holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. 7. 1, 2. To be renewed in the spirit of our minds from day to day, Eph. 4. 23. To God.

watch, stand fast, to quit us like men, to be strong, I Cor. 16. 13. To take to us the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil; and when we have done all, to stand, Eph. 6.11, 13. To use all diligence to make our calling and election sure, 2 Pet 1. 10. and such like? Nay, which is very remarkable, these and the like Exhortations were addressed to Christians in those Times, which had manifold Advantages above these of ours. If I should fay, That the Spirit of God, the fanctifying Grace of God, was then pour'd forth in more plentiful Measures than even after, not only Scripture, as I think, but Reason too, would be on my Side. The Interest of the Church of Christ required it; Sanctity being as necessary as Miracles to convert the Jew and the Gentile. But besides this, the then wonderful and furprizing Light of the Gospel, the Presence of Jesus in the Flesh, or of those who had been Eye-wirnesses of his Glory; a Croud of wondrous Works and Miracles, the Expectation of terrible Things, Temporal and Eternal Judgments at the Door, and an equal Expectation of glorious ones too. All these Things breaking in, beyond Expectation, upon a Jewish and Pagan World, overwhelm'd before by thick Darkness, and whose Abominations were too notorious to be conceal'd, and too detestable

testable to be excused or defended, could not but produce a very great and fudden Change. Now therefore, if in these Times, many did start forth in a Moment fit for Baptism and Martyrdom; if many amongst these were suddenly changed, justified and crowned, I wonder not. This was a Day of Power, a Day of Glory wherein God afferted Himself, exalted his Son, and rescued the World by a stretched out hand. I should not therefore from hence be induced to expect any thing like at this Day. But yet if notwithstanding all this, Christians in those happy Times, amidst so many Advantages, stood in need of such Exhortations, what do not we in these Times? If so much Watchfulness, Prayer, Patience, Fear, Abstinence, and earnest Contention became them, when God as it were bowed the heavens, and came down and dwelt among st men; what becomes us in these Days, in the Dregs of Time, when God stands as it were aloof off, to fee what will be our latter End, retired behind a Cloud, which our Herefies and Infidelities, Schisms and Divisions, Sins and Provocations have raised? To conclude, He that will be Perfect must not sit like the lame Man by Bethefda's Pool, expecting till some Angel come to cure him; but, like our Lord, he must climb the Mount, and pray, and then he may be transformed; he may be raised as much

much above the moral Corruption of his Nature by Perfection, as our Saviour was above the Meannels and Humility of his Body, by his glorious Transfiguration. These Two Observations are of manifold Use. For many expect Pleasure when they have no Right to it; they would reap, before Vertue be grown up and ripen'd; and being more intent upon the Fruit of Duty, than the Discharge of it, they are frequently disappointed and discouraged. Others there are, who mistaking some Fits and Flashes of spiritual Joy for the habitual Peace and Pleasure of Perfection, do entertain too early Considences, and instead of perfecting holines in the fear of God, they decline, or it may be, fall away through Negligence and Security; or, which is as bad, the Duties of Religion grow tasteless and insipid to them for want of that Pleasure which they ignorantly or prefumptuoufly expect should constantly attend 'em: And so they are disheartened or disgusted, and give back; which they would never do, if they did rightly understand, that Perfection is a Work of Time; that a fettled Tranquillity, an habitual Joy of Spirit, is the Fruit only of Perfection; and that those short Gleams of Joy, which break in upon new Converts, and sometimes on other impersect Christians, do depend upon extraordinary Circumstances, or are peculiar Favours of Heaven.

Heaven. Lastly, there are many, who have entertained very odd Fancies about the Attainment of Perfection; they talk and act as if Perfection were the Product, not of Time and Experience, but an Instant; as if it were to be infused in a Moment, not acquired; as if it were a meer Arbitrary Favour, not the Fruit of Meditation and Discipline. 'Tis true, it cannot be doubted by a Christian, but that Perfection derives it felf from Heaven; and that the Seed of it is the Grace of God: Yet it is true too. and can as little be doubted by any one who confults the Gospel, and the Experience of the best Men, that we must watch, and pray, and contend, labour, and persevere, and that loog too, ere we can attain it. And whoever fancies himself rapt up into the third Heaven on a sudden, will find himself as suddenly let down to the Earth again; if he do not use his utmost Diligence to fortify his Resolutions, to cherish the New-born Flame, and to guard and improve his Vertues.

3dly, It may be Objected against the Account I have given of the Growth of Vertue, that when I come to the Maturity of it, my Colours are too bright, my Strokes too bold, and the Form I have given it too Divine. For you describe it, will one say, as if Man, now grown Perfect, had nothing to do, but to enjoy God, and him-

felf;

felf; as if he were already entered into reft, and did actually sit down with Christ in heavenly places; as if, in a word, Vertue were no longer his Task, but Pleasure; as if he had nothing to do but to rejoice continually, nothing further to press after, nothing to combat, nothing to contend with: Whereas the Fathers generally, and all Judicious Modern Writers seem to place Perfection in nothing higher, than in a perpetual Progress towards it; they look upon Life as a perpetual Warfare, and utterly deny any such Height or Eminence as is rais'd above Clouds and Storms, above Troubles and Temptations. But to this I have feveral Things to fay, which will clear my Sense about this Matter, and dispelall Objections. First, I have described the last Stage of the Christian's Spiritual Progress, which I call a State of Zeal, and in which I suppose the Christian to commence Perfect; this, I fay, I have described in the fame manner, and, as near as I could, in the same Words which the Scripture does. Secondly, I do not pretend any where to affert, That there is any State in this Life raised above Trials and Temptations. Alas! the most Perfect Man will find it Work enough to make good the Ground he has gain'd, and maintain the Conquest he has won; much Watchfulness and Labour, much Humility and Fear, and many other other Vertues are necessary to Perseverance in a State of Perfection. Thirdly, As the World now goes, and indeed ever did, Perfection is a State we arrive at very late; and all the Way to it full of Labour and Travel, full of Dangers and Difficulties; so that upon this Account, the Life of Man may well enough be faid to be a perpetual Warfare. But, Fourthly, I do by no means affirm, That the Perfect Man is incapable of Growth and Improvement. Of this I shall have Occasion to unfold my Sense more fully afterwards. In the mean time I cannot forbear observing here, that there is a great Difference between the Growth of an Imperfect and a Perfect Christian; for supposing Grace to be always increasing, and the very Maturity of Vertue to admit of Degrees; yet the Marks and Distinctions of fuch different Degrees are so nice and delicate, that the Advances of the Perfect Man are scarcely perceptible to himself, without the closest and strictest Enquiry, much less can they fall under the Observation of others. The first Change of a Sinner from Darkness to Light, from Vice to Vertue, from an Aversion for God and Goodness, to a Sincere, though not a Perfect Love of both, is very palpable: So again, The Change from a State of Weakness and Inconstancy, to one of Strength; of Conflict and Difficulty, to one of Ease and Liberty;

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of Fear and Doubt, to one of Confidence and Pleasure, is little less evident than fenfible. But the several Degrees of Growth afterwards, the Improvements, whatever they be, of a mature State, are of another Nature, not confisting in a Change, but Addition; and that made insensibly. Here therefore, the Perfett Man, in order to maintain the Peace and Pleasure of his Mind, need not enter into a Nice and Scrupulous Examination of the Degrees and Measures of his Vertues; 'tis sufficient that he make good his Post; 'tis enough if he follow the Advice of St. Paul, 1 Cor. 15. 58. If he be stedfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the Work of the Lord.

CHAP. VI.

Of the Means of Perfection. Five general Observations, serving for Directions in the Use of Gospel-Means, and Instrumental-Duties. 1. The Practice of Wisdom and Vertue, is the best way to improve and strengthen both. 2. The Two general and immediate Instruments, as of Conversion, so of Perfection too, are the Gospel and the Spirit. 3. The natural and immediate Fruit of Meditation, Prayer, Eucharist, Psalmody, and good Conversation or Friend-

Friendship, is, the quickening and enlivening the Conscience, the fortifying and confirming our Resolutions, and the raising and keeping up an Heavenly Frame of Spirit. 4. The immediate Ends of Discipline, are the subduing the Pride of the Heart, and the reducing the Appetites of the Body. 5. Some Kinds of Life are better suited to the great Ends of Religion and Vertue, than others.

Hould I infift particularly on every one of the Means or Instruments of Perfection, it would lead me through the whole System of Religion; it would oblige me to treat of all the Articles of our Faith, and all the Parts of Moral Righteousness. For the Vertues of the Gospel do all afford mutual Support and Nourishment to one another; and mutually minister to their own Growth and Strength. And Prayer and the Lord's Supper, not to mention Meditation, Psalmody, Conversation, Discipline, are founded upon the Belief of all the Mysteries of our Religion; and confist in the Exercise of almost all Christian Graces, as Repentance, Faith, Hope, Charity: But this would be an endless Task. I purpose therefore here only to lay down some few General Observations, which may ferve for Directions in the Use of Gospel-Means, point out the End we are to aim at, and enable us to reap the utmost Benefit from them.

§. 1. The Practice of Wisdom and Vertue, is the best way to improve and strengthen both. This is a Proposition almost Self-evident: For besides that, it is acknowledged on all Hands, that the frequent Repetition of fingle Acts of Vertue, is the natural Way to arrive at an Habit of it; the Practice of Vertue gives a Man great Boldness towards God, mingles Joy and Pleasure in all his Addresses to him, purifies and enlightens the Mind, and entitles him to more plentiful Measures of Grace, and higher Degrees of Favour. If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free, Joh. 8. 31, 32. To him that hath, shall be given, and be shall have more abundance, Matth. 13. 12. If this be so, as undoubtedly it is, it is plain, That we ought not to be fond of fuch a Solitude or Retirement, as cuts off the Opportunity of many Vertues, which may be daily practifed in a more publick and active Life. The true Anchorite, or Hermite, was at first little better than a Pious Extravagant: I will not fay how much worse he is now. Meditation and Prayer are excellent Duties; but Meekness and Charity, Mercy and Zeal, are

not one jot inferior to them. The World is an excellent School to a good Christian; the Follies and the Miseries, the Tryals and Temptations of it, do not only exercise and employ our Vertue, but cultivate and improve it: They afford us both Instruction and Discipline, and naturally advance us on towards solid Wisdom, and a well-fettled Power over our felves. 'Tis our own Fault if every Accident that befals us, and every one whom we converse with; do not teach us somewhat; occasion some wise Reflection, or inkindle some Pious Affection in us. We do not reflect on our Words and Actions, we do not observe the Motions of our own Hearts as diligently as we ought; we make little or no Application of what we see or hear, nor learn any thing from the Wisdom and the Vertue, the Folly and the Madness of Man, and the Consequences of both: And so we neither improve our Knowledge, nor our Vertue, but are the same to Day we were Testerday, and Life wastes away in common Accidents, and customary Actions, with as little Alteration in us, as in our Affairs: Whereas, were we mindful, as we ought, of our true Interest, and desirous to reap some spiritual Benefit from every thing, the Vertues of Good Men would inkindle our Emulation, and the Folly and Madness of Sinners would confirm our Abhorrence forSin; from one we should learn Content, from another Industry; here we should see a Charm in Meekness and Charity, there in Humility; in this Man we should see Reason to admire Discretion, and Command of himself; in that Courage and Constancy, Assiduity, and Perseverance: Nor would it be less useful to us, to observe, how Vanity exposes one, and Peevishness torments another; how Pride and Ambition embroil a third, and how hateful and contemptible Avarice renders a fourth; and to trace all that Variety of Ruin, which Lust and Prodigality, Disor-

der and Sloth, leave behind them.

And as this kind of Observations will fill us with solid and useful Knowledge, so will a diligent Attention to the Rules of Righteousness, and Discretion in all the common and daily Actions of Life, enrich us with true Vertue. Religion is not to be confin'd to the Church, and to the Closet, nor to be exercised only in Prayers and Sacraments, Meditations and Alms; but every where, we are in the Presence of God, and every Word, every Action, is capable of Morality. Our Defects and Infirmities betray themselves in the daily Accidents and the common Conversation of Life; and here they draw after them very important Consequences; and therefore here they are to be watched over, regulated and governed; is well as in our more solemn Actions: 'Tis to the Vertues or the Errors of our common Conversation and ordinary Deportment, that we owe both our Friends and Enemies, our good or bad Character abroad, our Domestick Peace or Troubles; and in a high Degree, the Improvement or Depravation of our Minds. Let no Man then, that will be Perfect or Happy, abandon simfelf to his Humours or Inclinations in nis Carriage towards his Acquaintance, his Children, his Servants: Let no Man, that will be Perfect or Happy, follow Prejudice or Fashion in the common and customary Actions of Life: But let him assure himelf, that by a daily Endeavour to conform hese more and more to the excellent Rules of the Gospel, he is to train up himself by Degrees to the most absolute Wisdom, and he most Perfett Vertue, he is capable of. And to this end he must first know himself, nd those he has to do with; he must disern the proper Season and the just Occaion of every Vertue; and then he must pply himself to the acquiring the Persection of it by the daily Exercise of it, even in hose Things which, for want of due Relection, do not commonly seem of any great importance. To one that is thus dispos'd, he Dulness or the Carelessness of a Servant; the Stubbornness of a Child, the Sourness of a Parent, the Inconstancy of Friends, the Cold#

Coldness of Relations, the Neglect or Ingratitude of the World, will all prove extreamly useful and beneficial; every thing will instruct him, every thing will afford an Opportunity of exercising some Vertue or another; so that such a one shall be daily learning, daily growing better and wiser.

§. 2. The two great Instruments, not of Regeneration only, but also of Perseverance and Perfection, are the Word and the Spirit of God. This no Man doubts that is a Christian: And therefore I will not go about to prove it: Nor will I at present discourse of the Energy and Operation of the one, and the other; or examine what each is in its self, or wherein the one differs from the other. 'Tis abundantly enough, if we be assured that the Gospel and the Spirit are proper and sufficient Means to attain the great Ends I have mentioned, namely, our Conversion and Perfection. And that they are so, is very plain from those Texts which do expresly affert, That the Gospel contains all those Truths that are necessary to the clear Exposition of our Duty, or to the moving and obliging us to the Practice of it. And that the Spirit implies a Supply of all that supernatural Strength, be it what it will, that is necessary to enable us not only to will, but to do that which the Gospel convinces us to be our Duty. Such

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are, Rom. 1. 2. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Cor. 12. 9. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. I Pet. I. 5. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. 'Tis needless to multiply Texts on this Occasion, otherwise it were very easy to shew, That all things necessary to Life and Godliness, are contain'd in the Word and Spirit; that whatever is necessarily to be wrought in us to prepare us for, or entitle us to Eternal Salvation, is ascribed to the Gospel and the Spirit. This Truth then being unquestionable, That the Gospel and the Spirit are the two great Instruments of Perfection; we may from hence infer two Rules, which are of the most universal Use, and of the most powerful Efficacy in the Pursuit of Perfection. 1. We cannot have too great a Value, too great a Passion for the Book of God; nor fix our Thoughts and Hearts too earnestly upon the Truths of H 2

it. We must imitate the Thessalonians, in Behalf of whom St. Paul thanks God, because when they received the word of God which they heard of him, they received it not as the word of men; but as it is in truth, the word of God, 1 Thest. 2. 13. that is, we must entertain the Gospel, as that which has Infallible Truth in all its Doctrines, uncontroulable Authority in all its Precepts, a Divine Certainty in all its Promises and Threats, and a Divine Wisdom in all its Counsels and Directions: And he that thus believes will certainly find the Gospel to work effectually in him, as it did in the Thessalonians. What Light and Beauty will he discern in all its Descriptions of our Duty! What Force in all its Perfuafions! What Majesty, what Dignity, what Life, what Power, what Confolation, what Support! In one Word, What Heavenly Vertue will he discern in each Part of it, and what valt and unfathomable Wisdom in the whole Composure and Contrivance of it! How will he then admire it, how will he love it, how will he study it, how will he delight in it! How will he be transported by the Promises, and awed by the Threats of it! How will he be pierced and struck through by those Exaggerations of Sin, and captiv'd and enamour'd by those lively and divine Descriptions of Vertue he meets in it! How will he adore the GoodGoodness of God, conspicuous in our Relemption! How will he be inflam'd with he Love of Jesus, and be amazed at his Condescension and Humility! This and nuch more is the natural Effect of our reeiving the Gospel as we ought, and ponlering the Truths of it with devout and acessant Meditation. This the Royal Psalnist was abundantly sensible of, Thy word ave I hid in my heart, that I might not line gainst thee, Psal. 119. 11. Thou through thy ommandments hast made me wiser than mine nemies: for they are ever with me. I have nore understanding than all my teachers: for by testimonies are my meditation, Ver. 981 To which I might add many other Verses but of that Pfalm, containing the various nd mighty Effects of the Word of God. Nor will any one think that I attribute oo much to the Study of this Word of Life, vho shall consider that it is one of the great Works of the Holy Spirit, to incline our earts to the testimonies of God, to write his aws in our hearts, to dispose us to attend to evealed Truths; and, in one Word, to fix our Minds and Thoughts upon them, . Since the Spirit, together with the Ganel, is a joint Principle of Regeneration ind Perfection, 'tis manifest, that we ought o live in a continual Dependance upon God. He must be our Hope and Considence in the Day of Tryal: He must be our Praise Praise and Boast in the Day of Victory, and in the Day of Peace: When we lie down, and when we rise up, we must say with the Psalmist, 'Tis thou, Lord, that makest me dwell in safety, Psal. 4. 8. We must look upon our felves as furrounded by Enemies, and besieged by Spiritual Dangers, as Da vid was by Temporal: And as he in the one, fo must we in the other, expect Strength and Salvation from Him. Through God we shall do valiantly, for he it is that shall treat down our enemies, Psal. 60. 12. Many nations compass me round about; but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. And when we have conquer'd Temptations, and routed the Powers of Darkness, we must ascribe all, not to our own Strength, nor to our own Watchfulness, but to the Grace and the Power of God. If the Lord himself had not been on our side, now may Israel say; if the Lord himself had not been on our side, when the Legions of Hell combined with the World and Flesh against us, they had swallowed us up alive, Pfal. 124. 1, 2, 3. Now, many will be the happy Effects of this Dependance upon God; we shall be passionately desirous of his Presence, of his Grace and Favour; we shall dress and prepare our Souls, we shall awaken and dispose all our Faculties to receive him; we shall ever do the things that may invite and prevail with him to abide with us; we shall be apprehensive of his forfak-

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ing us, as the greatest Evil that can befal us. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in: Awake, O my Soul, raise thy self above this World and Flesh, that thou mayest be fit for the King of glory to dwell in thee: Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battel; that Holy Spirit that subdues our Enemies, that strengthens us with Might, and fills us with Courage and holy Alacrity, Pfal. 24. 7, 8. Nor does the Pfalmist prepare his Soul for God by Meditation only, and Spiritual Recollection and Soliloquies; but by a careful and circumspect Regulation of all his Actions, Pfal. 101. 2, 3. I will behave my self wisely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will let no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not clear to me. And how earnestly does he pray against God's forsaking him? Psal. 51. 11. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me. The Result of all this, must needs be Stedfastness and Growth in Holiness and Goodness. For, First, This is the natural Influence of fuch a Dependance upon God; it places us as always before Him, and makes us walk humbly and circumfpectly, as becomes those that are awed by the H 4 PrePresence of so Holy a Majesty: I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved, Pfal. 16. 1. Secondly, We cannot doubt but that God will plentifully bestow his Grace on those, who thus rely upon him. For where can He bestow it with more Advantage to his Glory, or to the Propagation of Holiness; both which are so dear to him? Who is a Subject more capable of it, or who can be better entitled to it, than he who thus depends upon God? As he begs it Humbly, and receives it thankfully; fo he will Husband it carefully, and employ it zealously.

§. 3. In Prayer, Meditation, and other Instrumental Duties of Religion, we are to aim at one or all of these three Things.

1. The Quickening and Enlivening the Conscience. 2. The confirming and strengthening our Resolutions of Obedience. 3. The Raising and Keeping up Holy and Devout Affections. Great is the Benefit of each of these. Tenderness of Conscience will keep us not only from Evil, but every Appearance of it; Increase of Spiritual Strength, will render us stedfast and unmoveable in all the Works of God; and Holy Passion will make us abound in them. To spiritual Passion we owe the Zeal and Pleasure; to spiritual Strength or Liberty, the Constancy

stancy and Uniformity of an Holy Life; and both Strength and Passion are generally owing to a Tender and Enlightened Conscience. For while the Conscience preferves a quick and nice Sense of good and evil, all the great Truths of the Gospel will have their proper Force, and natural Efficacy upon us. These then are the Genuine Fruits of Meditation, the Eucharist, Pfalmody, and fuch like. If they do not add Life and Light to the Conscience; if they do not augment our Strength, nor exalt our Passions; if they do not encrease our Detestation of Sin, and our Love to God and Goodness; if they do not quicken and excite devout Purposes; if they do not engage and refresh the Soul by Holy Joy and Heavenly Pleasure; if, I say, they do not in some Degree or other promote these Things, we reap no Benefit at all from them, or we can never be certain that we do. But though the Ends I have mention'd, be of this great Use to all, and confequently all are obliged to aim at them, yet may the different Defects and Inperfections of different Christians, render one of these Ends more necessary than another; and by Consequence, it will be Wisdom more immediately and directly to intend and pursue that. For Example; If a Man's Temper be such, that his Passions do soon kindle, and foon die again; that he is apt

106 Of the Attainment of Perfection.

to form wife and great Projects, and as unapt to accomplish any thing; in this Case, it will be his Duty to aim especially at the Increase of Strength. But if on the other Hand, a Man's Temper be cold and phlegmatick, flow and heavy; it it but fit that he should particularly apply himfelf to the awakening and exciting Devout Affections in his Soul. For as excellent Purpoles do often miscarry for want of Constancy and Firmness of Mind; So Steadiness and Firmness of Mind doth feldom effect any great matter, when it wants Life and Passion to put it into Motion. Again, if one's past Lise has been very Sinful, or the present be not very fruitful, it will behove such a one to encrease the Tenderness of Conscience, to add more Light and Life to its Convictions; that by a daily Repetition of Contrition and Compunction, he may wash off the Stain, or by the Fruitfulness of his following Life, repair the Barrenness of that past. Having thus in few Words, both made out the Usefulness of those three Ends I proposed to a Christian in the Performance of Instrumental Duties of Religion, and shewed in what Cases he may be obliged to aim more immediately at one than another; I will now enquire, and that as briefly as I can, how these three Ends may be secured and promoted.

1 st, Of Tenderness of Conscience, or the full

and lively Convictions of it.

To promote this, the first Thing necesfary is Meditation. No Man, who diligently searches and studies the Book of God, can be a Stranger to himself, or to his Duty. Not to his Duty; for this Book reveals the whole Will of God in clear and full Terms; it gives us such infallible Characters of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, as render our Ignorance or Error inexcusable: It points out the great Ends of Life so plainly, and conducts us to them by such general and unerring Rules, that there is no Variety of Circumstances can so perplex and ravel our Duty, but that an honest Man by the Help of this may eafily discover it. For this Reason 'tis, that the Word of God is called Light, because it does distinguish between Good and Evil, Right and Wrong; and like a Lamp does manifest the Path which we are to chuse, and disperses that Mist and Darkness, with which the Lust of Man, and the Subtilty of Hell has covered it. And for this Reason'tis, that the Good have such a Value, and the Wicked such an Aversion for the Book of God. For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds (hould be reproved. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought

wrought in God, John 3. 20, 21. Nor can he that studies the Word of God, be a Stranger to Himself any more than to his Duty. For this Light ranfacks all the Recesses of the Soul; it traces all its Affections back to their first Springs and Sources; it lays open all its Desires and Projects, and strips its most fecret Purposes of all their Disguise: For the word of God is quick and powerful, and (harper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, Heb. 4. 12. In a Word, If we would preserve the Conscience quick and sensible, we must be daily conversant in the Book of God. For this commands with that Authority, instructs with that Clearness, persuades with that Force, reproves with that Purity, Prudence, and Charity, that we shall not easily be able to resist it; it describes Righteousness and Sin in such true and lively Colours, proclaims Rewards and Punishments in fuch powerful and moving Language, that it rouzes even the Dead in Sin, penetrates and wounds the Stupid and Obdurate.

To Meditation we must add Prayer. For this is a very proper and essential Means to refresh and renew in the Soul, the Hatred of Sin, and Love of Goodness; and to improve those Impressions which Meditation has made upon it. We cannot easily put up Petitions to God with Confidence, unless we do the Things that please him; for our Hearts will misgive us, and our very Petitions will reproach us: And the meer Thought of entring more immediately into the Presence of God, does oblige us to a more careful Tryal and Examination of our Actions. For God being not only Omniscient, but Just and Holy too, we can no more flatter our felves with the Hope of Pardon for any Sin into which we are betray'd by Fondness or Negligence, than we can imagine him ignorant of it. But this is not all; we are to pray, that God would enable us to fearch out and discover our own Hearts. Psal. 139. 23, 24. Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. And if we do this fincerely, God will undoubtedly grant our Requests; and will lay open to us all our present Defects and Infirmities, and Thew us how far short we come of the glory of God: That Perfection of Holiness and Happiness, which many eminent Saints actually arrived at upon Earth. And we may be fure, that Light which breaks in upon our Mind with this Brightness, will not suffer any latent Corruptions to continue undiscovered; nor permit us to forget the Stains and Ruins, which the Sins of our past Life Life have left behind them. Conversation is another Way, by which we learn to know our felves, and by which Conscience is kept awake, and in its Vigour. How convictive, how moving is the Discourse of a Devour and Pious Friend? When he complains, or when he rejoyces; when he relates the History of his own Experience; when he lets us fee the Deligns he has form'd, and the excellent Ends his Soul thirsts after; how does our Heart burn within us? What Variety of Affections does it raise in us, when he makes his Remarks on Human Nature and the World; when he bewails the Dishonour of God and the Decay of Religion amongst us; when he relates the Mifery and Misfortune of Sinners, and obferves the particular Sins and Follies that occasion it? How often does he hereby provoke us to wise Reflections on our selves? How many new Beauties does he discover to us in Vertue? How many Deformities in Sin, which had escaped our Observations? But 'tis not the Conversation only of my Friend; but his Life also, from which I derive, or may do fo, Instruction and Admonition. The Perfections of my Friend, are the gentlest and the mildest, and yer the most awakening Reproofs too of my own Defects; and by the Freshness and Lustre of his Vertue, I discern best the Weakness and the Dimness of my own. How often

often have I been moved to turn my Thoughts with some Indignation on my own Heats and Commotions, while I have admired and blest the Sweetness and the Gentleness, the Softness and the Calm, very conspicuous in an excellent Friend? And when I have heard another Mention his Nightly Praises, and those Divine Thoughts which filled the Intervals of his Sleep, and made those Hours that are so burthensome to some, the most entertaining and delightful Parts of his Rest, how have I been inwardly filled with Confusion and Shame? How have I upbraided and reproached my felf, condemned the Sluggishness of my Days, the Dulness and the Wanderings of my Soul by Night? And I believe every fincere Man must find himself thus affected on the like Occasions. For in this kind of Reproof, which I talk of, there is fomething more of Force and Authority than is to be found in any other; for the Example of Friends, does not only teach us what we are to do, but demonstrates also that it may be done. Nor does Vertue any where appear with fo lovely and charming an Air as in a Friend. But after all, amongst all the Benefits we gain by excellent Friendships, we ought not to reckon this as the least, that it is one, and that an indispensable Office of Friendship, to admonish and reprove: For the reproofs of instruction are the paths of life,

life, Prov. 6. 23. But then, that we may be capable of this Blessing, we must dispose our Minds to expect and bear Reproof: We must strive after an humble and teachable Temper; and we must invite and encourage our Friends to this kindest Office; not only by unaffected Requests, but also by obeying their Advice, pardoning whatever Instrmity may be interspers'd with it, and loving them the better, as indeed they deserve: For there is scarce any better Proof of their Affection, Prudence and Courage, which they are capable

of giving us.

2dly, A Second End of Instrumental Duties is the Increase of Spiritual Strength. Now Spiritual Strength consists in the Power and Dominion we have over our Affections and Actions: And it stands upon two Bases; the Reduction of Sin, and the Growth of Vertue; whatever does weaken and reduce our Propensions to Sin, whatever promotes the Subjection of the Body, adds Power and Authority to the Mind, and renders Vertue more easy and pleasant. And because Vertues have a murual Connexion and Dependance upon one another; therefore whatever promotes any one, promotes all. But especially, whatever ftrengthens our Hope, or quickens our Fear, or enlarges our Knowledge, and encreases our Faith; this does confirm and elta-

stablish our Resolution more than any hing else. Faith is the Root, Fear the Guard, nd Hope the Spur of all our Vertues. Faith onvinces us what is our Duty; Fear makes is impartial, diligent, and watchful; Hope, esolved and active in the Prosecution of . It being thus clear, what our Spiritual trength consists in, it will be easy to disern by what Means we are to gain it. But I can here only suggest those Hints nd Intimations which the Reader must pon Occasion, as he needs, enlarge and

mprove.

i. Meditation is the first Thing necessary. Ve must often survey the Grounds and coundations of our Faith; we must consiler frequently and feriously the Scripture Topicks of Hope and Fear, such are the Death of Jesus, a Judgment to come, the Holiness and Justice, and the Omnipre-ence of God: We must diligently observe he Wiles and Stratagems of Statan, the Arts and Insinuations of the World and Flesh, and mark the Progress of Sin from ts very Beginning to Maturity; and all his with a particular Regard to the Corruption of our own Nature, and the Deeitfulness of our own Hearts. We must often ponder upon the Beauty and Peace of Holiness, the Love of God and of Jesus, the Vertues, Sufferings, and Crowns of Martyrs. And, Finally, If we will encrease

in Strength, we must practise this Duty of Meditation often, and we must not suffer our felves to be withdrawn from it, or be prevail'd with to intermit it on any flight and trivial Pretences. And because we are not always Masters of our own Affairs, nor consequently of our Time; therefore ought we to have ever ready at hand, a good Collection of Texts, which contain, in few Words, the Power and Spirit of Gospel Motives, the Perfection and Beauty of Duties, and the Substance of Advice and Counsel: And to fix these so in our Memory, that they may ferve as a Shield for us to oppose, as our Saviour did, against the Darts of the Devil, and as a Supply of excellent and useful Thoughts upon a sudden: So that in all the little Interruptions of Bufiness, and the many little Vaçancies of the Day, the Mind, which is an active and busy Spirit, may never want a proper Subject to work upon; much less lose in felf in wild and lazy Amusements, or desile it self by vain or vicious Thoughts, But we must not only take care that Medita-tion be frequent, but also that it be not loose and roving. To which end it will be necessary to study our selves as well as the Scriptures, and to be intimately acquainted with the Advantages and Difadvantages of our Constitution, and our State; that so in our Meditations on the Scriptures, Scriptures, we may more particularly have an Eye to those Vices we are most obnoxious to, and those Vertues which are either more necessary, or more feeble and under-

grown.

Next after Meditation must follow Prayer. Great is the Power of Prayer in promoting Christian Strength and Fortitude; whether we consider its Prevalence upon God, or its natural Influence upon our selves. If we consider the latter, what Divine Force and Energy is there in the Confidences of Faith, the Joys of Hope, the earnest Longings and Desires of Love, the tender Sorrows of Contrition, the Delight of Praises and Thanksgivings, the Adorations and Self-depressions of a profound Humility, and the Resolutions and Vows of a perfect Abhorrence of, and Holy Zeal and Indignation against Sin! How do these Things mellow and enrich the Soul! How do they raise it higher and higher above the Corruption which is in the world through lust! How do they renew it daily, and make it a Partaker of the Divine Nature! The Repetition of the same Acts naturally begets an Habit; an Habit is the Strength and Perfection of the Soul; for it is a Disposition ripen'd and confirm'd by Custom. How naturally then must Prayer fortify the Mind, ripen good Dispositions, or add Strength and Perfection to good Habits! Since it is 1 2

nothing else but a repeated Exercise of almost all the Graces of the Gospel, Repentance, Faith, Hope, Charity, and the like: And it ought to be observed, that Prayer gives us a frequent Opportunity of exercifing those Vertues, which we should not otherwise be so often obliged to do. If, Secondly, we enquire into the Prevalence of Prayer with God, we shall have further Reasons yet to resolve, that it is a most effectual Means of encreasing our Spiritual Strength. What will God deny to the Prayer of a Righteous Man? He may deny him temporal Things, because they are not good for him. He may refuse to remove a Temptation, because this is often an Occasion of his own Glory, and his Servant's Reward; but he will never refuse him Grace to conquer it. He will no more deny his Spirit to one that earneftly and fincerely begs it, than the natural Parent will Bread to his hungry and craving Child. And no wonder, fince Grace is as necessary to the spiritual Life as Bread to the natural; the Goodness of God is more tender and compassionate than any Instinct in Human Nature; and the Purity and Perfe-Aion of God more zealously follicitous for the Holiness and Immortality of his Children, than Earthly Parents can be for a fickly perishing Life of theirs. Thus then tis plain, that Prayer contributes wonderfully

fully to the Strengthening and Establishing the Mind of Man in Goodness. But then we must remember, that it must have these two Qualifications; it must be frequent and incessantly importunate. 1. It must be Frequent. I would have this Rule complied with as far as it may, even in our stated, regular, and solemn Addresses to God. But because Business, and several Obligations we lie under to the World, do often press hard upon us, therefore must I give the same Counsel here, which I did before under the Head of Meditation; that is, to have always ready and imprinted in our Memory several Texts of Scripture, containing the most weighty and important Truths, in the most piercing and moving Language; that we may be able to form these on a sudden into Ejaculations, in which our Souls may mount up into Heaven, amidst the Ardours and Transports of Defires and Praise, as the Angel did, in the Flame of Manoah's Sacrifice. 2. Prayer must be incessantly importunate. Importunate it will be, if the Soul be prepar'd and difposed as it ought; that is, if it be disingaged from this World, and possessed intirely with the Belief and earnest Expectation of a better; if it be humbled in it felf, disclaim all Strength and Merit of its own, and rest wholly on the Goodness and All-sufficiency of God. I add Incessantly,

118

cessantly, in Conformity to the Parables of our Lord, Luke 11. 8. and 18. 5. and the αδιαλάπως of the Apostle, 1 Thess. 5. 17. And whoever considers Human Nature well, and remembers how foon pious Motions vanish, and how little they effect, will discern a plain Reason, both for Vehemence and Perseverance in Prayer: For Vehemence, that the Soul may be deeply impresfed by pious Passions; for Perseverance, that fuch Impressions may not be esfaced and obliterated. Nor let any one fancy, That Prayer thus qualified has not a better Influence upon God as well as upon our selves: 'Tis true, God is void of the Painfulness and Defects of Human Passions, but not of the Perfection of Divine ones. Woe were to us, if God were an inflexible, inexorable Deity, and incapable of being wrought upon by the inceffant Importunity of his poor Creatures: Woe were to us, if the Softness and the Tenderness of the Divine Nature, did not infinitely exceed the little Resemblances of it in Man. If, in a Word, God did not abound in Goodness, Mercy, and Compassion, more easily to be moved and excited than those Human Passions that bear some Analogy to them. Next to Conversation with God by Prayer, the Conversation of good Men does wonderfully contribute to the building us up in Faith and Vertue. How does the

Sense and Experience of such as deserve our Esteem and Affection, settle and establish our Judgment when they concur with us! How does their Knowledge enlighten us, their Reason strengthen our Faith, and their Example inflame us with Emulation! A pious Friendship renders Religion it self more engaging: It fanctifies our very Diversions and Recreations, and makes them minister to Vertue; it minds us when we are forgetful, supports and encourages us when we faint and tire, reproves and corrects us when we give back, and recals us into the right Path when we go out of it. This is, or this should be, the Business of Conversation, the End and Advantage of Friendship: We should be often talking together of the Things of God, communicating and laying open the State of our Souls, our Fears, our Hopes, our Improvements and Defects; we should watch over one another, comfort and support one another; our Discourse should always minister new Warmth, or new Strength to our Holy Faith and Love. But among all the Means of Grace, there is no one does so much corroborate and nourish the Soul of Man as the Holy Eucharist. How many wise and impartial Reflections does the Preparation for it occasion? What unfeigned Humility, and what a profound Awe of the Divine Majesty, does a previous Self-Examination beget

beget in us? What a tender Sense of the Divine Love does the Contemplation of the whole Mystery inkindle? What Firmness and Resolution do we derive from fresh Vows and repeated Engagements; and thele offer'd up with fo much Solemnity? And how much, Finally, is the Habit of Holiness improved by that Spiritual Pleasure, which the sensible Assurances of Grace and Salvation work in us, by that Awe and Holy Fear which the whole Action leaves behind on our Minds, and the Zeal, Vigilance, and Circumspection it obliges us to for the Time following? Not to mention here, how the Participation of this Holy Sacrament obliges us to a most solemn Exercife of Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus, of Brotherly Love and Charity, and the Hope of Immortality and Glory. Here, in a Word, we prepare to meet God, as we would do in Death and Judgment; here we make an open Profession of our Holy Faith, renounce the World and Flesh, all our finful or vain Desires; devout our selves to the Service of Jesus; and learn to expect Happiness from nothing elfe, but the Merits and the Imitation of his Cross. So profound is the Wisdom of this Institution, that it evidently speaks God the Author of it, and proclaims the too common Neglect of it in most Parts of this Nation, an inexcusable Sin and Folly.

3. A Third End of Instrumental Duties of Religion, is the Raising and Keeping up Holy and Devout Affections. I know not why Passion is so commonly undervalued and disparaged in Religion, unless they who thus treat it, mean nothing by it, but a short-liv'd and superficial Commotion of the Mind, which leaves no Print or Relish behind it, and is presently succeeded by Sin and Folly. Holy Passion is the Vigour and Strength of the Soul; 'tis the State and Frame of the Mind when it is thoroughly moved and affected. And therefore to form to one's self Religion destitute of Passion, is little better than to content one's felf with one that is lazy, lukewarm, and lifeless. And though there be some Tempers very unapt to be moved, yet 'tis hard to imagine how even these can be wrought up to a Resolution, or that Resolution be supported and continued without their being affected so thoroughly, as to feel either a real Passion, or something very nearly approaching one. 'Tis an excellent Frame of Spirit, when the Soul is easily elevated and transported into Holy Passion: And I find that all those Vertues, or rather Acts of Vertue, which are described to the Life, and which are by all judged most Perfect and Lovely, have most of Passion in them. How Warm and Passionate was the Love of David for his God! What Flame, what

what Vebemence of Defire was he moved by, when he cries out, Pfsl. 42. 1, 2. As the bart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirst. eth for God, for the living God. What awful Concussions and Agitations of Spirit did he feel, when he thus describes his Fear! My stess trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments, Psal. 119. 120. What Afflictions of Soul, what Tenderness of Heart do we meet with in the Repentance of St. Peter, when he went forth and wept bitterly! Of Mary Magdalen, or whoever that Woman in Luke 7. was, when she washed the feet of our Saviour with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head! And of the Royal Plalmist, when he watered his Couch with lus tears, Pfal. 6. 6. Nor were the Pleasures of Assurance less sensible and vehement than the Sorrows of Repentance, when the first Christians rejoiced with joy un-Speakable, and hopes full of glory. Shall I here add that Holy Indignation against Sin, that vehement Desire of making some Reparation for it, which is the Effect of Godly Sorrow, that Zeal and Fervency of Spirit in the Service of God, which is the high f Character of Perfection it self? Shall I call these Passions? I must not; for though they have the Heat and Agitation of Passion, they have in them the Firmness and Steadiness of an Habit. And I wish with all my Heart,

leart, that all those other excellent Affectins of Soul, which I before named, could e render'd Natural and Habitual. The earer we come to this, undoubtedly the Perfecter. I doubt Mortality is incapable of any fuch Height: But the more frequent is well as the more vehement and fervent uch Affections are, the better certainly; or great is the Force and Vertue of Holy Pallion: the Flame of Love refines our Nature, and purifies it from all irs Drofs; the Tears of a Godly Sorrow extinguish all our carnal and worldly Lusts; and the Agitations of Fear preserve the Chastity and Purity of the Soul. 'Tis plain then, that our Religion ought to be animated by Holy Passions; that the more frequent and natural these grow, the more Perfect we are; that being the most excellent Frame of Spirit, when we are most apt to be sensibly and thoroughly affected by Divine Truths. By what Means we may attain to this, is now briefly to be considered. Tis certain, That great and important, wonderful and glorious Truths, will not fail to affect us, and that throughly, unless Lust or Infidelity have render'd us stupid and impenetrable. And that Golpel-Truths are fuch, is no doubt at all; let the Conviction be full, the Representation lively, and the Truth will do its Work. 'Tis for want of fuch Circumstances and such sensible Noti-

124 Of the Attainment of Perfection.

ons of an Object as may strike the Imagination; for want of close and particular Applications, when Divine Truths do not move us. This now does not only call us to the frequent Meditation of the most Affeeting Subjects, the Majesty and Omniprefence of God; the Sufferings of Christ, Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell; but it shews also, how to model and form our Meditations, that they prove not cold and fluggish. Let the Object of our Thoughts be described by the most sensible Images or Resemblances, let it be clad with the most natural Circumstances, let it be made as particular as it can, by fixing its Eye upon us, and pointing its Motion towards us; but above all, and in the first Place, let the *Proof* of it be clear and strong. *Prayer* is an Exercise very apt to move the *Passion*: The Mind having disengaged it felf from all Earthly and Bodily Affections, is prepared for the Impression of Truth and the Spirit of God; it draws nearer into the Presence of God, and the Sense of this sheds an awful Reverence upon it; it has a clearer, calmer, and more ferious View of Divine Things, than when it is obscured and disturbed by worldly Objects. In a Word, Meditation is in this Exercise render'd more solemn and more particular; and when the Holy Fire is kindled in the Soul, it dilates and diffuses it self

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ore and more, till the Strength of Desire, ne Vehemence of Holy Love transcendig the Weakness of this Mortal Nature, e faint under the Passions that we cannot iar. The Lord's Supper is an Holy Rite, onderfully adapted to raise excellent Pasms: Here Christ is, as it were set forth ncified among st us; we see his Body broken, ad his Blood poured forth; here with a evout Joy we receive and embrace him y Faith and Love in those Symbols of his ody and Blood, and Pledges of his Love. he Soul must be very ill prepared, it must ave very imperfect Notions of Sin and Damnation, the Cross of Christ, Grace nd Salvation, which is not fensible of a roud of holy Passions springing up in it at his Sacrament. Hymns and Plalms have, by know not what Natural Magick, a peuliar Force and Operation upon a pious Aind. Divine Poetry has a noble Elevaion of Thoughts; it does not devise and ounterfeit Passions, but only vents those vhich it feels; and these are pure and ovely, kindled from above. Therefore re all its Characters natural, its Descriptiin lively, its Language moving and powerul; and all is so directly suited to a Devout Mind, that it presently enters, moves, and ictuates it, inspires and informs it with the very Passions it describes. And though all Good Men are not equally moved in this Duty, Duty, yet all, I believe, are more or les. moved. It was very much the Business o the Prophets, and all of Prophetick Educa tion; our Lord and his Disciples practifec it frequently; it was ever a great part o Religious Joy, and one of the greatest Plea fures of pious Retirement: And I wish from my Heart the Esteem of it were re vived in our Days; I perswade my self i would add much to the Warmth and Plea fure of Devotion; it would contribute to introduce Religion into our Families; and for ought I know, into our very Recreation and Friendships. And this minds me, tha as I have under every foregoing Head ta ken notice of the Advantages of Conver fation, so I should not forget it here. This has a lively Influence upon our Minds, an always kindles in the Soul a gentle Heat And did we but accustom our selves to en tertain one another with Discourse abou another World; did we mingle the Praise of God with the Feasts and Joys of Life did we retire to our Country-Houses to con template the Variety and Riches of Divin Wisdom and Bounty in those natural Scene of Pleasure which the Country affords, an did we now and then invite our Friends t join with us in offering up. Hallelujahs t God on this Account, with Brightness an Serenity, what Calm and Pleasure, would this diffuse through all our Souls, through

all our Days! To this that I have said. touching the exciting Holy Passions, I will only add one Observation, formed upon those Words of the Apostle, James 5. 13. Is any among you afflitted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing Psalms. That Religion must be accommodated to Nature, and that devout Passions will soon shoot up, when they are engrafted upon a Natural Stock. With which I will join this other, That fince we are most affected by such Truths as are most particular, circumstantiated, and sensible, and therefore imprint themselves more easily and deeply on our Imagination; for this Reason I should recommend the Reading the Lives of Saints and excellent Persons, were they not generally writ fo, that we have Reason to desire fomewhat more of the Spirit of Piety in the Learned, and more of Judgment in the Pious, who have employ'd their Pens on this Argument.

6.4. The immediate Ends of Discipline are, the subduing the Pride of the Heart, and the reducing the Appetites of the Body. By Discipline, I here understand whatever voluntary Rigours we impose upon our selves, or whatever voluntary Restraints we lay upon our allowed Enjoyments. And when I say that the Humiliation of the Heart, and Subjection of the Body are the imme-

immediate Ends of both, I do not exclude any other which may be involved in these, or refult from them. Now, of what Importance these two Things are, I need not shew. For since all Sin is distinguished in Scripture into the Filthiness of the Spirit and the Flesh, it is plain, that the Pride of the Heart, and the Lust of the Body, are the two great Causes of all Immorality and Uncleanness. And therefore these are the two great Ends which the Wife and Good have ever had in their Eye in all their Acts of Self-denial and Mortification. This is sufficatly attested by the Example of David, Psal. 131. Lord, I am not high-minded, I have no proud looks. I do not exercise my felf in great matters, which are too high for me: But I refrain my Soul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother; yea, my Soul is even as a weaned child. And from that other of St. Paul, 1 Cor. 9. 25. 26, 27. And every one that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things: Now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I my self (hould be a cast-away. Whoever thus mortifies the Pride of the Heart, whoever thus brings under the Body, will foon find himself truly set free, and Master of himself and Fortune: He will be able to run the way of God's Commandments, and to advance on swiftly towards Perfection, and the Pleasure

and Happiness that attends it.

And to attain these blessed Ends, I do not think that we need enfnare our Souls in the perpetual Bonds of Monastick Vows; I do not think that we are to expose our selves by any Ridiculous or Fantastick Observances: There is, I say, no need of this; for we may, as oft as we shall see sit, retrench our Pleasures, abate of the Shew and Figure of Life; we may renounce our own Wills to comply with theirs who cannot fo well pretend either to Authority or Difcretion: And if these Things cannot be done in some Circumstances, without becoming Fools for Christ; that is, without that Tameness, that Condescension, that Diminution of our ferves which will never comport with the Humours and the Fashions of the World; here is still the more Room for Mortification, and for a nearer and more eminent Imitation of the Blessed Jesus: Provided still we decline all Affectation of Singularity; and when we practife any extraordinary Instance of Self-denial, we be ever able to justify it to Religious and Judicious Persons, by the Proposal of some excellent End. Fasting indeed is plainly described in Scripture; and though the Obligation to it,

it, with respect to its Frequency and Measure, be not the same on all, yet all should some time or other practise it, as sar as the Rules of Christian Prudence will permit. And I have often thought, that Fasting should generally consist, rather in Abstinence from pleasing Meats, than from all; not the Food which nourishes our Strength, but that which gratisies the Palate, minitring most directly to Wantonness and

Luxury.

For the better regulating of Voluntary Discipline, I propose by way of Advice Three Things. 1. I do not think it best to bring our felves under any perpetual and unalterable Ties in any Instance of Selfdenial: There is a Vertue in enjoying the World, as well as in renouncing it; and 'tis as great an Excellence of Religion to know how to abound, as how to suffer Want. Nay, what is more, all voluntary Austerities are in order to give us a Power and Dominion over our felves in the general Courfe of a prosperous Life. And lastly, I very much doubt, when once a Man has long and constantly accustomed himself to any Rigour, whether it continue to have much of Mortification in it, or whether it so efsectually tend to promote our Spiritual Liberty, as it would if we did return to it but now and then, as we faw Occasion. 2. We must not multiply unnecessary Severities;

and that no Man may think more needful than really are, I observe here, That as there are very few who have not in their Nature very confiderable Infirmities, so are there as few who have not in their Fortune very confiderable Inconveniences: And if they would apply themselves to the Mastering of both these as they ought, they would stand in less need of the Discipline of Arbitrary Austerities. There are many Things too trifling to be taken notice of, which yet do prove sufficient to disturb the Quiet of most, and betray them to many Passions and Indecencies: Nay, the Weaknesses of good Men are sometimes fed by Temptations of very little Moment. Now, to surmount these Temptations, and to frame and accommodate the Mind to bear the little Shocks and Justles which we daily meet with, without any Discomposure or Displeasure, is a Matter of great Use to the Tranquillity of Life, and the Maturity of Virtue. To be able to bear the Pride of one, and the Stupidity of another; one while to encounter Rudeness, another while Neglect, without being moved by either; to submit to Noise, Disorder, and the Distraction of many little Affairs, when one is naturally a Lover of Quietness and Order, or when the Mind is intent upon Things of Importance; in a Word, to digest the perpetual Disappointments which we meet with, both in Business and Pleafure, and in all the little Projects, which not the Elegant and Ingenious only, but People of all Stations and all Capacities pursue; to suffer all the Humours and Follies, the Errors, Artifices, Indecencies, and Faults of those we have to do with, with that Temper we ought, that is, with a Calmness which proceeds not from an Unconcernment for the Good of others, but a just Dominion over our own Spirits: This is a great Height; and to train our felves up to it daily with much Patience, Vigilance, and Application of Mind, is the best Discipline: Though I do not mean hereby to exclude all voluntary Impositions; for in order to master the Evils which we can-not avoid, it may be of good Use now and then to form the Mind by voluntary Tryals and Difficulties of our own chusing. 3. Lastly, We must ever have a care not to lose the Substance for the Shadow, not to rest in the Means, and neglect the End; being much taken up in Discipline, without producing any Fruit of it. For this is taking much Pains to little Purpose; travelling much without making any Progress. But much more must we take care in the next place, that the Discipline we put our selves upon, do not produce any ill Fruit. To which end, we must carefully observe Three Things. 1. That we keep to that Moderation

deration which Spiritual Prudence requires; neither exposing nor entangling our selves, nor discouraging others by Excesses and Extravagancies. 2. That our Self-denial never betray us into Pride or Uncharitableness; for if it tempt us to over-rate our selves, and dispise others, this is a flat Contradiction to one of the main Ends of Christian Discipline, which is, the Humiliation of the Heart. 3. That we ever preserve, nay, encrease the Sweetness and Gentleness of our Minds; for whatever makes us foure and morose, or peevish and unfociable, makes us certainly fo much worse: And instead of begetting in us nearer Resemblances of the Divine Nature, gives us a very strong Tincture of a Devilish one. Athanasius therefore in the Life of Anthony the Hermite observes, amongst other his great Vertues, That after Thirty Years spent in a strange kind of retired and Politary Life, भ्रे วล่า ย่น พ์ร อ้าย теарыя, หล่นผ γέρων γρομβρο, άγερον είπε το πθω, άκα κ pacies no, of modimes. He did not appear to his Friends with a fullen or favage, but with an obliging fociable Air: And there is indeed but little Reason, why the Look should be louring and contracted, when the Heart is filled with Joy and Charity, Goodness and Pleasure. A serene open Countenance, and a chearful grave Deportment, does best suit the Tranquil-K 3

134 Of the Attainment of Perfestion.

lity, Purity, and Dignity of a Christian Mind.

§. 5. Lastly, Some kinds of Life are better suited and accommodated to the great Ends of Religion and Vertue than others. I shall not here enter into an Examination of the Advantages or Disadyantages there are in the several kinds of Life with reference to Religion. The fettling this and feveral other things relating to it, was one main Design of my last Book. All therefore that I have here to do, is but to make one plain Inference from all that has been advanced in this Chapter. If Perfection and Happiness cannot be obtained without a frequent and serious Application of our selves to the Means here insisted on; then 'tis plain that we ought to cast our Lives, if we can, into fuch a Method, that we may be in a Capacity to do this. To speak more particularly and closely; since Meditation, Prayer, and holy Conversation are so necessary to quicken the Conscience, excite our Passions, and fortify our Resolutions, it is evident that it is as necessary so to model and form our Lives, that we may have Time enough to bestow on these. For they, whose Minds and Time are taken up by the World, have very little Leisure for Things of this Nature, and are very little disposed to them, and as ill qualified for them. As to Conversation, as the

the World goes now, 'tis not to be expected that it should have in it any Relish of Piety, unless between such as have enter'd into a close and strict Friendsbip. But the Worldly Man is a Stranger to true Friend-(bip; itis too facred, too delicate a Thing for a Mind devoted to the World, to be capable of. A Regard to Interest, to some outward Forms and Decencies; the Gratification of some natural Inclination, the Neceffity of some kind of Diversion and Enjoyment, may invite him to more Familiarity with some, than others. But 'tis hard to believe, that there should be any thing in fuch Combinations, of that which is the very Life and Soul of Friendship, a sincere and undefigning Passion, increased by mutual Confidences and Obligations, and supported and strengthen'd by Vertue and Honour. As to Prayer, Men of Business do, I doubt, oftner read or say Prayers, than pray; for 'tis very hard to imagine that a Soul that grovels perpetually here upon Earth, that is incessantly sollicitous about the Things of this World, and that enters abruptly upon this Duty without any Preparation, should immediately take Fire, be filled with Heavenly Vigour, and be transported with earnest and impatient Desire of Grace and Glory. Ah! how hard is it for him who hungers and thirsts perpetually after the Profits of this World, to hunger and K 4

136

thirst after Righteousness too! If such Minds as these retain the Belief of a Providence, fome Awe of God, and fome Degree of Gratitude towards him, 'tis as much as may reasonably be expected from them: And may this avail them as far as it can! Lastly, as to Meditation, how can it be imagined that fuch whose Minds and Bodies are fatigued and harassed by Worldly Business, should be much inclined to it, or well prepared for it? How should these Men form any Notion of a perfect and exalted Vertue, of devout and heavenly Passion? What Conceptions can they have of the Power and Joy of the Holy Ghost, of Poverty of Spirit, or Purity of Heart, or the Diffusion of the Love of God in our Souls? What Idea's can they entertain of an Heaven, or of Angelical Pleasure and Beatitude? In a Word, the Religion of Men intent upon this World, when they pretend to any, which too often they do not, confifts especially in Two Things, in abstaining from Wickedness, and doing the Works of their Civil Calling; and how far they may be sensible of higher Obligations, I determine not. Good God! What a Mercy it is to these poor Creatures, that 'tis the Fashion of their Country, as well as a Precept of our Religion, to dedicate one Day in Seven to the Service of God and their Souls! But have I not often taught, that Purity of Intention converts

verts the Works of a Secular Calling into the Works of God? I have so, 'tis univerfally taught, 'tis the Doctrine of the Gofpel; and therefore I shall never retract it; but ah! How hard a Thing is it for a Worldly Man to maintain this Purity of Intention! How hard a Thing is it for a Mind eaten up by the Love and Cares of this World to do all to the Honour of God! Though therefore I cannot retract this Do-Arine, yet the longer I live, the more Reafon do I see for qualifying and guarding it with this Caution: Let no Man that desires to be Saved, much less that desires to be Perfect, take Sanctuary in Purity of Intention, while he suffers the Works of his Secular Calling to ingross his Soul, and entirely usurp his Time. If Secular Works exclude and thrust out of Doors such as are properly Religious, it will not be easy to conceive, how the Power of Godliness fhould be maintained, how any wife Thoughts, or Heavenly Desires should be preferved in fuch Men; or how, finally those who have utterly given up themselves to the Wisdom of this World, should retain any true Value for those Maxims of the Gospel, wherein consists the true Wisdom that is from above. All that I have said against a Life of Business, may, with equal or greater Force, be urged against a Life of Pleasure; I mean that which they call Innocent Plea-Sure:

138 Of the Attainment of Perfestion.

fure: The one and the other entangle and ensure the Mind; the one and the other leave in it a peculiar Relish, which continues long after the Hurry both of Pleasure and Business is over. But all this while, I would not have what I have said to be extended further than I design it, to raise Scruples in Vertuous and Good Men, instead of reforming the too eager Applications of the Earthly to the Things of this World.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Motives to Perfection. Several Metives summ'd up in short, and that Great one, of having the other Life in our View, insisted upon.

Nnumerable are the Motives to Perfection, which offer themselves to any one that reflects seriously on this Argument. An hearty Endeavour after Perfection is the best Proof of Sincerity; the nearest Approach to Perfection, is the nearest Approach to the utmost Security this Life is capable of. Great is the Beauty and Loveliness of an exalted Vertue, great the Honour and Authority of it; and a very happy Influence it has even upon our Temporal Affairs: And to this may be added, the Peace and Tranquillity of a wise Mind,

Ind, sanctified Affections, and a regular ife. Besides, the Love of God is boundels, and the Love of Jesus is so too; and berefore demand not a lazy, feeble, or uneddy Vertue, but a strong and vigorous ne, a warm and active; such as a true o naturally excite us to. To all this I night add, that the Spirit of God is alvays pressing on and advancing, desirous o communicate himself to us more and more plentifully, if we be not backward or negligent our selves. But these, and maty other Enforcements to the Duty of Perection, should I enlarge on them, would well this Treatise to an intolerable Bulk. Nor indeed is it necessary: for the 4th Chapter, where I treat of the Fruits of Perection, does contain such Motives to it, as are sufficient to excite in any one that reads them, a most vehement Desire and Thirst after it. Here therefore all that I think fit to do, is, to put my Reader in mind of another Life: In the Glories and Pleasures of which, I need not prove that the Perfect Man will have the greatest Share. This is a Motive that must never be out of the Thoughts of the Man that will be Perfect; and that for Three Reasons, which I will but just mention.

1. Without another Life, we can never form any true Notion of a Perfect Vertue.

Sociable and Civil Vertues may be supported by Temporal Motives, and fram'd and modell'd by Worldly Conveniences; but a Divine Vertue must be built upon a Devine Life, upon a Heavenly Kingdom. The Reason of this Assertion is plain; the Mean must always bear Proportion to the End where therefore the End is an imperfect temporal Good, there needs no more than imperfect unfinished Vertue to attain it; but where the End is Heavenly and Immortal, the Vertue ought to be fo too. Were there no other Life, the Standard and Meafure of the Good or Evil to be found in Actions, would be their Subserviency to the temporal Good or Evil of this World; and by a necessary Consequence, it would be impossible to prove any higher Degrees of Poverty of Spirit, Purity of Heart, Charity, and the like, to be truly Vertue, than what we could prove truly necessary to procure the Good, or guard us against the Evil of this Life: And if so, 'tis easy to conclude what mean and beggarly kind of Vertues would be produced from this Ground.

2. Without another Life, all other Motives to Perfection will be infufficient. For though, generally speaking, such is the Contrivance of Human Nature, that neither the common Good of Civil Society, nor the more particular Good of private Men,

n be provided for, or fecured, without re Practice of fociable and political Veries; yet 'tis certain, that not only in may extraordinary Cases there would be no eward at all for Vertue, if there were not ne referved for it in another World; but lso in most Cases, if there were not a fure Pleasure, that did infinitely outweigh re Enjoyments of this Life, Men would ee no Obligation to Perfection. For what hould raise them above the Love of this World, if there were no other? Or above he Love of the Body, if when they died hey should be no more for ever? And cerainly our Minds would never be able to oar very high, nor should we ever arrive at iny Excellence or Perfection in any Action, f we were always under the Influence of the Love of the World, and the Body.

3. A Life to come is alone a sufficient Motive to Perfection. Who will refuse to endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Fesus, who firmly believes that He is now a Spectator, and will very fuddenly come to be a Judge and Rewarder of his Sufferings? How natural is it to run with patience the race that is set before us, to him who has an Eternal Joy, an Eternal Crown alway in his Eye? And if a Life to come can make a Man rejoyce even in suffering Evil, how much more in doing Good? If it enable him to Conquer in the Day of the Church's Church's Tryal and Affliction, how much more will it enable him to abound in all Vertues in the Day of its Peace and Profperity? How freely will a Man give to the distressed Members of Christ, who be lieves that he fees Christ himself standing by, and receiving it as it were by their Hands, and placing it to his own Account to be repaid a Thousandfold in the great Day of the Lord? How easily will a Man allay the Storms of Passion, and cast away the Weapon of Revenge and Anger, with Indignation against himself, if his Faith do but present him often with a View of that Canaan, which the meek in heart (ball inher) for ever? How importunately will a Man pray for the Pardon of Sin, whose Sense whose Soul, whose Imagination is struct with a Dread of being for ever divided from God, and excluded from the Joys and Vertues of the Bleffed? How fervently will a Man pray for the Spirit of God. for the Increase of Grace, whose Thought are daily swallowed up with the Contemplation of an Eternity; and whose Mind as fully posses'd of the Certainty and the Glory of another World, as of the Emptiness and Vanity of this? How natural, finally, will it be to be poor in Spirit, and to delight in all the Offices of an unfeign'd Humility, to that Man who has the Image of Jesus washing the feet of his Disciples, and a little

little after ascending up into Heaven, alway before him?

But I know it will be here Objected, We discern not this Efficacy you attribute to this Motive. The Doctrine of another Life is the great Article of the Christian Faith, and it is every where preached throughout Christendom; and yet Men generally seem to have as much Fondness for this World, is they could were there no other: They practife no Vertues but such as are proficable and fashionable, or none any further than they are so. To this I answer, Tho' most act thus, there are many, I hope very many, who do otherwise; and that all in general do not, proceeds from Want, either of due Consideration, or firm Belief of this Doctrine of another Life. First, From not considering it as we should. 'Tis the greatest Disadvantage of the Objects of Fith, compared with those of Sense, that they are distant and invisible. He therefore that will be Perfett, that will derive any Strength and Vertue from this Motive, must supply this Distance by devout and daily Contemplation; he must fetch the remote Objects of Faith home to him; he must render them, as it were, present; he must see and feel them by the Strength of Faith, and the Force of Meditation; which if he do, then will his Faith certainly prove a vital and victorious Principle; then will

no Pleasure in this World be able to combat the assured Hopes of an Heaven, nor any worldly Evil or Difficulty fustained for Vertue, be able to confront the Terrors of an Hell. A Second Reason why this Motive doth not operate as it shouldis Want of Faith. We doubt, we waven we stagger, we take Things upon Trust affenting very flightly and superficially to the Doctrine of another Life, and looking upon good Works rather as not injurious to this World, than serviceable to a better And then 'tis no more wonder that the unbelieving Christian does not enter into Perfection and Rest, than that the unbelieving Few did not: 'Tis no more wonder, if the Word of Life do not profit the Christian when not beleeved by him, than if it do not profit a Pagan who has never heard of it. And what is here said of Infidelity, is in its Measure and Proportion true when applied to a weak and imperfect Faith. He therefore that will be Perfect must daily pray Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. He must daily consider the Grounds on which the Faith and Hope of a Christian stand; the express Declarations of the Divine Will concerning the future Immortality and Glory of the Children of God; the Demonstration of this contained in the Refurrection of Jesus from the Dead, and his Aseension, and Session at the Right Hand

Hand of God: And to this he may add, he Love of God, the Merits of Jesus, and he State and Fortune of Vertue in this World. From all which one may be able o infer the undoubted Certainty of another Vorld. The Sum of all amounts to this; whoever will be Perfect, must daily, I hould, I think, have said, almost hourly under the Blessedness that attends Perfection a another Life; he must ponder it seriously, hat he may be throughly perswaded of it; e must ponder it often, that the Notions of t may be fresh and lively in his Soul.

SECT. II:

of the several Parts of Perfection, Illumination, Liberty, and Zeal.

Perfection are, will be easily discerned by a very slight Resection, either in the Nature of Man, or the general Notion of Perfection already laid down. If we consider Man, whose Perfection I am reating of, as it is plain that he is made up of Soul and Body, so 'tis as plain that Moal Perfection relates to the Soul, as the thief Subject of it, and to the Body no otherwise than as the Instrument of that Righteousness which is planted in the Soul. Now in the Soul of Man we find these

Three Things; Understanding, Will, and Affections: In the Improvement and Accomplishment of which, Human Perfection must consequently consist. And if we enquire wherein this Improvement or Accomplishment lies, 'tis a Truth so obvious that it will not need any Proof, that Illumnation is the Perfection of the Understanding Liberty of the Will, and Zeal of the M. fections. If, in the next place, we reflect upon the Description I have before given of Perfection, nothing is more evident, that that to constitute a firm Habit of Righte oufnefs, Three Things are necessary: 1. The Knowledge of our Duty, and our Obligations to it. 2. The Subduing our Lusts and Passions, that we may be enabled to perform it. Lastly, Not only a free, but warm and vigorous Profecution of it. In the first of these consists Illumination; in the second Liberty; and in the third, Zeal. Upon the whole then 'tis evident, both from the Nature of Perfection, and of Man, the I am now to treat in order of these Three Things, Illumination, Liberty, and Zeal, w fo many Essential Parts of Religious Par fection. Nor must I stop here, but mu to those Three unavoidably add Humility For whether we consider the Sins of the Perfect Man's patt Life, or the Slips and Defects of his best State; or whether w confider Man's continual Dependance up

God in all respects, but especially in reference to the Beginning, Progress, and Consummation of his Perfection; or whether, Lastly, we consider the Scantiness and Deficiency, not only of this or that Man's Perfection in particular, but of Human Prefection in general, we cannot but conclude, that nothing can become Mortal Man (even though all the Excellence Human Nature is capable of were united in one) better than Humility. Humility therefore must begin and compleat Religious Perfection; it must accompany the Christian in every Stage of his Spiritual Progress; it must crown all his Actions, and add that Beauty and Excellence, that Grace and Lustre to all his other Vertues, that is wholly necessary to render them acceptable to God.

The general Notion of Perfection being thus resolved into its Parts, 'tis plain I am now to discourse of each of these. And what I have to fay on each, ought according to the strict Rules of Method, to be comprized within the same Chapter: But to consult the Ease and Benefit of my Reader, I shall slight this Nicety, and distribute my Thoughts into as many Chapters as I shall judge most convenient for the Ease and

Support of the Memory.

CHAP. I.

EAS

Of Illumination. I. The distinguishing Characters of Illuminating Truths. 1. They parify us. 2. They nourish and strengther us. 3. They delight us. 4. They procure us a glorious Reward. II. The Nature of Illuminating Knowledge. 1. It must be deeply rooted. 2. It must be distinct and clear. 3. It must be thoroughly concocted.

§. 1. WHAT it is. It happens in the Point of Illumination, as it does in that of Happiness: All Men at first hearing, form in general an agreeable and pleasing Notion of it: all Men admire and love it; but few have any distinct and true Understanding of those Things which tis made up of. All Men conceive Illumination to be a State of Light and Knowledge, as they do Happiness to be a State of Plea-Sure: But are as little agreed in particular, wherein confists the Light or Knowledge which makes the one, as wherein consists the Pleasure that makes the other. The Lust and Passion of some, the Superstition and Prejudice of others; Curiofity and Confidence, Weakness and Design, Enthufiasm and Fancy, embroil and perplex all Things. However, every honest Man hath a Clue by which he may escape out of this Labyrinth. The Scripture shines with bright and

and gracious Beams throughout all this Darkness: And if we will attend to it, we cannot wander into any dangerous Mifrake. This describes the State of Illumination very plainly to us, calling it someimes Wisdom, sometimes Knowledge and Understanding; sometimes Faith, sometimes the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation. Next, it acquaints us with the Design and End of it; namely, to convert us from the power of Satan to the service of the living God, to purify and sanctify us, to enable us to apbrove the holy, acceptable, and perfect will of God, and in one Word, to make us wife unto Salvation. Nay, it proceeds further, and points out to us particularly the Truths, in he Knowledge of which Illumination conists. Thus the Old Testament reckons Wisdom to be, sometimes the Knowledge of God, ometimes the Knowledge of his Law, sometimes the Understanding of Proverbs and Parables; these containing as it were the Soul of Moral Instruction, and wrapping up in few and lively Words, whatever the Experience of the Aged, or the Observation of Men of the most piercing Judgment, thought best deserved to be transmitted to Posterity. But all this amounts to the same thing, and all the Descriptions of Wisdom in the Old Testament may be summ'd up into that one, Job 28. 28. Be-bold, the fear of the Lord, that is misdom, L 3

and to depart from evil is understanding. The New Testament tells us, This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent: That Christ is the way, the truth and the life: That in him are hid all the treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge: That true Understanding consists in knowing the will of God; which will is our sanctification. And when St. Paul understands by Wisdom as fometimes he does, the penetrating into the Spirit and Mystery, the Depths and Recesses of the Old Testament, and discovering the great Design of Man's Redemption, carried on through all the Ages of the World, and thro' a wife Variety of Difpensations, this alters not the Notion of Illumination: For this does not point out to us any new or different Truths; but only regards one peculiar way of explaining, or establishing and confirming the great Christian Doctrines. To conclude we may eafily learn what fort of Knowledge the Spirit of God recommends to us above all other, from those Petitions which St. Paul puts up for the Ephesians and Colossians. For the Former he prays thus; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wifdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inhe-

inheritance in the Saints, and what is the exceding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, &c. Eph. 1. 17, 18, 19, 20. For the Latter thus: That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and encreasing in the knowledge of God, Col. 1. 9, 10. If from these and the like Texts we form a general Idea of Illumination, it will be this: Illumination is a State of Knowledge, confisting in the abolishing or relinquishing those Errors, which deprave and pervert our Affections, and undermine and supplant the Empire and Authority of Reason; and in entertaining and embracing those Truths, which purity the one, and restore and establish the other: All this in order to entitle us to the Favour of God, and a bleffed Eternity. I might content my felf with this general Delineation of Illumination. But because this is a Subject from which we cannot but reap so much Pleafure and Advantage, as will abundantly requite whatever Labour can be bestowed upon it; I will proceed to a fuller Discovery of it, if I can.

Illu

Illumination then being a State of Knowledge, and the Object of this Knowledge being Truth, 'tis plain, that in order to form a just and distinct Notion of Illumination, it will be necessary to enquire into two Things: First, What kind of Truths; and Next, What kind of Knowledge of these Truths, constitutes Illumination.

1. Of the Truths which Illuminate: We have many noble Characters in the Old Testament and the New, which distinguish these from Truths of an inferior Nature All which are, I think, compriz'd by Solomon in very few Words; Prov. 24. 13, 14. My Son, faith he, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honey-comb, which is sweet to thy taste; so shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul, when thou hast found it; then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off. Solomon here, as is very usual with inspired Writers, does compare Spiritual with Corporeal Things, or illustrates the one by the other. He tells us, that what Honey is to the Body, that Wifdom is to the Soul: And recommending the Former from two incomparable Properties, its ministring to Health and Pleasure, he recommends the Latter from Advantages, which hear indeed some Resemblance; but are as much superior to these, as the Soul is to the Body. My Son, eat thou ho-

ey, because it is good; i.e. because it both leanses and purges all noxious Humours, and nourishes and strengthens the Body: And the honey-comb, because it is sweet to the afte; which is the second Excellence of this sort of Food, namely, its Pleasantness; and properly urged to invite the Eater: Then proceeding to compleat the Comparison, ne adds, So shall the knowledge of wisdom be o thy Soul, when thou hast found it; i.e. t shall minister to the Purification, Strength, and Delight of thy Soul. But this is not ill: Though the Parallel can be extended no further between Honey and Wisdom; vet he does not think fit for that Reason to omit one of the greatest Excellencies of Wildom: And therefore he adds, Then there hall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off. Wisdom does not only perfect and entertain our Minds; but also it gives us a Title to those Rewards, for the Enjoyment of which it prepares and fits us. Here then we have from Solomon the true Properties of true Wisdom: By these we may pronounce fafely of all the different Kinds of Knowledge; distinguishing the Precious from the Vile, and fixing the true Estimate of Each. If there be any Sort of Iruths, whose Knowledge does not promote, but obstruct these great Ends, these we are to despise and slight, to shun and hate. But if there be any Knowledge, that

that does neither oppose or hinder, nor yet contribute to these Ends, unless accidentally, and very remotely; for this we may have some, but no very great Regard or Esteem. But whatever Knowledge that be which is attended by these Fruits, this is that which we are to search for as for hidden Treasure: This is that which, when we have found it, we are to value above the Gold of Ophir, the Topaz, and the Cabuncle, and all precious Stones. The diftinguishing Characters then of Illuminative Truths are Four:

1. They Purify us.

2. They Nourish and Strengthen us.
3. They Entertain and Delight us.
4. They procure us a glorious Reward.

1. They Purify us. This is a Property which the Royal Psalmist frequently attri-butes to the Word of God, that it is pure and clean, Pfal. 119. and elsewhere. And the New Testament frequently ascribes to Faith and Hope, that they purify the Heart, 1 Joh. 3. 3. Acts 15. And this sure is the first Thing necessary to the Perfecting the Soul of Man. 'Tis with the Soul, as with the Body; it must be first cleansed from hurtful Humours, before it can be fed and nourished; purged of its Errors and Vices, ere it can be enriched with Divine Vertues, and attain that Liberty and Strength, where-

vherein confifts the true Greatness and excellence of the Mind of Man. The first step towards the Perfection of Vertue, is the elinguishing our Vice; for we must cease to lo evil, ere we can learn to do good: And the irst Step towards the Perfection of Wislung, is the dispelling those Errors, which decive and missead the Mind, and pervert life. What these were in the Few and Gentile, and what they are at this Day in s, it is easy enough to discern. The Mind of Man, as far as I can observe, is natually prone to Religious Worship. Not ony the Consideration of the wonderful Mechanism and Contrivance of the World, and of Events, strange, sudden, and unaccountable; but also the Conscience of his own Impotence and Obnoxiousness, inclining him to the Belief, and prompting him to feek the Patronage of an Invisible All-sufficient Power. In the next place, the Mind of Man is ever prone to propose to him some great, some Sovereign Good; in which he may acquiesce, and by which he may secure himself, as well as he can, against the Indigence and Poverty of his Nature, and the Changes and Revolutions, the Difasters and the Miseries, to which this Mortal State is exposed. These are Two Things of that Importance, that no Man can err in them, but the Error must prove fatal to his Repose. He that sets up to himself for his ultimate End, an empty and uncertain Good, instead of a Solid and Eternal one, must needs be as miserably deluded and disappointed, as he must, who sets up to himself a false God instead of the true; or goes about to endear and recommend himfelf to the true, by a false and superstitious Worship. Now in these Points the Jew and Gentile were miserably, though nor equally mistaken. The Gentile worshipped Devils, instead of God: Their Mysteries were either sensual or cruel; their Religion did oftner encourage Sin than Vertue. And as to their Sovereign Good, their Hearts were set upon this World, upon the Pomp and Pleasure, upon the Ease and Honour of it; and they had either none, or very dark and uncertain Prospects beyond the Grave: All beyond it was an unknown Region, full of Fables and idle Phantoms The Jews, though they enjoy'd the Oracles af God, and generally preserved the Wor-Thip of one true and living God, yet were they not free from very deplorable Errors relating to these Points: They seemed to have turned the true God into an Idol, and to have entertained some Notions of Him very repugnant to his Nature: They looked upon him as the God of the Jews, not of the Gentiles; as a Respecter of Persons, as fond and partial to their Nation; and as delighted with a Religion, made up of

umerous Rites and Ceremonies, and exteral Observances And this could not but ave a very fad Influence upon their Reliion, as it really had: The Holiness which truly acceptable to God, being neglected nd abolished; and Sadducism or Pharisaism, e. Senfuality or Hypocrify, introduced in he Room of it. And as to their ultimate d or fupreme Good, the Sadducees denied he Resurrection, Angels, and Spirits; and herefore 'tis not to be expected they should ntertain any Design above the Pleasure of he Body. And though the Pharifees acnowledged Angels and a Resurrection; yet an we not discern that they had a real Value for any thing besides the Honour, Power, and Wealth of this World. And 10 wonder, fince they could, upon their Principles, satisfy themselves in a Religion which had nothing of internal Purity or solid Righteousness in it. So that upon the whole, the Jew and Gentile were alike wicked: Only the Wickedness of the Jews, had this Aggravation in it above that of the Gentiles, that they enjoy'd the Oracles of God, and the Favour of a peculiar Covenant. This being the State of Darkness, which lay upon the Face of the Jewish and Gentile World, our Lord, who was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel, advanced and established in the World that Doctrine, which directly

directly tends to dispel these Errors, and resource Mankind from the Misery that attends them. For all that the Gospel contains may be reduced to these Three Heads: First, The Assertion of One only True God. with a bright and full Revelation of his Divine Attributes and Perfection.' Secondly, An Account of the Will of God, or the World (hip he delights in, which is a Spiritual one, together with suitable Means and Mon tives; in which last is contained a full D claration of Man's supreme Happiness. Third ly, The Revelation of One Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus: through whom we have access with boldness to the throne of grace; through whom we have obtained from the Father, grace, and pardon, and add ption; and through whom, Lastly, all our Oblations and Performances are accertable to Him. The Design of this glori ous Manifestation was to open Mens eye to turn them from darkness to light, and fro the power of Satan to the living God: The they might obtain remission of sins, and all inheritance of glory. These then are the Truths which Illuminated the Gentile and Jewish World: And these are the Truth which must Illuminate us at this Day, These dispel all destructive Errors that lead us to Vice or Misery: These point out our supreme Felicity, and the direct Way to it: These open and enlarge the EV

Eye of the Soul, enable it to distinguish and udge with an unerring Exactness between Good and Evil, between Substantial and Superficial, Temporal and Eternal Good. And I wish from my Soul, whatever Light we pretend to at this Day, we were well grounded and established in these Truths. I doubt notwithstanding our Belief of One God, and One Mediator; and notwithstanding we are well enough affured, that God who is a Spirit, must be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth; and notwithstanding our pretending to believe a Life to come; I say, I am afraid, that notwithstanding these Things, we do generally err in Two main Points; namely, in the Notion we ought to have of Religion, and the Value we are to fet upon the World and the Body. For who that reflects upon the Pomp and Pride of Life, upon the Ease, the Softness and the Luxury of it, upon the Frothiness and the Freedom, the Vanity and Impertinence, to fay no worse, of Conversation, will not conclude, that either we have renounced our Religion, or form to our selves too complaisant and indulgent a Notion of it? For is this the Imitation of Jesus? Is this to walk as he walked in the World? Can this be the Deportment of Men to whom the World and the Body is crucified? Can fuch a Life as this is flow from those Divine Fountains, Faith, Love, and Hope? Who again again can reflect upon the Passion we discover for Superiority and Precedence, our Thirst of Power, our ravenous Desire of Wealth, and not conclude, that we have mistaken our main End, that we set a wrong Value upon Things; and that whatever we talk of an Eternity, we look upon this prefent World as our Portion, and most valuable Good? For can fuch a tender Concern for, such an eager Pursuit after temporal Things, flow from, nay confift with, Purity of Heart, and Poverty of Spirit, the Love of God, and a Desire of Heaven? Whoever then will be Perfect or Happy, must carefully avoid both these Errors: He must never think that Religion can sublist, without the Strength and Vigour of our Affections: Or, that the Bent and Vigour of our Souls can be pointed towards God, and yet the Air of our Deportment and Conversation be earthly, sensual, and vain, conformed even to a Pagan Pride, and Shew of Life. Next, he must never cherish in himself the Love of this World: He must never look upon himfelf other than a Stranger and Pilgrim in it: He must never be fond of the Pleasure of it: He must never form vain Designs and Projects about it; nor look upon the best Things in it, as Ingredients of our Happiness, but only as Instruments of Vertue, or short Repasts and Refreshments in our Journey. And because all our Mistakes about the NaThings do generally arise om είναρτα Things do generally arise om είναρτα Things do generally arise om είναρτα Φραρτία, that peculiar Sing which our Constitution betrays us; therefore the Knowledge of our selves, an intiate Acquaintance with all our natural Pronsions and Infirmities, is no inconsiderable art of Illumination. For we shall never address our selves heartily to the Cure of Disease which we know nothing of, or the restifying any Inclination, till we are oroughly convinced that 'tis irregular and

ngerous.

2. The Second Charaster of Illuminating uths is, that they are such as feed and surish, corroborate and improve the Mind Man. Now the Properties of bodily rength are fuch as these: It enables us to flle and repel Injuries, to bear Toil and ravel, to perform difficult Works with teed and Ease; and finally, it prolongs fe to a much further Date, than weak d crazy Constitutions can arrive at. And all these we find some Resemblances in diritual Strength; but as much more per-If and Excellent, as the Spirit is above e Body. These Truths then are indeed Ilminating, which enable us to vanquish Imptations, to endure with Constancy and Itience the Toils and Hardships of our hristian Warfare, to discharge the Duties our Station with Zeal and Vigour; and which M

which, Lastly, render us firm, steddy, an immortal. And these are the glorious Effects which are attributed to the Trust of God. Hence is the Gospel called the Power of God anto Salvation, Rom. 1. 11 And hence it is, that we read of the Armon of God, Ephel. 6. 11. The sword of spirit, the shield of Faith, the breast-place righteousness, &c. to intimate to us Strength and Vertue of the Word of Go and that it brings with it Safety and Su cefs. And hence it is, that the Word God is said to quicken and strengthen; the Man is said to live, not by bread only, but every word that proceedeth out of the mouth God; that Righteousness is called everlasting and that he that doth the Will of God is firmed to abide for ever: To teach us plan ly, that there is nothing steddy and uniterable, nothing durable, nothing etera but God, Divine Truths, and those that formed and moulded by them.

There are Truths indeed which are maly barren and unattive, which amuse and sepend the Mind, but never benefit it: I there are others which are, in the Langur of Solomon, like health to the navel, and man to the bones: Wisdom and Vertue, Life Honour, the Favour of God and Man, tend them where'er they dwell. And the are the Truths which Illuminate: Truthat are Active and Fruitful; that make

ise and good, perfect and happy: Such we have a mighty Interest in, such as have strong Influence upon us, fuch as give a w Day to the Understanding, and new rength and Liberty to the Will; such as life and exalt our Affections, and render whole Man more rational, more steddy, ore constant, more uniform. These are e Truths which make Men great and mooft in Prosperity, erect and couragious Adversity; always content with this orld, yet alway full of the Hopes of a ter: Serene, calm, and well affured in e present State of their Souls, and yet irsting after Perfection, Maturity, and the solute Consummation of Righteousness in e World to come. Now the Truths that ect all this, are all reducible to those hich I have mentioned under the former ead: For in those we find all that is ne-Tary to Life and Godliness, to Vertue and lory; in those we find all that is necessary raise and support true Magnanimity, to large and free the Mind, and to add rength and Courage to it. For what can ore certainly promote all this, than Imortality and Glory? What can be a furer bundation for the Hope of both to rest on, an the Favour of God himself? And what on more effectually reconcile and ingratiate with God, than sincere universal Righteusness, and the Mediation of his dearly bewed Son ? M 2 3. The

3. The Third Character of Illuminating Truths, is, that they are pleasant and agreeable to the Soul. Hence it is that the Royal Psalmist pronounces the Word of God sweeter than the honey and the honey-comb: That he ascribes to it Delight and Joy; for he tells us, that it rejoices the Heart, that it enlighten the Eyes. And accordingly we find the true Servants of God, not only continually blessing and praing God in the Temple, but magnifying him by Psalms and Hymns in their Prisons, and rejoicing in the midst of Tribulation. But when I reckon Pleasure and Delight amongst the Fruits of Illumin tion, I must add, that there is a vast Dir ference between the Fits and Flashes Mirth, and the Serenity of a fix'd and he bitual Delight; between the Titillations o Sense, and the solid Joys of the Mind and lastly, between the Pleasures of Fans and of Reason. And when I say, Illum nation consists in the Knowledge of pleasan and agreeable Truths, I mean it of ration Pleasure, an habitual Tranquillity of the Mind: And then the Matter is beyon Question. Whatever Truths do contribut to promote this, the Study and Content plation of them, must be our true Wisdom Toy, when 'tis folid and rational, does en large and exalt the Mind of Man: 'Ti as it were, health to the navel, and marro to the lones; it renders us more thankf

o God, more kind and courteous to Man. Tis an excellent Preparation to invite more lentiful Influxes of the Spirit of God. Hence id Élijah call for a Musical Instrument when e desired to prophesy: And we find the Company of Prophets rejoycing with Hymns, Susick, and Dances; all outward Testimonies f the inward Transports and Ravishments f their Minds. And as I am perswaded hat that which distinguishes a Godly Sorow, from a Worldly or Impious one, Reentance and Contrition, from the Agonies nd Perplexities of Despair, is the Peace and ranquillity which attends it; so am I perwaded, that God does press and invite us o Mourning and Sorrow for Sin, for this Reason, not excluding others, because it naturally leads on to Peace and Joy: A foft nd tender Sorrow distipating the Fears and Distresses of Guilt, like mild and fruitful showers that do lay Storms. In a Word, here is no fuch powerful Antidote against Sin, nor Spur to Holy Industry, as Holy Pleasure, Pious Joy, or Spiritual Peace and Tranquillity. This is a partaking or Anticipating the Powers of the World to come; and the mightiest Corroboration of every thing that is good in us. The Study then of such Truths, is true Wisdom. And Illumination thus far will confift in quitting those Errors which beget Melancholy, Su-perstition, Desperation; and in such Truths, M 3

as enlarge our View of the Divine Perfections, and exhibit to us a nearer Presence of his Goodness and Glory: Such, again, as unfold the Dignity of Human Nature, and the wise and gracious Ends of our Creation: Such, Lastly, as extend our Prospect, and enlarge our Hopes; support our

Frailties, and excite our Vigour.

4. The last Property of those Truths in the Knowledge of which Illumination confifts, is, that they are fuch as procure w a Reward. If we reflect upon those Three Heads, under which I ranged those Truth which Illuminated the Gentile and Jewill World, we shall easily discern how well they fit this Character: They fill the Mind with Joy and Peace, and make it abound in Hope; they purge the Man from his na tural Corruption, and fortify the Min against such Impressions, from outward Good or Evil in this World, as disquiet and rorment the Sinner; they procure him the Protection of God's Providence, and the Assistance of his Spirit in this Life, and they invite him to hope for Glories and Pleasures in another, far above any thing that the heart of man can conceive. God I the God of hope; He has all Fulness and Sufficiency in himself: And therefore blessed must all they be, who have the Lord for their God. Jesus is the Fountain of all Confolation; He is made unto us of God, wisdom

nd righteousness, and sanctification, and reemption: Happy is he that does rejoice Iways, and glory in him. Righteousness is State of Health and Strength, of Perfectin and Beauty, of Peace and Tranquillity, f Rest and Hope: Blessed are they who re possessed of it, who are made free from n, and become servants of God; who have beir fruit unto holiness, and the end everasting life. Such are already past from death o life; for the spirit of life and holiness, of lod and Glory, rests upon them. This is the Character that distinguishes Gospel Knowedge from all other Sorts of Knowledge. No Knowledge of Arts or Sciences, and nuch less the most exquisite Knowledge of Ill the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Darkress, can pretend to an Eternal Reward. A. thort and impure Pleasure, and a transient Interest, is all that this Sort of Knowledge can bestow, and very often, instead of Pleasure and Prosit, it requites its Disciples with Pain and Trouble. The Gospel only contains those Traths, which confer Life and Immortality on those that Believe and Obey them. 'Tis the Gospel alone that teaches us how we are to gain the Love and Favour of God; and 'tis God alone who rules and governs the visible and invisible World. He therefore alone is to be fear'd, and He alone is to be loved. Fear not them, faith our Saviour, Matth.

10. 28. which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. And St. John gives the same Presept concerning the World: Love not the world, neither the things of the world: And backs it by the same Reason; For the world passetb away, the lust thereof: But he that doth the will of God abideth for ever. That is, the Woll can at best but gratify for a Moment the Appetites of the Body, or the Desires of a senfual Fancy; therefore love it not; but love the Father, who after the Dissolution of the vital Union betwixt Soul and Body, is able to confer Life and Happiness on both to all Eternity.

Thus I have considered the Character of Illuminating Truths. And the whole of what I have faid amounts to these To Things. 1. There are Truths of very differ rent Kinds: Truths that are of no Ve; fuch are those which are either trifling or meetly notional, and can have no Influence ou Human Life: Truths that are of ill Vis fuch are those of which consists the Area of Sensuality, Avarice, Vanity, and Ambition: These are to be detested, the former to be contemned by all that feek after true Wisdom. Again, there are Truths of an inferior Use; such as concern our Fortunes, our Relations, our Bodies; and these may be allowed their proper Place, and a realonable fonable Value. But the Truths which concern the Peace and Pleasure, Strength and Liberty of our Souls; which procure us the Favour of God, and the Grace of his Spirit; the Truths, in a Word, which fecure our Temporal and Eternal Happiness; these are Illuminating Truths, these have a transcendent Worth, and inestimable Excellence, or Usefulness, and consequently can never be too dear to us. 2. Since the great Characters of Illuminating Truths do exactly fit the Gospel of Jesus, 'tis plain, that this is that System of Knowledge, which we are to study Day and Night; this is that Divine Philosophy, whose Principles and Laws we must incessantly revolve and ponder. 'Tis not without Reason, that the Psalmist bestows such glorious Elogies upon the Word of God, Psal. 19. and elsewhere: That he magnifies one while the intrinsick Excellence and Beauty, another while the Force and Efficacy of it; and ever and anon enlarges himself upon the Advantages, the unspeakable Advantages which reward the Meditation and Practice of it. Of all Perfections I have seen an end; but thy commandments are exceeding broad. They are pure, they endure for ever; they enlighten the eyes, and rejoice the heart. Moreover by them thy servant is warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward. That is, by them we are preserved from all real Evil, and put in Posses. Possession of, or entitled to, all real Good. How well did St. Peter answer, when our Lord asked his Disciples, Will ye also go from me? Lord, whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And how wisely did St. Paul resolve, to know nothing but Christ Jesus and him crucified? For he is the way, the truth, and the life; and in him are hid all the

treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

But after all, as there is a Form of Godliness, so there is a Form of Knowledge, without the Power of it. The Knowledge of the same Truths, as I observed in the Beginning, in different Persons, may be very different, as meeting with a very different Reception. Our Conceptions may be more clear or confused, more lively or faint, more perfect or maimed: And our Assent may be stronger or weaker. In some they may only float superficially, in others they may penetrate deeper: And the Degrees of their Influence and Operation will be certainly proportioned to the different manner of their Reception. For this Reason it will be necesfary to the right understanding of a State of Illumination, to Discourse,

2. Of the Nature of that Knowledge we must have of the former Truths; to shew, what fort of Conception we must form of them, what kind of Assent we must pay them, and what kind of Consideration we must employ about them. As I have there-

fore

fore laid down the Properties of those Truths, fo will I now lay down the Properties of that Knowledge of them, which is effential to Illumination.

1. Illuminating Knowledge must be deeply rooted. This our Saviour has taught us in that Parable, wherein he has observed to us, that the Seed which had not depth of earth, as it soon sprang up, so it soon withered and dried away. We often know (or pretend to do so) the Rudiments of our Religion, without the Grounds and Foundation of it. We embrace Conclusions, without examining the Principles from whence they flow; and contrary to the Advice of the Apostle, we are unable to give a reason to any one that asketh us of the faith, and the hope that is in us. And then ours is not properly Knowledge, but Opinion; 'tis not Faith, but Credulity: 'Tis not a firm Persuasion, but an easy customary Affent. And this is overthrown by every Temptation; defaced or much blurr'd by every Atheistical Suggestion or Prophane Objection. Does the World or our Lust tempt us, as the Devil did our First Parents, Te shall not surely die? How easily is that Faith shaken, which is no better founded? How easily is a Man induced to hope, that Sin is not very fatal and pernicious, that God will easily be prevailed with to paradon it, that the Flames of Hell are Metaphorical, and its Eternity a mistaken Notion and

and groundless Fancy, if he be ignorant of the true Reasons of God's Wrath and Indignation, which are founded in the very Nature of God and Sin? Whereas on the other Hand, he that well understands both these; the Deformity and Tendency of Sin, and the Holiness and the Purity of the Divine Nature, cannot but discern an irreconcileable Opposition between them; and be convinced, that were there no Tribunal erected for the Sinner, yet would Sin be its own Punishment; and that an intolerable Hell, consisting in the Disorder of Nature, an Exclusion from God, &c. would be the natural and necessary Issue of it. The Sum of this Argument is, That Knowledge, which has no deep Root, is subject to be overthrown by every Blast: That Faith which is little more than Credulity, does very feldom stand against any very rude Shock. Now the Grounds of our Faith and Duty are fully and clearly expounded in the Gospel: And here especially we must seek them. When I say this, I reject no Collateral Arguments, I resuse no Foreign Aids, which contribute any thing to con-firm and fortify our Belief of Gospel Truths. The Faith of St. Thomas did, in part at least, depend upon the Evidence of Sense. Thomas, because thou hast seen thou hast believed, John 20. 29. And so did that of the rest of them, who were Eye-witnesses of the

the Resurrection and Ascension of the Blessed Jesus. The Doctrine of One God, and a Judgment to come, may receive much Light and Strength from Natural Reason: And whatever establishes a revealed Truth, will be so far from diminishing, that it will encrease the Vertue and Efficacy of it. All. the Caution I think fit to give here is, that we be fure that the Ground be plain and firm, on which we build the Belief of an Illuminating Truth. Philosophy, in many Cafes is clear and convictive: St. Paul himfelf amongst the Gentiles frequently appeals to Reason. But too often we call our Fancy Philosophy; and obtrude upon the World, the wild and undigested Theories of a warm and confident Imagination, for new Discoveries. What strange Stuff was Gnostick Philosophy once? What did it produce but the Corruption of the Christian Faith? And what can be expected from Mystick, Enthusiastick Philosophy or Divinity in any Age, any Man may guess, without any deep Penetration. Nor do I doubt but that all judicious and experienced Men, do as much despise and nauseate the Blendures and Mixtures of pretended Philosophy with our Faith and Morals, as the World generally does the Subtilities and Perplexities of the Schools. For my part, I can't endure to have my Religion lean upon the rotten Props of preearious Notions. I admire, I love the Elevations and Enlargements of Soul: But I can have no Value for unaccountable Amusements or Rambles of Fancy. An Itch of Novelty or Curiosity has a Tincture in it of our Original Corruption. I ever suspect an Opinion that carries an Air of Novelty in it; and do always prefer a vulgar Truth before refined Error. They are vulgar Truths, which, like vulgar Blessings, are of most Use and truest Worth: And furely our Saviour thought fo, when he thanked his Father, that he had hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. And when he himself taught the People with Power and Authority, and not as the Scribes, he did advance no subtil Theories, but bright and dazling, useful and convictive Truths. This minds me of another Property of Illuminating Knowledge.

2. This Knowledge must not be obscure and confused, but distinct and clear. Where the Images of Things are slight, faint, and vanishing, they move Men but very weakly, and affect them but very coldly; especially in such Matters as are not subject to our Senses. And this I perswade my self is one chief Reason why those glorious and wonderful Objects, God, a Judgment to come, Heaven, and Hell, do strike us so feebly, and operate so little. We have generally no lively, distinct, and clear Conception of them: It being otherwise impossible, that Things

in their own Nature dreadful and amazing, should excite in us no Fear; or that Things in their own Nature infinitely amiable, should enkindle in us no Passion, no Desire. The Notions we have of Spiritual and Invisible Things are dim, dusky, and imperfect: Our Thoughts pass over them so flightly, that they scarce retain any Print or Traces of them. Now this Sort of Knowledge will never do the Work. These drowfy Notices of Things will never ferment and raise our Passions for Heaven high enough to confront and combat those we have for the World. From hence we may give a fair Account, what the Use is of Prophetick Retirement, and Prophetick Eloquence: What is the Purpose of all those Schemes and Tropes which occur in inspired Writings: And why the best of Men have ever so much affected Solitude and Retreats, from the Noise and the Hurry of the World. Serious, frequent, and devout Contemplation is necessary to form in our Minds, clear, distinct, and sprightly Notions: And to communicate these well to the World, they must be expressed in moving Language, in living Tropes and Figures. Ah! did we but consider this, we should sure allot more Time to the Study of Divine Truths; and we should not think, that to discover them throughly, it were enough to let our Thoughts glance upon them. But we should survey and and ponder them with all the Exactness and Diligence that were necessary to make lasting and distinct Impressions upon us. Could we know by Intuition, doubtless wonderful Objects would raise very extraordinary Passions in us. But this we cannot, let us come as near it as we can: Only let us avoid forming absurd and false Notions of Things, whilst we endeavour after distinct and clear ones. Spiritual Things do not answer Corporeal, like Face to Face in a Glass: And therefore, though to give some Light to Things that are above us, we may find out all the Resemblances of them we can in those Things we are acquainted with here below; yet we must still remember, that the one do vastly exceed the other, and that we cannot thus get a just and adequate Notion of them.

3. This Knowledge must not lie in the Understanding, crude and undigested; but it must be throughly concocted and turned into Nourishment, Blood, and Spirits. We must know the true Value and Use of every Principle, of every Truth; and be able readily to apply them. For what does it signify, how important Truths are in themselves, if they are not so to me? What does it avail that they are impregnated with Life and Power, if I feel not any such Instuence? Of what Use is the Knowledge of Gospel-Promises to me, if I reap no Comfort from them?

It the Knowledge of Gospel-Threats, if they re unable to curb and restrain my Passions? Ind so is it with other Truths: What will avail me that I know, the Life of man mists not in the multitude of the things which enoffesses, if notwithstanding I cannot conmy self with a Competenty? That Righmesses is the chief Good, and the richest fure of the Soul of Man; if notwithanding I feek this World, and the Things it, with a more early and passionate Conern? That Sin and Pain are the most conderable, if not only Evils of Man; if notrithstanding I be cast down and broken uner every Adversity? And thus I might go a, and shew you, that the Knowledge which not digested into Nourisbment is, if not a Jurden, of no Benefit to us. 'Tis plain, that to me nothing worth, which I make no se of. We must then follow the Advice f Solomon, and never quit the Search and Meditation of Truth; till we grow intimate nd familiar with it; and so have it always edy for a Guide and Guard for our Support nd Strength, and for our Delight and Pleawe. We must bind it about our heart, as he paks, and tie it as an ornament about our . Then, when we go forth it shall lead us, wen we sleep it shall keep us, and when we awake hall talk with us: For the commandment is Lamp, and the Law is light; and reproofs of Arustion are the way of life, Prov. 6. In a Word,

Word, nothing can render the most important Truths powerful and operative in us but such a Digestion of them by serious and devout Meditation, as may in a manner in corporate them with us. And this the Scripture plainly teaches, when to signifithe Force and Vertue of the Gospel about that of the Law, it uses these Words: Fe this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord I will put my laws into their minds, and will them in their hearts, Heb. 8. 10. intimating that no Laws, no Principles can ever influence us, till they be deeply imprinted in our Hearts.

To wind up all. There are several Kind of Knowledge of the same Truths: There a Knowledge which ferves us only as Pife Top did Moses; to shew us Canaan, but no to bring us into it. There is again, Knowledge which serves us only as the T lent did the wicked Servants; not to pro cure Rewards, but Punishments. And finall there is a Knowledge, which like the To lents in the Hand of the faithful and god Steward; enriches us first, and recommends w afterwards to higher Trusts and Dignities which improves and perfects our Natur first, and then puts us into Possession fuch Blessings, as only Nature thus improved and perfected is capable of. And this Knowledge must not be a slight, superficial

and undigested one; it must not be a conused and obscure, a weak and impersect ne: This is not the Knowledge which will oring forth those excellent Fruits, which ve have reason to expect from true Illuvination. But it must be a Knowledge that us all the quite contrary Characters: Even uch as I have before described at large. That this is an Observation of the greatest Weight and Moment is evident to any one vho will give himself Leave to make any eflection on the present State of Christiani-. For how does the Power of Darkness revail amidst the Light of the Gospel? low has the Devil erected his Throne in he midst of that Church, which should e the Kingdom of God? And Sin and Death reign where Life and Immortality re preached? Whence is this? Are Men igorant of those Truths which make up the ystem of true Wisdom? This is not easy o be imagined; scarcely of the darkest Corers of the Popish Churches, much less of urs. And therefore we must conclude, that his is because our Knowledge is not such as t ought to be, with respect to its Clearness, lertainty, and Digestion.

CHAP. II.

Of the Fruits and Attainment of Illumin tion. That Illumination does not depend 🖟 much upon a Man's outward Fortune, extraordinary Parts; acquired Learning, On as upon his Moral Qualifications, such m Humility, Impartiality, and Love of the Truth. 4. Directions for the Attainment of Illumination. 1. That we do not Suffer our Minds to be engaged in quest of Know ledge foreign to our Purpose. 2. That w apply our selves with a very tender and senfible Concern to the Study of Illuminating Truths. 2. That we alt conformable to thou Measures of Light which we have attain 4. That we frequently address our selves God by Prayer for the Illumination of h Grace. The Chapter concluded with a Pray of Fulgentius.

Aving dispatched the Notion of Illumination in the foregoing Chapter, and shew'd both what Truths, and what forto Knowledge of them is requisite to it; I am next to treat,

1. Of the Fruits: And,

2. Of the Attainment of it.

6. 1. As to the Fruits of Illumination I have the less Need to insist upon them, because whatever can be said on this Head, has been

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1 a manner anticipated: All the Characters f Illuminating Truths and Illuminating Knowde being such as sufficiently declare the lessed Effects of true Illumination. I will nerefore be very short on this Head; and nly just mention two Advantages of Illumination. vion. As the Use of Light is especially vosold, to delight and guide us; so do we cap Two Benefits from Illumination.

1. The first and most immediate one is, That it sets the whole Man, and the whole ife right; that it fixes our Affections on heir proper and natural Objett, and directs ll our Actions to their true End. I do not nean that the Understanding constantly and ecessarily influences and determines the Will, Experience tells us, that we have a fatal Liverty: That our Affections are too often Inlependant of our Reason; that we sin against the Dictates of Conscience; that we pursue false Pleasure, and a false Interest, in Oppoition to the true, and in plain Opposition to our Judgment too; at least to a sedate and olm one. And the Reason of all this is, because we consist of Two different and repugnant Principles, a Body and a Soul: And are sollicited by Two different Worlds, a Temporal and an Eternal one. But all this notwithstanding, 'tis certain that Illumination in the Mind has a mighty Influence upon us: For it is continually exciting in us wife Defires and excellent Pur-N3

poses: 'Tis always alluring and inviting us towards our Sovereign Good, and restraining and deterring us from Sin and Death: It alarms, disquiets, disturbs, and persecutes us as often as we err and wander from the Path of Life. In one Word, the great Work of Illumination, is, to be always representing the Beauties and Pleasures, and the Beatitude and Glory of Vertue; and remonstrating the Evils and Dishonours, the Desormities and Dangers of Vice: So that a Man will never be at Rest, who has this Light within him, that it be either ex-

tinguished or obeyed.

2. This Light within us, if it be followed and complied with, not muddied and disturbed; if it be not quenched and extinguished by wilful Sin, or unpardonable Oscitancy and Remissness; if, in a Word, its Influence be not interrupted, disperses all our Fears as well as Errors; creates an unspeakable Tranquillity in the Soul, spreads over us a calm and glorious Sky, and makes every thing in us and about us look gay, and verdant, and beautiful. The Dissipation of Pagan Darkness, and all Participations or Resemblances of it; Deliverance from a State of Bondage and Wrath, the Peace of God, the Love of Jesus, the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, the Immortality of the Soul, the Resurrection of the Body, the Perfection and Blessedness of Eternity. Good God! What

furprizing, what ravishing Themes are these for the Thoughts of an enlighten'd Soul to dwell upon! Blessed and happy is he who enjoys this Pleasure upon Earth. And that we may, I am now to discourse,

- §. 2. Of the Attainment of Illumination. Now whatever Advice can relate to this, may be reduced under Two Heads:
- 1. What Qualifications do render Man calpable of Illumination.

2. What it is that one duly qualified is to do in Pursuit of it,

6. 1. To begin with the Qualifications requisite to Illumination. One Man is distinguished from another several Ways: By his Estate or Fortune; By Natural or Acquir'd Endowments, and by Moral Dispositions: And each of these may have fome, though a very different Influence upon Human Perfection. For if we enquire after only the Essence and Integrity of Perfection; then are there two or three Moral Qualifications, which are all that is required in order to this: But if we enquire after the Largeness of its Stature, the Symmetry of its Features, the Lustre of its Complexion, and the Elegance of its Dress; then may we allow something to be ascribed to Fortune, to Nature, and a liberal Education. This is an Observation very necessary to be made. For tho?

is, Habitual Holiness, if it be not his own Fault; yet is not every Man capable of being equally Perfett, because of that acidental Variety which I have suggested, and which slows from different Gifts of God, which depend not on our selves. This being premised in order to prevent my being mistaken, I proceed and determine,

1. That Illumination depends not upon a Man's outward Fortune. There are indeed feweral Sorts of Knowledge which we can never arrive at without much Leisure, and much Expence: And in order to support the one, and enjoy the other, it is requifite that we be Masters of a good Fortum. Hence is that Observation of the Author Ecclesiasticus, Chap. 38. 24. The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leifure; and he that has little business shall become wife. And therefore in the following Verses, he excludes the Husbandman, the Statuary, the Engraver, the Smith, the Potter; and all consequently whose Time and Mind is to ken up in the Labours of their Profession, and in making the necessary Provision for Life; these, I say, he excludes from all Pretensions to Wisdom. How can he get wifdom that holdeth the plough, and that glorieth in the goad, whose talk is of bullocks, &c. But this is not the Wisdom that I am enquiring after, and which constitutes Illu-

mination.

mination. That consists not in the Laws of our Earthly but Heavenly Country: Not in Arts and Sciences which relate to the Body, and minister to a Temporal Life; but in those Divine Truths which purify the Soul, and minister to an Eternal one: No, not in Notional Improvements of the Mind, but in Spiritual and Vital ones. And therefore the Husbandman and the Artist, the Mechanick and the Trader, are as capable of this Sort of Wisdom, as the Man of Office, Money, or Quality. There needs no Wealth to render one the Child of Light and of the Day. There is the Book of Nature; the Book of Revelation: both the Books of God, both writ throughout with glorious Illuminating Truths: These lie wide open to every honest Christian. The Being and Nature of God; the Mediation of Jesus, and a Judgment to come; the Nature and Necessity of Holiness, are fully revealed, and unanswerably proved. And tho' every honest Man be not able to discover all the Arguments on which they stand, yet may he discover enough: And what is more, he may have an inward, vital, sensible Proof of them; he may feel the Power, the Charms of Holiness; Experiment its Congruity and Loveliness to the Human Soul; and observe a thousand Demonstrations of its serviceableness to the Honour of God, and the Good of Mankind: He may have a full and convictive Sense of the ManiManifestation of the Divine Perfections in the great Work of our Redemption; and the excellent Tendency of it may be so palpable and conspicuous to him, as to leave no room for Doubts or Scruples. But besides all this, there is a Voice within, there is a Divine Teacher and Instructor, which will ever abide with him, and lead him into all necessary Truths: All which is implied in those Words of our Lord, If any man will do his will he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self, John 7.17.

2. Extraordinary Natural Parts, such as

Sagacity or Acuteness of Judgment, strength of Memory, the Liveline's of Imagination are not necessary to Illumination. The Gospel, as I remember, takes no Notice of these. Such is the Beauty of Holiness, that it requires rather Purity of Heart, than Quickness of Apprehension, to render us enamour'd of it. And the very same thing may be faid of the Power and Energy of all Gospel Motives, and of the Proofs and Evidences too of Divine Truths. To convince and affest us, there is no need of Sagacity and Penetration, but Probity and Sincerity. However I have two or three Reflections to make here, which may not be unufeful: For though Acuteness and Retention, by which I mean Quickness in discerning, and Firmness in preserving Truth, be commonly accounted Natural Parts, and generally

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tre so; yet, I think, where the one or the oher are most defective, they may be much helped and wonderfully improved. To which end I remark, First, That those Defects of Understanding or Memory, which some are wont to accuse themselves of in Spiritual Things, are with more Justice to be imouted to Want of Concern and Affection for uch Things, than to any Incapacity of Nature. 'Tis plain, we easily understand, and easily remember, what we desire and love: And where-ever we follow the Imoulse or Conduct of strong Inclinations, we eldom fail of excelling. Let us therefore take care, that our Hearts be set upon the Things of God; and we shall soon see that our Judgment and Memory will no more fail us here, than in those Worldly Interests and Pleasures, which we are most intent upon. Secondly, As to Memory; it depends very much upon the Perspicuity, Regularity, and Order of our Notions. Many complain of want of Memory, when the Defect is in their Judgment. And others, while they grasp at all, retain nothing. In order then to relieve this Infirmity of Memory, it were an excellent way to confine our Search and Meditation to a few Objects, and to have these clearly and methodically handled. A Catechetical way of expounding and afferting the Rudiments of our Faith, if done as it ought to be, is of great Service to Perfons sons of all Capacities; but especially to those of meaner. For thus they may not only be enriched with the Knowledge of the molt afeful Things, and of the Grounds on which our Obligation either to Belief or Practice is bottom'd; but also may be furnished with general Principles of Reason, by which they may steer their Judgment in all Cases and with certain Heads of Faith and Morals, to which they may be able to reduce most of what they read or hear. Thirdle Tis with the Understanding as with the Eye of the Body: One sees further off, and in a fainter Light; but another sees as well with regard to all the Uses of Life who yet requires that the Object should be nearer, and the Light better. Men of flow Capacities must not be daring or precipitate in passing their Sentence, and forming their Notions. They must examine whether the Matters they enquire after be not too remote and obscure: Whether the Object may be brought nearer, and placed in a better Light; or whether they may be furnished with Telescopes or Microscoper fit for them. If not, they must quit the Search of such Truths as improper and unnecessary for them: By which means they will, at least, avoid being deceived or perplexed; which is no small Advantage. To be enriched with a kind of Universal Knowledge is a great Thing; but I doubt too great

owed with a Knowledge of necessary and nportant Truths; and to be freed from Erors and Perplexity in Matters of any Monnt: And methinks it were no great Excis of Modesty or Humility, for Man to be notent with this.

3. There is no great Need of acquired Learning in order to true Illumination. Our Saviour did not exact of his Disciples, as a necessary Preparation for his Doctrine, the Knowledge of Tongues; the History of Times, or Nature; Logick, Metaphysicks, Mahematicks, or the like. These indeed may be serviceable to many excellent Ends: They may be great Accomplishments of the Mind; great Ornaments and very engaging Entertainments of Life: They may be, finally, very excellent and necessary Instruments of, or Introductions to several Professions or Employments. But as to Perfection and Happiness, to these they can never be indispenfably necessary. A. Man may be excellently, habitually Good, without more Languages than one: He may be fully perswaded of those great Truths, that will render him Master of his Passions, and independent of the World; that will render him easy and useful in this Life, and glorious in another, though he be no Logician nor Metaphysician. Yet would I not all this while be supposed to exclude the Use of true Reason and solid Judgment. Though the meanest Capacity may attain to its proper Persection; that is, such a Measure of Knowledge, as may make the Man truly wise and happy; yet the more capacious any Man's Soul is, and the more enlarged his Knowledge, the more persect and happy he.

4. The Qualifications previously necessary to Illumination, are two or three Moral ones implied in that Infant Temper our Savious required in those who would be his Difar ples. These are Humility, Impartiality, and a Thirst or Love of Truth. First, Humility. He that will be taught of God must not be proud or confident in himself. He must not over-rate his own Parts and Capacity; not lean too stiffly to his own Understanding. He must firmly believe, that Illumination is the Work of God; and on Him be must depend. He must confess the Weakness of his own Faculties, the natural Poverty and Indigence of his Understanding; and so look up to God, who is the Fountain of Wisdom: and giveth Grace to the humble, but resistes the proud. Secondly, Impartiality, Sincerity or a certain Purity or Innocence of Judgment, If I may be allowed to speak so. That the Understanding may be capable of Divine Light, it must not be blurr'd and stained by false Principles: It must not be byass'd nor influenced by any corrupt Inclinations. Some to prove their Impartiality or Free-

of Judgment, abandon themselves to he Scrupulousness of Scepticism and a wanon Itch of endless Disputation and Conradiction. But I cannot think it necesary to our Freedom and Impartiality, to dey the Evidence of our Senses; to oppose ne Universal Reason of Mankind; and ro hake off all Reverence for the Integrity of Mn, and the Veracity of God. No, this avours too much, either of Ostentation, or a raw and unexperienced Affectation of new Theories and Speculations. He feures his Freedom fufficiently, who guards uis Reason against the Force of groundless Prepossessions, and senseless Modes and Cufthe Prejudices of Parties; who keeps a trict Eye upon the Motions and Tendencies of his inferiour Nature; who admits not the Dictates of a Single Person or Party for Catholick Reason; who considers, that there are Revolutions of Philosophy and Opinions as well as of States and Kingdoms; and judges well of Times and Men, Lere he pay much Deference to Authority. But, Thirdb, This is not all that is necessary to any compleat Degree of Illumination. Impartiality is necessary to the first Dawnings of it; but if we would have it encrease, and diffuse itself into a perfett Day of Spiritual Wisdom and Understanding, we must hunger and

and thirst after Truth. An unprejudiced Mind is necessary to qualify us for the first Rudiments of Truth; but we must be instamed with Desire and Love of it, ere we shall enter into the Sanctuary or Recesses of it: Therefore our Saviour invites to him every one that thirsts, John 7. 37. And St. Peter exhorts us, as new born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby, 1 Epist. 2. 2. And St. Paul imputes the Damnation of those that perish, to want of love of the truth, 2 Thest 2. 10. 'Tis too trifling to object here, how come we to thirst after what we do not know? For it concerns every Man to enquire what will become of him for ever; and if he be already assured that there is another World; and a glorious Salvation to be attained, it is natural to thirst after the Resolution of fuch Questions as these, What shall I do to be saved? What shall I do to inherit an Eternal Life? And such is the Beauty of Illuminating Truth, that every Glance of it kindles in our Hearts the Love of it: And fuch its boundless Perfection, that the more we know, the more still shall we defire to know. Having thus consider'd what qualifies Man for Illumination, my next Business is to enquire.

19. 2. What

§. 2. What one thus qualified is to do for he actual Attainment of it. All the Advice but I can think fit here to be given, may e reduced to Four Heads:

That we do not suffer our Minds to engaged in quest of Knowledge foreign to ur Purpose.

2. That we apply our selves with a very mader and sensible Concern to the Study of

luminating Truths.

3. That we act conformable to those Mea-

res of Light which we have attain'd.

4. That we frequently and conftantly ddress our selves to God by Prayer, for the lumination of his Grace.

1. That we do not fuffer, &c. This is natural and necessary Consequence of what as been already faid concerning Illuminaon. For if Illumination confist in the Knowdge, not of all fort of Truths, but the most ecessary and important, such as purify and rfett our Nature; such as procure us sad and stable Pleasure, and all the Rewards hat flow from our Adoption to God; it is hen plain, he who would be Perfect, ought ot to amuse and distract his Mind in Puruit of trifling or divertive Knowledge: That e ought to shun, and not to admit whatver is apt to entangle, perplex, or defile him; nd to fix his Thoughts, and confine his MediMeditations to the great Truths of the Gospel. He that knows the only true Gosand Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, know enough to oblige him to Vertue, and to ope the way to Glory and everlasting Life. It that knows nothing but Jesus Christ, and he crucified, knows enough in order to Pea Grace, and Joy; enough to promote Holimand Hope: Hope that abounds in joy a speakable and full of Glory.

2. We must apply our selves with a vetender and sensible Concern to the Study Illuminating Traths. This Rule must be uderstood to enjoin Three Things. 1. Gre Care and Caution in examining Doctrin proposed; and in distinguishing betwee Truth and Falshood. 2. Great Diligence a Industry to encrease and enlarge our Knowledge. 3. Frequent and serious Reslective

upon the Truths we know.

There is need of great Caution in a Tryal and Examination of Doctrines. The Scripture it felf frequently puts us mind of: And not without Reason; cause the Devil sows his tares amongst wheat; Errors, and these too satal and structive ones, are frequently obtruded on the World for the Revelations of Gand every Party, nay, every single Authlays the Stress of Salvation on their peliar and distinguishing Opinions. Below below

whieve not every spirit, but try the spirits wheher they are of God: because many false prothets are gone out into the world, I John 4. I. Tis needless to multiply Texts or Words n this Occasion. When the Peace and Purity of our Mind, the Rectitude and Happiness of our Lives, and the Blessedis of Eternity has so close and necessary Dependance upon the Doctrines we imlibe, that we hereby either secure or forin them; who sees not, unless he be stuold and infatuated, that greater Care and solicitude is necessary here, than in any Mater whatever, because there is no other of qual Moment? Bad Money, or bad Wares instead of good; an ill Title or Conveyance Instead of a firm and clear one, may imoverish us: Bad Drugs instead of good may nfest the Body, and destroy the Health: But what is all this to the dismal Consequences of Error and Heresy, which impo-parishes and infects the Mind, perverts the Use, and damns the Man to all Eternity? The Example of the Bereans is never fora: And indeed never ought to be on this Occasion. We must admit nothing hastily; Ment to nothing without examining the Founds on which it stands. Credulity, Premitation, and Confidence are irreconcilable Enemies to Knowledge and Wisdom.

2. We are to use great Diligence and la dustry to enlarge and encrease our Knows ledge. The Treasures of Divine Wishen are almost infinite; and it fares with those that study them, as with a Traveller when he ascends a rising Ground: Every new Ster almost enlarges his Horizon, and present new Countries, new Pleasures to his Eye 'Tis our own Negligence, if we do no daily extend the Compass of our Knowledge If our View of Things grow not more di tinct and clear, and our Belief of then more firm and steddy. This is to grow grace and in the knowledge of Christ Jan our Lord, 2 Pet. 3. 18. This is to have n eye of our understanding opened, Eph. 1. 1 This is to be filled with the knowledge of Go in all wisdom and understanding, Col. 1. This is, finally, for the word of God to do in us richly, Col. 3. 16. And of what h portance this is, is manifest from what have before proved: Namely, That III mination consists not in a credulous and grounded, in a flight and superficial, or confused and obscure, or impersect son Knowledge; but in a clear, distinct, fir and well established one. And the acq ring fuch a one demands a very dilig and an indefatigable Study of the Work Life. To fill the Mind with numero great, and beautiful Ideas, and these ch and distinct; to have them engraven

he Memory in deep and lasting Characters; have them lodged and disposed in that Wer, as to be able in an Instant to have Lecourse to them; to discern and demontrate plainly the Connexion and Dependance f one upon another, and the unquestionble Evidence of each; this is a Work of me and Labour; the Fruit of a Regular nd Assiduous Search after Truth; and if the apacities and Fortunes of all Men will fuffer them to come up to this, they nust come as near as they can. But if such Search as this be not necessary to penetrate he Depths, and to discover the Beauties of Divine Truths, or to convince the World and ur selves of the Certainty of them; yet certainly without it we shall never be able to extract their Force and Vertue, and to derive Purity and Nourishment from them; which is the next Thing implied in the Rule laid down.

3. We must make frequent and serious Restections on the Truths we do know. This again naturally sollows from the Notion of Illumination as it is before settled. For if it is not every Knowledge of the best Things that suffices for Illumination, but a Vital and Operative one, that is, a well-grounded, clear, distinct, and well-digested one, it is plain, that constant, daily, and devout Meditation is necessary to Illumination; because 'tis not a transient and perfunctory

functory Reflection upon the most important Truths; 'tis not a fleeting, rambling irregular, and defultory Meditation of them that will possess us with such a kind of Knowledge. To imprint a Truth in lively Notions upon our Minds, to digest it into Nourishment and Strength; and make it mix it self with all our Affections, and all our Actions, it is necessary that we dwell upon it with Constancy and Delight. And accordingly we find that excellent and elevated Souls, both under the Old Testamen and the New, have been daily, nay, almost hourly conversant in the Book of God: They have been passionately devoted to the Study of it, and delighted more in it, than in Treafures or Honours; than in the most profitable Employments, or engaging Diversions of Life. 'Tis this kind of Meditation on God, on Jesus, the World, and our selves, that can alone acquaint us thoroughly with each: 'Tis this kind of Meditation on Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell, that can make us wise unto Salvation.

The Sum of all that I have said on this Rule amounts to this: That Illumination is not to be attained without Labour and Travel. It is indeed the Gift of God: But such a one as he will never bestow but upon those who ask, and seek, and knock. Divine Bounty and Human Industry do here very well accord: The Spirit of God gene-

ally joins them together; and 'tis Boldness and Impiety in Man to go about to devide hem, Prov. 2. 4, 5, 6. If thou feekest her as Iver, and searchest for her as hid treasures; hen halt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord weth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowlage and understanding. Nor will any one urely think it much to devote his Time nd Labour to the Attainment of Illumination. For what is there that can more justly hallenge, or better deserve both? Can Pleaure? There is none but what flows from Wisdom, that is either pure, great, or lasting. Can Business? What Business can be of reater Importance, than what secures our Salvation, our Eternity? Wisdom then is the trincipal thing, therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting, get understanding, Prov. 4. 7. for without this, the most desirable Possessions and Pleasures of Life are but Cheats and Illusions, Mischiefs and Snares. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them; and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them, Prov.

3. That we act conformable to those Mea-Jures of Light which we have attained. The more spiritual we grow, the fitter we are for the Residence of God's Spirit, and the more capable of his Influences. The more we subdue all inordinate Affections, the clearer does the Understanding grow, and the more O 4 absolute absolute its Authority. The Grace of God. if it be complied with and obeyed, while it renders us more like God, renders us more dear to him too: And one Favour, it it be not our own Fault, qualifies us for another. Whoever shall observe the Sorntures, will find that Holiness and Illumin tion advance with equal Steps, and grow up by the same Degrees of Maturity: That as we pass on from the Infancy to the Manbood of Vertue, so do we from the first R. diments of Wisdom to the Heights and M. steries of it. But on the other hand, Lus obscures and eclipses the Light within: Sin depraves and corrupts our Principles: And while we renounce our Vertue, we quench or chase away the Spirit. Into a malicious Soul wisdom shall not enter; nor dwell in the book that is subject unto Sin: For the holy spirit of discipline will flee deceit, and remove from thoughts that are without understanding; and will not abide when unrighteousness cometh in Wild. 1. 4, 5.

4. We must frequently and constantly address our selves to God by Prayer, for the Illumination of his Grace. There is nothing that we do not receive from above: And if the most inconsiderable Things be the Gift of God, from what Fountain but from him can we expect Illumination? The Raptures of Poets, the Wisdom of Lawgivers, the noblest Pieces of Philosophy, and

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indeed all Heroick and Extraordinary Performances, were by the Pagans themselves generally attributed to a Divine Inspiration. And the Old Testament ascribes a transcendent Skill even in Arts and Trades to the Spirit of God. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if Illumination be attributed to Him in the New. Wisdom and Underflanding are essential Parts of Sanctity; and therefore must proceed from the sanctifying Spirit. We must therefore constantly look up to God, and depend upon Him for Illumination; we must earnestly pray in the Words of St. Paul, That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, would give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation, Eph. 1. 17. This Dependance upon God, in Expectation of his Bleffing on our Search after Knowledge, puts the Mind into the best Disposition and Frame to attain it: Because it naturally frees and disengages it from those Passions, Prejudices, and Distractions, which otherwise entangle and disturb it, and render it incapable of raised, ledate, and coherent Thoughts. But what is more than this, there are repeated and express Promises made it; so that it can never fail of Success: Ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened to you. The Reason of which is added; If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much

more shall your father which is in heaven grow good things (or as it is Luke 11. the Holy Spin rit) to them that ask him? Matt. 7. 7, 11. II any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraid eth not; and it shall be given him, Jam. 1. onor do I doubt but every good Man has these Promises verified to him. There are sudden Suggestions, unexpected Manifestanons, extraordinary Elevations of Mind, which are never to be accounted for, but by a Divine Principle. Nor does this Doctrino of Spiritual Illumination or Irradiation in the least diminish the Power and Excellence of the Gospel of Christ, no more than the Instruction of the Gospel does supersede that of the Spirit. For we must not think that the Spirit does now reveal any new Truth of general Use or Importance; since the Canon of Scripture would on this Supposal be but a defective Rule of Faith and Manners. But, First, The Spirit may affist us in making a fuller Discovery of the Sense of Scripture. Secondly, The Spirit may help us to form clearer and distincter Notions of those Things we have yet but an imperfect and general Knowledge of; and to fix and imprint them in more lasting, as well as more legible Characters in our Minds: Or it may recal to our Remembrance fuch Things as are obliterated and forgotten: en: Or finally, it may produce in us a more earnest and steddy Application to the Truth of God. Thirdly, I see no Reaion why the Spirit may not vouchsafe us parcicular Impulses, Directions, and Intimaross upon extraordinary Occasions, and sud-Emergencies; where Holy Writ affords is no Light, and Human Prudence is at a Ms. Nor does any thing that I attribute the Spiret in all this, detract or deroare from the Dignity or the Efficacy of be Scripture. This then I conceive is what he Spirit does in the Work of Illumination. But how it does, it is not necessary, nor, I loubt, possible to be determined. Nor ought our Ignorance of this to be objected against the Truth of Divine Illumination. We are fure we understand and remember, and exerlife a Freedom or Liberty of Will, in our Choices, Resolutions, and Actions: But the Manner how we do this, is an Enquiry that does hitherto, for ought I can see, wholly furpass and transcend our Philo-Tughy.

I will here close this Chapter with a Preyer of Fulgentius, Lib. 1. Cap. 4. After he has in the Beginning of the Chapter disclaimed all Pretences to the setting up himself a Master, Doctor, or Dictator to his Brethren, he breaks out into these devout and pious Words---- 'I will not cease to Pray, that our true Master and Doctor 'Christ

'Christ Jesus, either by the Oracles of his Gospel, or by the Conversation of my Brethren or Joint-disciples; or else by the secret and delightful Instruction of Divine Inspiration, in which, without the Ele-" ments of Letters, or the Sound of Speech, 6 Truth speaks with so much the sweeter, as the stiller and softer Voice; would vouch-' safe to teach me those things, which I may ' so propose, and so affert, that in all my Expolitions and Assertions, I may be ever found conformable, and obedient, and firm to that Truth, which can neither Deceive, nor be Deceived. For it is Truth ' it felf that enlightens, confirms, and aids ' me, that I may always obey and affent to the Truth. By Truth I desire to be informed of those many more Things which I am Ignorant of, from whom I have received the few I know. Of Truth ' I beg, through preventing and affifting Grace, to be instructed in whatever I ' yet know not, which conduces to the Interest of my Vertue and Happiness; to be preserved and kept stedsast in those 'Truths which I know; to be reformed ' and rectified in those Points, in which, as is common to Man, I am mistaken; to be confirmed and established in those Truths wherein I waver; and to be de-' livered from those Opinions that are erroneous or hurtful. I beg, lastly, that

Truth may ever find, both in my Thoughts and Speeches, all that found and whole-fome Doctrine I have received from its Gift; and that it would always cause me to utter those Things which are agreeable to it self in the first place; and consequently acceptable to all faithful Christians in the next.

CHAP. III.

Of Liberty in general. The Notion of it truly stated, and guarded. The Fruits of this Liberty. 1. Sin being a great Evil, Deliverance from it is great Happiness. 2. A Freedom and Pleasure in the Acts of Righteousness and good Works, 3. The near Relation it creates between God and us. 4. The great Fruit of all, Eternal Life, with a brief Exhortation to endeavour after Deliverance from Sin.

AFTER Illumination, which is the Perfection of the Understanding, follows Liberty, which is the Perfection of the Will. In treating of which, I shall, First, give an Account of Liberty in general: And then discourse of the several Parts of it; as it regards Wickedness, Unfruitfulness, Human Instrmities, and Original Corruption.

§. I. What

6. 1. What Liberty is. There have been feveral Mistakes about this Matter: But these have been so absurd or extravagant. fo designing or sensual, that they New not, I think, a serious Refutation. However, 'tis necessary in a Word or two to remove this Rubbilb and Lumber out of my Way, that I may build up and establish the Truth more easily and regularly. Some then have placed Christian Liberty in Deliverance from the Mosaick Toke. But this is to make our Liberty consist in Freedom from a Toke to which we were never subject; and to make our Glorious Redemption from the Tyranny of Sin and the Misery that attends it, dwindle into an Immunity from external Rites and Observances. 'Tis true, the Mosaick Institution, as far as it confisted in outward Observances and Typical Rites, is now dissolved; the Messias being come, who was the Substance of those Shadows; and the Beauty of Holiness being unfolded and displayed, without any Vail upon her Face. But what is this to Ecclesiastical Authority? Or to those Ecclesiastical Institutions, which are no Part of the Mosaick Yoke? From the Abrogation indeed, or Abolition of Ritual and Typical Religion one may infer, First, That Christian stianity must be a Rational Worship, a Moral Spiritual Service. And therefore, Secondly, That Human Institutions, when they en-JOYE

oyn any thing as a necessary and essential Part of Religion, which God has not made fo; or when they impose such Rites, as thro' the Number or Nature of them, cherish Superstition, obscure the Gospel, weaken its Force, or prove burthensome to us, are to be rejected and not complied with. Thus much is plain, and nothing farther. There have been Others, who have run into more intolerable Errors. For some have placed Christian Liberty in Exemption from the Laws of Man: And Others, advancing higher, in Exemption even from the moral and immutable Laws of God. But the Folly and Wickedness of these Opinions sufficiently confute them: Since 'tis notorious to every one, that Disobedience and Anarchy is as flat a Contradiction to the Peaceableness, as Voluptuousness and Luxury is to the Purity of that Wisdom which is from above. But how abfurd and wicked foever these Notions are, yet do we find them greedily embraced and industriously propagated at this Day; and behold, with Amazement, the baffled and despicable Gnosticks, Priscilianists, Libertines, and I know not what other Spawn of Hell, reviving in Deists and Atheists. These indeed do not advance their Errors under a Pretence of Christian Liberty, but, which is more ingenuous, and less scandalous of the two, in open Desiance and confessed Oppsition to Christianity. They tell tell us, that we impose upon the World false and fantastick Notions of Vertue and Liberty: That Religion does enslave Man, not fet him free; awing the Mind by groundless and superstitious Principles, and restraining and infringing our true and natural Liberty: Which, if we will believe them, confifts in giving Nature its full Swing; letting loose the Reins to the most head-strong Lusts, and the wildest and the most corrupt Imaginations. But to this, 'tis easy to answer, That while these Men attempt to establish their Errors, and fortify their Minds in them, by Arguments of fome fort or other, as they do; 'tis plain, that they suppose and acknowledge with us, That they ought to be ruled and governed by Reason: And if this be true, then, by undeniable Consequence, true Liberty must consist, not in doing what we list, but what we ought; not in following our Lust or Fancy, but our Reason; not in being exempt from Law, but in being a Law to our selves. And then I appeal to all the World, whether the Discipline of Vertue, or Libertinism; whether the Schools of Epicurus, or Christ, be the Way to true Liberty. I appeal to the Experience of Mankind, whether Spiritual or Sensual Pleasure; whether the Love of God and Vertue, or the Love of the World and Body, be the more like to qualify and dispose us to obey the

Dictates of sober and solid Reason. But Truth is, here is no need of Arguments: he Lives and Fortunes of Atheists and Deists roclaim aloud what a glorious kind of Lithey are like to bless the World with, Pet. 2. 19. Whilst they promise liberty, they Is selves are the servants of corruption. And Corruption draws on their Ruin. The Monourable and miserable Courses, in hich these poor Wretches are plunged, nd in which, generally, they perish bere their Time, are such an open Contra-Fion to Reason, that no Man doubts but at they have abandoned its Conduct, lat they have given themselves up to that Lust and Humour; and that they earoffly endeavour to force or betray their eason into a Compliance to screen themselves om the Reproach and Disturbance of neir own Minds, and from the Shame nd Contempt of the World. I have dwelt ng enough on this Argument. 'Tis now me to pass on, and resolve what Christian therty really is.

This is in a manner evident from what as been suggested already. For if Reason the governing Faculty in Man, then the sherty of Man must consist in his Substitution to Reason: And so Christian Liberty ill be nothing else but Subjection to Rean enlighten'd by Revelation. Two Things perefore are essential to true Liberty: A

clear and unbyaffed Judgment; and a Power and Capacity of acting conformable to it. This is a very short, but full Account of Liberty. Darkness and Impotence constitute our Slavery: Light and Strength our Freedom. Man is then free, when his Reason is not awed by vile Fears, or bribed by viler Hopes: When it is not tumultuously transported and hurried away by Lusts and Passions; nor cheated and deluded by the gilded Appearances of Sophisticated Good but it deliberates impartially, and commands effectually. And because the great Obstacl of this Liberty is Sin; because natural and contracted Corruption are the Fetters in which we are bound; because the law in the body wars against the law in the mind, obscuring the Light, and enfeebling the Authority of Reason; hence it is, that Christian Liberty is as truly as commonly described by a Dominion over the Body, by the subduing our corrupt Affections, and by D. liverance from Sin. This Notion of L. berty may be sufficiently established upon that Account of Servitude or Bondage which the Apostle gives us, Rom. 7. where he ro presents it as consisting in Impotence or Inability to do those things, which God com mands, and Reason approves: For to will i present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not, Ver. 18. Liberty there fore must on the contrary consist in being

ble, not only to will, but to do Good; in obeying those Commandments, which we cannot but acknowledge to be holy, and just, and good. And this is the very Notion which our Lord and Master gives us of it, Joh. 8. For, when the Jews bragg'd of their Freedom, he lets them know, that Freedom could not consist with Subjection to Sin: He that committeth sin is the servant of sin, Ver. 34. That honourable Parentage, and the Freedom of the Body, was but a false and ludicrous Appearance of Liberty: That if they would be free indeed, the Son must make them so, Ver. 36. i.e. they must, by his Spirit and Doctrine be rescued from the Servitude of Lust and Error, and be set at Liberty to work Righteousness. If ye con-tinue in my word, then are ye my Disciples in-deed; and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free, Ver. 31, 32. Finally, Not to multiply Proofs of a Truth that is scarce liable to be controverted, as the Apostle describes the Bondage of a Sinner in Rom. 7. so does he the Liberty of a Saint in Rom. 8. For there, Ver. 2. he tells us, That the law of the spirit of life has tet the true Christian free from the law of Sin and Death. And then he lets us know wherein this Liberty consists; in walking, not after the flesh, but after the spirit; in the Mortisication of the Body of Sin, and Restutution of the Mind to its just Empire and Authority. If Christ be in you, the boar is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness, Ver. 10. And all this is the same thing with his Description of Liberty, Chap. 6. where, 'tis nothing elle but for a Man to be made free from ling and become the servant of God. Thus then we have a plain Account of Bondage and Liberty. Yet for the clearer understanding of both, it will not be amis to observe that they are each capable of different Dgrees; and both the one and the other may be more or less entire, complear, and absolute, according to the different Progress of Men in Vice and Vertue. Thus, in some Men, not their Will only, but their very Reason is enflaved. Their Understanding is fo far infatuated, their Affections so me tirely captivated, that there is no Confident at all between the Mind and the Body They commit Sin without any Reluctant beforehand, or any Remorfe afterwards Their feared Conscience making no Remore strance, inflicting no Wounds, nor denouncing any Threats. This is the last Degree of Vassalage. Such are said in Scripture to be dead in trespasses and sins. Others there are, in whom their Lust and Appetic prevails indeed, but not without Opposition. They Reason rightly; and, which is the natural Result of this, have some Desire and Wishes of Righteousness: But through

the Prevalency of the Body, they are unable to act and live conformable to their Reason. Their Understanding has indeed Light, but not Authority: It consents to the Law of God, but it has no Power, no Force to make it be obeyed: It produces indeed some good Inclinations, Purposes, and Efforts; but they prove weak and ineffectual ones, and unable to grapple with the stronger Passion raised by the Body. And as Bondage, so Liberty is of different Degrees, and different Strength. For though Liberty may be able to subsist, where there is much Opposition from the Body, yet 'tis plain that Liberty is most absolute and compleat, where the Opposition is least, where the Body is reduced to an entire Submission and Obsequiousness, and the Spirit reigns with an uncontroul'd and unlimited Authority. And this latter is that Liberty which I would have my Perfect Man possessed of. I know very well 'tis commonly taught by some, that there is no fuch State: But, I think, this Doctrine, if it be throughly considered, has neither Scripture, Reason, nor Experience to support it. For as to those Places, Rom. 7: and Gall. 5. urged in favour of an almost incessant, strong, and too frequently prevalent lusting of the flesh against the spirit, it has been often answered, and proved too, that they are so far from belonging to the Perfect, that they belong not to P 3 the

the Regenerate. But on the contrary, those Texts that represent the Yoke of Christ easy, and his burthen light; which affirm the Commandments of Christ not to be grievous to such as are made perfect in love; do all bear Witness to that Liberty which I contend for. Nor does Reason favour my Opinion less than Scripture. For if the Perfest Man be a New Creature, if he be transformed into a New Nature; if his Body be dead to lin, and his spirit live to righteoulness; in one word, if the world be as much crucifi d to him, as he to it; I cannot see why it should not be easy for him to alt consonant to his Nature; why he should not with Pleasure and Readiness follow that Spirit, and obey those Affections, which reign and rule in him. Nor can I see why a Habit of Righteousness should not have the same Properties with other Habits; that is, be attended with Eafe and Pleasure in its Operations and Actions. 'Tis true, I can eafily see why the Habits of Righteousness are acquired with more Difficulty than those of any other kind: But, I fay, I cannot fee, when they are acquired, why they should not be as natural and delightful to us as any other. Lastly, How degenerate soever Ages past have been, or the present is, I dare not so far distrust the Goodness of my Cause, or the Vertue of Mankind, as not to refer my felf willingly, in this Point

to the Decision of Experience. I am very well assured, that Truth and Justice, Devotion and Charity, Honour and Integrity, are to a great many fo dear and delightful, so natural, so easy, that it is hard to determine, whether they are more frongly moved by a Sense of Duty, or the Instigations of Love and Inclination; and that they cannot do a base Thing without the utmost Mortification and Violence to their Nature. Nor is all this to be wonder'd at, if we again reflect on what I just now intimated, that the Perfect Man is a new creature, transformed daily from glory to glory: That he is moved by new Affections, raised and fortified by new Principles: That he is animated by a Divine Energy, and sees all things by a truer and brighter Light; through which the things of God appear lovely and beautiful, the Things of the World deformed and worthless; just as to him who views them through a Microscope, the Works of God appear exact and elegant; but those of Man, coarse, and bungling, and agly. My Opinion then, which afferts the bsolute Liberty of the Perfect Man, is sufficiently proved here, and in Chapter the First. And if I thought it were not, I could easily reinforce it with fresh Recruits, For the glorious Characters that are given us in Scripture, of the Liberty of the Children of God, and the bleffed Fruit of it, P 4

Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost, would easily furnish me with invincible Arguments: Nor would the contrary Opinion ever have been able to have kept the Field so long as it has done, had it not been favoured by a weak and decayed Piety; by the Fondnesses of Men for themselves, in spight of their Sins and Frailties; and by many mistaken Texts.

But that this Matter may, if possible, be freed from all Objections. 1. I here distinguish between Inordinate and Natural Affections. By Inordinate Affections, I mean the Tendencies of the Soul towards that which is Unlawful: By Natural, its Propension to the Body with which it is invested; the Desire of its Health and Ease, and the Conveniencies and Necessaries of Life for this end. Now when Religion enjoyns Repugnances to the former Appetites, the Obedience of the Perfect Man has no Reluctancy in it: But when it enjoyns Things, as fometimes occasionally it does, which thwart and cross the latter; here the Obedience even of Christ himself could not be exempt from Conflict; for our Natural Appetites, in this Sense of them, will never be put off till our Bodies be. I think this is so clear, it needs not be illustrated by Instances: Or else 'twere easy to shew, that though good Men have pra-Etised Temperance, Chastity, Charity, and other

other Vertues of this kind with Ease and Pleasure too; yet has Nature shrunk and fartled at Persecution and Martyrdom: Tho? ven here too the Courage and Resolution of some hath appeared to be much whove what Human Nature ever seem'd cabe ble of. 2. I do not in the least suppose that Nature is so changed, but that the Indinations to finful Pleasure, or Profit, or my other forbidden Object, will soon rewive again, even in the Perfect Man, unless he keep a Watch and Guard upon himself, and pass the time of his sojourning here in fear. Not to be subject to disorderly Desires, not to be liable to irregular Motions, is the Privilege of Souls when stripped of a Mortal Body, or cloath'd with an Immortal one. Till then, the Conjun-Etion of Flesh and Blood will ever render the poor Soul obnoxious to carnal and worldly Appetites: And the natural Appetites of the Body do so easily pass those Bounds that divide them from sinful ones, that the best of Men can never be secure, but when the Mind is taken up in Congaged in the Profecution of some just and honest Design, or amused by some innocent Recreation: For in these Cases the Body is either made the Instrument of Righteous-ms; or at leastwise, 'tis innocently busied and diverted from those Objects, to which it has too too impetuous a Tendency. I have now, I think, fufficiently stated the Notice of true Liberty; and, I hope, sufficiently guarded it: And have nothing to do bu to proceed to the Fruits of it; which wil ferve for so many Motives or Inducement to its Attainment.

6. 2. Of the Fruits of Liberty. These may be reduced under Four Heads.

1. Sin being a great Evil, Deliverand from it is great Happiness.

2. A Second Fruit of this Liberty is Good

Works.

3. It gives us a near Relation to God. 4. The great and last Fruit of it is Eter nal Life.

These are all comprised by the Apostle in Rom. 6. 21, 22, 23. What fruit had ye tho in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed. For the end of those things is death. Bu now being made free from sin, and become ser vants to God, ye have your fruit unto hold ness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God seternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord And these are the great Ends which the Gospel, that perfect law of Liberty, aims at and for which it was preached to the World

World; as appears from those Words of our and to St. Paul, Acts 26. 17, 18. Unto wom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from he power of Satan unto God; that they may weive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance awing them which are sanctified by faith that is me. I will here insist on these blessed fects of Christian Liberty; not only betuse the Design of the Chapter demands , but also to prevent the being obliged o any tedious Repetition of them herefter, under every distinct Branch of Chritan Liberty.

§. 1. Sin is a great Evil; and thereore Deliverance from the Dominion of it s a great Good. To make this evident, we need but reflect a little on the Nature and Effects of Sin. If we enquire into he Nature of Sin, we shall find that it s founded in the Subversion of the Dignity, and defacing the Beauty of Human Nature: And that it consists in the Darkness of our Understanding, the Depravity of our Afections, and the Feebleness and Impotence of the Will. The Understanding of a Sunner is incapable of discerning the Certainty and Force of Divine Truths, the Loveliness of Vertue, the unspeakable Pleasure which now flows from the great and precious Promises of the Gospel, and the

the incomparably greater which will one Day flow from the Accomplishment and Fruition of them. His Affections, which, if fix'd and bent on Vertue, had been Incentives, as they were defigned by God to noble and worthy Actions, being byass and perverted, do now hurry him on to lewd and wicked ones. And by these the Mind, if at any time it chance to be away ken'd and render'd fensible of its Happle ness and Duty, is over-power'd and oppress If this were not the true State of a Sinner if the Strength of Sin did not thus confist in the Disorder and Impotence of all the Faculties of the Soul, whence is it that the Sinner acts as he does? Is it not eviden that his Understanding is infatuated, when he lives as if he were meerly, wholly Body? As if he had no Soul, or none but one resulting from, and dissolv'd with, it Temperament and Contexture? One design'd to no higher Purpose, than to contrive minister to, and partake in its Sensualities! Is it not evident that He has little Expe-Etation of another World, who lays up he Treasures only in this; and lives as if he were born only to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof? 'Tis true, all Sinners are not equally stupid or obdurate: But even in those in whom some Sparks of Understanding and Conscience remain unextinguished, how are the weak Defires

no of Vertue baffled and over-power'd by much fronger Passions which they have the Body and the World? Do they not d themselves reduced to that wretch-State of Bondage, wherein the good that would do, that they do not; but the evil t they would not do, that is present with m? 'Tis plain then that Sin is a Disease our Nature: That it not only extin-ibes the Grace of the Spirit, and oblitees the Image of God stamp'd on the Soul its Creation; but also scatters and dif-Tes I know not what Venom and Infection orough it, that makes it eagerly pursue own Misery. 'Tis a Disease that produces ore intolerable Effects in the Soul, than y whatever can in the Body. The Preminancy of any noxious Humour can eed no Pain, no Disturbance, equal to lat of a predominant Passion: No Scars Ruins which the worst Disease leaves thind it, are half so deformed and loathme as those of Vice: Nay, that last Change, hich Death it self produces, when it onverts a beautiful Body into Dust and ottenness, is not half so contemptible or hatel as that of Sin; when it transforms lan into a Beast or Devil. If we do not et sufficiently comprehend the Nature of in, by viewing it as it exists in our Minds nd Hearts, we may contemplate it in our actions. And here, 'tis Blindness and Folly, Rashness and Madness, Incogitance Levity, Falshood, and Cowardise; 'tis every thing that is mean and base: And this aggravated by the most accursed Inguitude that Human Nature is capable of These and the like Resections on the Nature of Sin, cannot chuse but render hateful. And if,

Secondly, We make any ferious ones the Effects of it, they cannot fail of the dering it frightful and dreadful to us. The Effects may be especially reduced to Three 1. The ill Influence Sin has upon our To poral Concerns. 2. Guilt. And, 3. Fear. A to the First of these, I shall only say, the we fuffer very few Evils but what a owing to our own Sins: That it is ver rarely any Calamity befals us, but we man put our Finger on the Fountain, the Su I mean, from whence the Mischief flow Whence come wars and fightings amongst you faith St. James, come they not from your last which war in your members? This is ever jot as applicable to Private as Publick Cor tentions: And where envy, strife, and out tention is, no evil work, no Disaster will o long ablent. I might run through all the different Kinds of Evils that infest the Be dy, or embroil the Fortune; that blast ou Hopes, or stain our Defires: And eals shew, that they all generally spring from

ur Vices. Nay, what is worse yet, I could new that Sin converts our good things into el, and our Enjoyments into Punishments: hat it renders the slightest Evils intolerable; irns Scratches into Wounds, and Wounds to Gangrenes. But this is too copious a ubject; and would infenfibly render me 'oluminous, when I would be as short as ossibly I can. A Second Effect of Sin is which is nothing elfe, but a Confeiusness of having done ill, and an Obligaon to Punishment resulting from it. And lough Men often sin with Hopes of Imunity, yet it is hard to imagine, even on his Supposal, that they should sin without uffering the Reproaches of their own Minds; which furely must be very uneasy to them: To be perpetually vex'd at one's own Folly; o commit those things which we inwardly ondemn, and be in continual Pain lest they hould come to Light; to be always displeased it one's felf, and afraid, not only of the Reflections of others, but our own: This is, methinks, a great Evil, did no other attend our Sin. But, Thirdly, Fear is almost inseparably join'd with Guilt: For Guilt does not only damp the Chearfulness, and enfeeble the Vigour of the Mind, it does not only destroy that Confidence Man would otherwise naturally have in God, and render him Cowardly and Pusillanimous; but it terrifies his Soul with melancholy Apprehensions, henfions, and makes him live continually in Fear of Death and Punishment. And thus the Scripture represents the State of a Sinner: The wicked flee when none pursue; but the righteous are bold as a lion, Prov. 28. I. If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things, I John 3.2. There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord, Isa. 48. 22. To deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage, Heb. 2. 15. The sinner in Zion are afraid, fearfulness has surprise the Hypocrites; who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among st us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? Isa. 33. 14. Nor let any one wonder, that notwithstanding the outward Gayety of the Sinner, the Spirit thus describes the inward Condition of his Soul. As long as Men retain the Belie of a God, it is impossible they should wholly free themselves from the Fear of him. They may indeed forget him in the Fits of Lust or Passion: But in their Intermissions his Terrors will return upon them with more Violence. Again, as long as Men retain the common Principles of Truth and Justice; if they acknowledge but the Obligation of that universal Law, Thou shalt do to others, as thou wouldest they should do unto thee, 'tis impossible they should reflect on their Sins without Regret and Uneasiness; for there is no Sin but has more or less.

Re-

pugnancy in it to Truth, Justice, and Good-Finally, As long as Men are perladed that there is fuch a Faculty as Conhave, that God has prescribed them a Law, and that they are accountable to Him; the Conscience cannot chuse but by Fits, nd upon Occasions, scourge and torture, line and gash them. And 'tis a hard natter to wear out these Notions: They are matural and obvious; the Proofs of them o clear; their Reputation and Authon the World is so well established; and Providence of God so frequently inculthem. Men may eafily wear out all me of the Beauty, and of their Obligams to the Heights and Perfections of Ver-But they cannot fo eafily do this in ference to Vertue in genéral; because 'tis mper'd and accommodated to Human Nare and Society; and necessary to the toleble Well-doing of the World. Men may on, I confess, extinguish their Christiabut not Humanity: And while this repins, Sin will leave a Stain and Guilt beit; and Guilt will be attended by Unfiness and Fear. The very Pagans, who advanced so far in Wickedness, as to given up to all dishonourable Passions, to commit all uncleanness with greediness, not yet so mortified and stupisfied their more, but that it gave much Disturthat they knew the judgment of God, that the which committed such things, were worthy of death. And Rom. 2. 15. Their conscience are said to accuse and condemn them. And 'tis of very wicked Men, that the Author to the Hebrews affirms, that through fear death they were all their life-time subject

bondage.

But are there not, will some say, many Ingenuous and Brave Spirits, who have de persed those vain Spectres, and burst those superstitious Fetters, by which you labout to scare and enslave the World? I do no doubt, indeed, but that there are too m ny who have vigorously endeavour'd cashier all Principles of Natural and R vealed Religion, and utterly to extinguil all Conscience of Good and Evil. But the is fuch an Attempt, in which, I confe I could never have believed, that the mode daring Sinner could have proved successful had not the Scriptures told me, that the are some who are past feeling, Eph. 4. 19 of a seared Conscience, 2 Tim. 4. 2. who not ashamed when they have committed iniqui neither can they blush, Jer. 6. 15. who good evil, and evil good; that put darkne for light, and light for darkness; that p bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, 19 5. 20. Such Sinners there are then: Bu what does this amount to? What can the Sense or Example weigh? I am sure thes PQ0.

Wretches are as far distant from any Happiness, as from Sense; and derive our Pity, not Imitation. As will early appear from these following Considerations.

Tis true, Conscience depends upon Innion: But what if this Opinion depend son Sense and Truth? What if it be built on the Demonstration of the Spirit and of wer? In what a deplorable Condition are the Men of Wit? The Fear of an angry a fundament to come, and an Hell, is no memon or ordinary Fear. 'Tis not the Fear a Scratch or Wound in the Body; of a ffle in the Pursuit of Preferment; or a sappointment in that of Pleasure; 'tis not be Loss or the Forfeiture of Estate, in part, whole a 'Tis not a Pleasure and Party. whole: 'Tis not a Blot upon our Repution; 'tis not the Death of a Child, a Broer, or, what is more, if he be fuch, a riend: 'Tis not any thing of this kind nat is the Object of this Fear; but Misery are and unallay'd; complicated, accumumed Misery; Misery unalterable, incurable, ad lasting as long as Eternity. Methinks, fore one should venture on a Sin, which whreatned with fuch a State as this; and much more, before one should resolve to outinue in it, it were reasonable to be vey sure, that the Notion of a Hell were Me, and the Doctrine of Eternal Punishvens a meer Bugbear. Nay, I protest, in a Q 2

Matter of this Importance, I think on should scarce trust to a Demonstration, un less it had passed the Test of the most said and impartial Part of Mankind, and stood the Shock and Tryal of many Ages. But alas, after the utmost Efforts of Wit and Lust, what has ever yet been produced that has been able to undergo the Excel nation even of an honest Man? What guments have yet been started against Judgment to come, that have been able work upon any who were truly serious the Point? And if a Judgment to co why not an Hell? Revelation is plain and Reason can find no Inconsistency the Doctrine. Human Laws punish a simple Offence sometimes with Death or Bank ment; with Loss of Estate: And by this, and divers other Ways, extend the Punishmen of the Criminal to his Posterity: That make it as Eternal as they can. And she it be thought unjust in God to punish repeated Provocations of an impenitent Life the Neglect of that great Salvation wrough by the Blood, and published by the Mon of his dearly Beloved Son; and all this fully in Defiance of the Light of the Golf and Solicitations of the Spirit; in Defiant of Mercies and Chastisements; shall it, I in be thought unjust in God to punish this a miserable Eternity? When Infinite Goods has in vain tried all imaginable Means reclass Jum a Sinner, what has he to complain If God leave him to the Effects of his a Choice? Sin, as it alienates our Af-Mons from God here, so must it certainly dude us from his Presence and his Fawe bereafter. And what can be the Case that wretched Creature, who is banished over to those black and dismal Regions, ich no Ray, no Influence of Divne Goodcan ever reach? Where shall those un-Creatures dwell, which shall be chaby the Presence and Glory of God out of new Heavens and the new Earth, (or ich rather can never approach either) in that outward Darkness, which is partfrom the World of the Bleffed by an unable Gulph? Ah then! if this be so, what wretched Men gain by growing impuin Wickedness? Alas! the more insen-Men are of the Deformity and Danof Sin, the more desperate their State, more incurable their Disease; and the wer they to Death and Destruction: My hat shall not always strive with man. This is need a bleffed Advantage, to stand upon Brink of Damnation! 'Tis a glorious bary, to have defeated all the Means of are and Happiness! 'Tis an Heroick Atsement to be able to extinguish all true We and Reason, as well as Religion, and mome impregnable, impenetrable to all cuments, to all Motives which either the Q 3

tenderest Love or the profoundest Wife of God and Man can attack us by!

2. I cannot but think that those Men, who for the most part are obiaand insensible, do suffer some, though Returns of Anxiety and Fear. Why else they such avowed Enemies to Solitude Retirement? To all serious and calm flections, that they are ready to take up a most trifling and contemptible Business Diversion? nay, tired with a dull and to less Repetition of a Folly; they chuse to peat it to their Lives End, rather than alone, and thoughtful? What is this, but confess that there is something within whe they are afraid to awaken? That there fuch a Brightness in Divine Truth, that the dare not open their Eyes upon it, less should fill their Souls with the Terron God? This Height of Wickedness there best is a State fit only for Fortunate Sinwho can rowl and tumble from Follow Folly, from one Impertinence or Extra gance to another, endlesty: And yet w becomes of these poor Things, when Disaster, when a Disease, nay, but a n ful Hour by Night forces them to into themselves?

3. A Sinner does not soon arrive at State of Insensibility. It costs him dear to grow impudent in his Lust. Manage a Pang, many a Torment has he suffer

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iff; often has he felt the Wounds of Conience; often has he trembled and shrunk the Menaces of God. The Soul can no nore be reconciled to Sin, than the Body o Excess, but by passing thorough many winful and sickly Fits, many uneasie Pangs nd Qualms. And is it not worth the Mile to endure so much in order to be damed? Is it not an infallible Mark of more man vulgar Wisdom, to purchase Misery at b dear a rate? To endure hardship as good Idiers of Christ Jesus, for a Crown, a never-fading Crown, this with them is an Unertaking that deserves to be exposed, and hed with the utmost Severity of Spight ind Confidence: But to suffer, as it were, epeated Martyrdoms to gain an Hell, this is what they think becomes Men of their Parts nd Gallantry. Bleffed God! to what degree of Madness and Stupidity may Men of he finest Natural Parts sink, when abanfuned by Thee? Or rather, when they hemselves abandon Thee, and that Light which Thou hast set up in the World? Our Lord and Master thought the Profits and Pleasures of the whole World a poor Compensation for the Loss of the Soul: What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, &c. Matt. 16. But these Men rather than it should not perish for ever, will charge through Shame and Pain, Re-God Q 4

God has set between us and a desperiment

Height of Wickedness.

4. Though a Sinner may come to the Pass, as to suppress his Conscience, and ster his Fears, yet he must ever be conferent to himself of the Frustlessness and the Mean ness of a Course of Sin. He must need be inwardly sensible, that he has we rehimself to commit Iniquity to no purpose that his Mind has been restless and temper stuous, like a troubled sea, casting up its on mire and dirt: He must be conscious to him felf, that he is falle and unjust, unconst and ingrateful, and in Bondage to Such Luff as are mean and poor, and injurious to him Repose, and which he has often wished him felf free from. And this, no doubt, mult be a bleffed Condition, when a Man's our Mind does to his Face assure him, That is that very Thing which all the world on demns and scorns, and which he cannot and dure to be charged with, without resenting it as the highest Affront! Certainly it were better that all the World should sall Fool, and Knave, and Villain, than that should call my felf so, and know it to be true. My Peace and Happiness depends up on my own Opinion of my self, not that w others: 'Tis the inward Sentiments that I have of my self, that raise or deject me; and my Mind can no more be pleased with any Sensation but its own, than the Body C2.0 her's Palate.

5. The more insensible a Sinner grows, he more intolerable is the Disorder and Disr stion which Sin produces in his Affairs. While Men are under any little Restraints M Conscience; while they are held in by ruples, and Fears, and Fits of Regret; while, in a word, they sin with any Mofy, so long Sin will tolerably comport with their Interest and Reputation; but as bon as they grow insensible and impudent, they pass all Bounds, and there is nothing o dear and considerable to them, which they will not sacrifice to their Wickedness. Now Vise and Children, Friends, Estate, Laws, Vows, Compacts, Oaths, are no stronger Ties to them than Sampson's Withes, or Cords. Such an one as this is very well de-Cribed in the Prophet; Thou art a swift Dronedary, traversing her ways; a wild Ass used o the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? Jer. 2. 23. And again, he is firly represented to an Horse rushing into the Rettel. He has as much Contempt for his Mefety and Happiness, as for Reason and Relegion; he defies Shame, Ruin, and Death, as much as he does God and Providence: In one word, with an impudent and lewd Stupidity he makes all the haste he can to be windone; and fince he will be fo, it were well if he could be undone alone. I am fure we have too many Instances at this Day of the miserable and satal Effects of Atheism and Deism, to leave any Room to doubt whether I have strained the Point here or no.

Upon the whole it does appear, That Sin is a great Evil; and that the Evil of it is not lessen'd, but encreased by Obduration. And from hence the Proposition inferr'd does naturally follow, That Deliverance from it is a great Good; so great, that if we estimate it by the Evil there is in Sin, Health to the Sick, Liberty to the Captive, Day to the benighted, weary, and wandering Traveller; a Calm, a Port to Passengers in a Storm; Pardon to Men adjudged to Death, are but weak and imperfect Images or Resemblances of it. A Disease will at worst terminate with the Body, and Life and Pain will have an End together: But the Pain that Sin causes will endure to all Eternity; for the worm dies not, and the fire will not be quenched. The Error of the Traveller will be corrected by the approaching Day, aud his Weariness refreshed at the next Stage he comes to; but he that errs impenitently from the Path of Life, is lost for ever: When the Day of Grace is once set upon him, no Light shall e'er recal his wandering Feet into the Path of Righteoufness and Peace; no Ease, no Refreshment shall

shall e'er relieve his Toil and Misery. Whilst the Feet of the Captive are loaded with Fetters, his Soul may enjoy its truest Liberty; and in the midst of Dangers and Dungeons, like Paul and Silas, he may fing Songs of Praise and Triumph: But the Captivity of Sin defiles, oppresses, and enslaves the Mind, and delivers up the miserable Man to those intolerable and endless Evils, which inexorable Justice and Almighty Wrath inflicts upon Ingratitude and Obstinacy. A Storm can but wreck the Body, a frail and worthless Bark; the Soul will escape safe to Shore, the Blessed Shore, where the happy Inhabitants enjoy an undisturbed, an everlasting Calm: But Sin makes Shipwreck of faith and a good Conscience, and he that perishes in it does but pass into a more miserable State; for on the wicked God will rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest; this shall be their portion for ever, Psal. 11. And, Lastly, A Pardon sends back a condemned Criminal to Life, that is, to Sins and Sufferings, to Toils and Troubles, which Death, if Death were the utmost he had to fear, would have freed him from: But he that is once delivered from Sin, is past from Death to Life, and from this Life of Faith, of Love, of Hope, shall soon pass to another of Fruition and Glory.

6. 2. A Second Fruit of Liberty is Good Works. Here I will shew Two Things: First, and this but briefly, That the Works of Righteousuess contribute mightily to our Happiness; and that Immediately. Secondly, That Deliverance from Sin removes the great Obstacles and Impediments of Righteousness, and throws off that Weight which would otherwise encumber and tire us in our Race. 1. Holiness is no small Pleasure, no small Advantage, to him who is exercised therein. When Nature is renewed and restored, the Works of Righteousness are properly and truly the Works of Nature: And to do Good to Man, and offer up our Praises and Devotions to God, is to gratify the strongest and most delightful Inclinations we have. These indeed are at first stifled and oppressed by Original Corruption, Filse Principles, and Vicious Customs: But when once they have broke through these, like Seeds through the Earthy Coats they are enclosed and imprisoned in, and are impregnated, warmed, and cherished by an Heavenly Influence, they naturally shoot up into good Works. Vertue has a Coelestial Original, and a Coelestial Tendency: From God it comes, and towards God it moves: And can it be otherwise than amiable and pleasant? Vertue is all Beauty, all Harmony and Order; and therefore we may view and review, consider, and reslect upon it with Delight.

is makes our Affairs naturally run smoothly and calmly on; and fills our Minds with courage, Chearfulness, and good Hopes. In one Word, Diversion and Amusements give as a fanciful Pleasure; an animal sensitive Life, a short and mean one: Sin, a deceitful, fulse, and fatal one: Only Vertue, a pure, a sational, a glorious, and lasting one. And this is enough to be said here: The Loveliuss of Holiness being a Subject which ever and anon I have Cocasion to engage in.

2. I am next to shew, That Deliverance from Sin removes the Impediments of Ver-This will easily be made out, by exmining what Influence Selfishness, Sensualay, and the Love of this World, which are the Three great Principles or Sources of Wickedness, have upon the several Parts of Evangelical Righteousness. 1. The First Part is that, which contains those Duties that more immediately relate to our selves. These are especially Two, Sobriety and Temperance. By Sobriety, I mean a serious and impartial Examination of Things; or such a State of Mind as qualifies us for it. By Temperance, mean the Moderation of our Affections and Enjoyments, even in lawful and allowed Instances. From these proceed Vi-gilonce, Industry, Prudence, Fortitude; or Pa-Proce and Steadiness of Mind in the Profecution of what is best. Without these

'tis in vain to expect, either Devotion to. wards God, or Justice and Charity towards Man. Nay, nothing good or great can be accomplished without them: Since with. out them we have no Ground to hope for, either the Assistance of Divine Grace, or the Protection and Concurrence of Divine Providence. Only the pure and chaste Soul is a fit Temple for the Residence of the Spirit. And the Providence of God watches over none, or at least none have Reason to expect it should, but such as are themselves vigilant and industrious. But now, how repugnant to, how inconfistent with those Vertues, is that Infatuation of Mind, and that Debauchery of Affections, wherein Sin confifts? How incapable either of Sobriety or Temperance do Selfishness, Sensuality, and the Love of this World, render us? What a false Estimate of Things do they cause us to form? How insatiable do they render us in our Desire of Juch Things, as have but false and empty Appearances of Good? And how imperiously do they precipitate us into those Sins, which are the Pollution and Dishonour of our Nature? On the contrary, let Man be but once enlightned by Faith; let him but once come to believe, that his Soul is himself, that he is a Stranger and Pilgrim upon Earth, that Heaven is his Country, and that to do good Works is to lay up his Treasure in it; let him, I fay,

[say, but once believe this, and then, how Sober, how Temperate, how Wife, how Viilant, and Industrious will he grow? And this he will foon be induced to believe, if he be not actually under the Influence of vicious Principles, and vicious Customs. When the Mind is undeceived and difbused, and the Affections disengaged, 'tis vatural to Man to think calmly, and to deire and enjoy with a Moderation, suited to and sober Notions of worldly Things: For this is to think and act as a Man. A Second Part of Holiness regards God as its immediate Object, and consists in the Fear and Love of Him, in Dependance and Self. Resignation, in Contemplation and Devotion. As to this, 'tis plain, that whoever is under the Dominion of any Sin, must be an Enemy, or at least a Stranger to it. The Infidel knows no God; and the Wicked will not, or dares not, approach one. Their Guilt, or their Aversion keeps them from it. Selfishness, Sensuality, and the Love of the World, are inconsistent with the Love of the Euther, and all the several Duties we owe him: They alienate the Minds of Men from Him, and set up other Gods in his room. Hence the Covetous are pronounced guilty of Idolatry, Col. 3.5. and the Luxurious and Unclean are said to make their belly their God, and to glory in their shame, Phil. 3. 19. But as foon as a poor Man discerns

discerns that he has set his Heart upon false Goods; as soon as he finds himself cheated and deceived in all his Expectations by the World, and is convinced that God is his proper and his Sovereign Good; how natural is it to turn his Desires and Hopes from the Creature upon the Creator? How natural is it to contemplate his Greatness and Goodness, to thirst impatiently for his Favour, and dread his Displeasure? And such a Man will certainly make the Worship of God a great Part, at least, of the Business and Employment of Life. With this he will begin, and with this he will end the Day: Nor will he rest here; his Soul will be ever and anon mounting towards Heaven, in Ejaculations; and there will be scarce any Action, any Event, that will not excite him to praise and adore God, or engage him in some wise Reflections on his Attributes. But all this, will the Loofe and Atheistical fay, may be well spared, 'tis only a vain and idle Amusement. War and Peace, Bu siness and Trade, have no Dependance upon it; Kingdoms and Commonwealths may stand and flourish, and sensible Men may be rish and happy without it. But to this I answer, Religion towards God is the Foundation of all true Vertue towards our Neighbour. Land would want the better part of their And thority, if they were not enforced by an Awe of God: The wisest Counsels would

tive no Effect, did not Vertue and Religion and Comomealths would be dissolved, and burst Pieces, if they were not united and held by these Bonds: And Wickedness would educe the World to one great Solitude and win, were it not tempered and restrained, only by the Vertues and Examples, but the Supplications and Intercessions too, of for none to make, but the Sottish and In Ignorant; Men of desperate Considence, and little Knowledge. For who ever is able consider, by what Motives Mankind has ver been wont to be most strongly affected; what Principles the World has ever been and governed; how great an Interest ven Superstition has had, either in the vilizing and Reforming barbarous Natiis; or the Martial Successes of the first ounders of Monarchies, and the like; whover, I say, is able to reflett, though but ghtly, on these Things, can never be so ly, as to demand what the Use of Religion , or to imagine it possible to root up its Impority in the World.

The Third Part of Holiness regards our sughbour; and consists in the Exercise of rath, Justice, and Charity. And no where the ill Influence of Selfshness, Sensuality, and the Love of the World, more notoristhan here: For these rendring us impa-

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tient and insatiable in our Desires, violent the Prosecution of them, extravagant ar excessive in our Enjoyments; and the Thin of this World being few and finite, and u able to satisfy such inordinate Appetites; v stand in one another's Light, in one another Way to Profit and Pleasures, or, too of at least, seem to do so: And this must un voidably produce a thousand miserable Co fequences. Accordingly, we daily fee the these Passions, Selfsbness, Sensuality, and t Love of the World, are the Parents of En and Emulation, Avarice, Ambition, Str and Contention, Hypocrify and Corrupti Lewdness; Luxury and Prodigality; but : utter Enemies to Honour, Truth and Integ ty; to Generosity and Charity. To obvin therefore the mischievous Effects of th vicious Principles, Religion aims at impla ing in the World others of a benign and neficent Nature; opposing against the L of the World, Hope; against Selfishness, C rity; and against Sensuality, Faith: And the end the different Tendency of these ferent Principles may be the more con cuous, I will briefly compare the Eff they have in reference to our Neighbor Selfishness makes a Man look upon World as made for him alone; and w all as his Enemies, who do any way in fere with, or obstruct his Designs: It s up all our Treasures; confines all our Care a

loughts to our private Interest, Honour, Pleasure; employs all our Parts, Power, Mealth, and all our Time too, in Puruit of our particular Advantage. Sensuan tempts a Man to abandon the Care and oncern for his Country, his Friends and Mations, and neglect the Duties of his Stam, that he may give himself to some sot-In and dishonourable Vice: It prevails oth him to refuse Alms to the Poor, As-I nee to any publick or Neighbourly good York, and even a decent, nay, sometimes a fary Allowance to his Family, that he may afte and lavish out his Fortune upon me vile and expensive Lust. In a Word, makes him incapable of the Fatigues of wil Business; and much more of the lardships and Hazards of War: So that istead of imitating the glorious Example f Vriah, who would not suffer himself be courted into the Enjoyment even of lowed Pleasures, nor indulge himself in Tendernesses and Caresses of a Wife d Children, while Joab and the Armies Israel were in the Field; he, on the conrary, dissolves and melts down his Life and fortunes in Uncleanness and Luxury, the hame and Burden of his Country and his Lamily, at a Time when not only the Hoour, but the Safety of his Country lies at take, and Prince and People defend it by heir Toil and Blood. What should I men-R 2

tion the Lave of the World? Are not the Effects of it as visible amongst us, as deplorable? Does not this, where-ever it reigns, fill all Places with Bribery and Corruption Falshood, Treachery, and Cowardise? Worse cannot be faid on't, and more needs not For what Societies can thrive, or which way can Credit and Reputation be support ed? What Treasures, what Counsels, wha Armies, what Conduct, can fave a People where these Vices prevail? Let us now on the other Side, suppose Selfishness, Sen fuality, and the Love of the World, cashier'd and Faith, Hope, and Charity entertaine in their Room; what a blessed Change wi this effect in the World? How foon wi Honour and Integrity, Truth and Jufter and a publick Spirit revive? How service able and eminent will these render eve Man in his Charge? These are the true Prin ciples of great and brave Actions: The these alone, can render our Duty dearer us than any temporal Consideration: The will enable us to do good Works, with an Eye to the Return they will make u These will make it appear to us very re sonable, to sacrifice Fortune, Life, eve thing, when the Honour of God, and pl lick Good, demand it of us. The Bel and Hope of Heaven, is a sufficient Ence ragement to Vertue when all others fa The Love of God, as our Supreme Go

sill make us eafily surmount the Confidertion of Expence, Difficulty, or Hazard, in Ich Attempts as we are sure will please lim; and the Love of our Neighbour as our ves, will make us compassionate to his Evils ed Wants, tender to his Infirmities, and colous of his Good as of our own. How lopy then would these Principles make the forld? And how much is it the Interest every one to encourage and propagate these, d to discountenance and suppress the conbry ones? I have done with the fecond feet of Christian Liberty; and will pass on the Third, as foon as I have made Two marks on this last Paragraph. First, 'Tis ry evident from what has been faid in that solid Vertue can be grafted on no ock, but that of Religion: That universal ghteousness can be raised on none but ospel Principles; who is he that overcometh world, but he that believeth that Jesus is Christ? 1 Joh. 5. I do not oppose this coposition against Jew or Gentile. God suchsafed in sundry times and in divers unners, such Revelations of his Truth, and ch Communications of his Grace, as he faw : And to these is their Righteousness erefore, whatever it was, to be attributed, ot to the Law of Nature or Moses. But oppose it against the bold Pretentions of ibertines and Atheists at this Day. Honour nd Justice in their Mouths is a vain Boast; R 3 and

and the Natural Power they pretend to over their own Actions, to square and govern then according to the Rules of right Reason, i only a malicious Design to supplant the Ho nour of Divine Grace; and is as false and groundless as arrogant. Alas! they talk of a Liberty which they do not understand: Fo did they but once admit Purity of Hear into their Notion of it, they would foo discern what Strangers they are to it. How is it possible, but that they should be the Servants of the Rody, who reject and dil believe the Dignity and Pre-eminence of the Soul? How is it possible, they should not be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of Go who either believe no God, or none the concerns himself much about us? And how can they chuse but be felfish and sensu and doat upon this World, who expect better, who believe no other? Take awa Providence and a Life to come, and wha can oblige a Man to any Action, that sha cross his temporal Interest or his Pleasur What shall reward his espousing Vertue, who it has no Dowry, but Losses, Reproach and Persecutions? What shall curb him i the Career of a Lust, when he may con mit it, not only with Impunity, but a the World fometimes goes, with Honor and Preferment too? Though, therefore fuch Men as these may possibly restrai their outward Actions, yet are they all th whil

while enflaved and defiled in their Affections; nd the very Liberty they boast of in their Conduct and Management of themselves open-, springs from their secret Servitude to ome vile Passion or other. Nor yet can I be so soft and easy as to grant, that such den as these, either do or can arrive at he Liberty they pretend to: I mean, that f regulating and governing all their outward Actions by the Rules of Vertue. They oo often throw off the Disguise, which eiher Hypocrify or Enmity to Religion makes hem put on; and prove too plainly to the World, that when they lay Restraints on hemselves in this or that Sin, 'tis only to ndulge themselves the more freely and feurely in others. Secondly, My next Remark s, That it is gross Stupidity or Impudence, o deny a Providence and another World, when the Belief of both is so indispensably recessary to the Well-being of this. The Frame and Nature of Man, and the Nedestities of this World require both. Without these, Selfishness must undoubtedly be he predominant Principle. This would breed unreasonable Desires; and these would fill us with Fears and Jealousies: So that a State of Nature would indeed be a State of War; and our Enmity against one another would not be extinguished by Civil Society; but only concealed and restrained, till a sit Occasion for its breaking out should present it felf: Laws would want that Force, Commonwealths that Bond or Cement, Conversation that Confidence, and our Possessions that Security which is necessary to render them Blessings to us.

§. 3. A Third Fruit of Christian Liberty is that Relation which it creates between God and us. We are no longer of the World, but are separated and sanctified, devoted and dedicated to God. Thus St. Peter, 1 Epist. 2. 9. Te are a chosen Generation, aroyal Priesthood, a holy Nation, a peculiar People. And thus St. Paul, Rom. 8. 15. 16. Te have not received the spirit of Bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit it self beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. God is our God; we are his People. He is our Father; and we are his Children, we are ingrafted into his Family. The Consequence of this is, his Dearly Beloved and Only Begotten Son, is out Advocate at his right hand, the Propitiation for our Sins, and Intercessor for us. His Spirit resides with us to comfort and assist us; his Angels guard us, and minister to us for we are no longer the Object of his Wrath, but of his Love and Care. How does the Apostle triumph on this Argument,

Heb. 12. 18, 19, &c. For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire; nor unto blackness and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trum-pet, and the voice of words, which voice they who heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded; and if so much as a beast touch the mountain it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of Angels; to the general Assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect: And to Jesus, the Mediator of she new Covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. And thus again, 1 Cor. 3. 2. Therefore let no man glory in men; for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. These are great and glorious Things. What Dignity and Eminence does this Adoption raise us to? What Bleffedness flows from Communion and Fellowship with God? What can we want, or what can we fear, when we have so mighty an Interest in the Sovereign of Heaven and Earth; when all his Divine Perfections are employed to promote and secure our Happiness? Now sure we may rejoice, now we may glory and triumph; for certainly all things must work together for our good. But as fallen Angels envied the Happiness of new-created Man, so do Apostate and Debauched Men envy that of the Godly. And one of these will be apt to say, Hold, Sir, you run too fast; these glorious Privileges are yet but in Embryo, and all your Happiness is yet but in the Reversion: Notwithstanding all these big words, you must grant me that you are yet but in a State of Probation; that you are to undergo Hardships and Difficulties, and to live upon the thin Diet of Hope and Expectation: And so I think I might take you down from Heirs of God, to Servants at the best. Well, I will grant that we yet live by Faith, and wait for the Hope of Glory: Nor will I at present contend about those Pleasures that are but in the Bud: I will for once quit all that Preference both as to Nobility and Pleasure, which Adoption and the full Assurance of Hope gives a Godly Man above a Sinner; and I will take the State of a Child of God to be as the Objector would have it; I will suppose him to be under Age till he come to another

another Life; and to differ nothing from a Servant whilst he is so, though he be Heir of all. Yet after all, if I can prove that 'tis our Duty to serve God, it will be no contemptible Fruit, no small Commendation of Liberty, that it enables us to do our Duty. And that it is our Duty to serve God, is plain: For is it not fit that He who made and still upholds the World, should govern it? Ought we not to pay Obedience to His Laws, whose Infinite Perfections and Immense Beneficence invest Him with an absolute and uncontroulable Sovereignty over us? Whom should we honour with our Soul and Body, but Him who is the Author of both? To whom should we devote and sacrifice what we have, but to Him from whom we received all? Whose Praise should we shew forth, but His who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light? Whom should we obey and adore, but Him who has translated us out of Bondage into Liberty, out of the Servitude of Satan into the Kingdom of his dear Son; having redeemed us by the Blood of his Son, from that Wrath to which our Sins had deservedly subjected us? But this is not all; I shall prove it not only to be our Duty, but our Honour and our Happiness to serve God; even on the Supposition on which the Objettion proceeds, and which I at present grant. 1. Tis our Honour to serve Him whom Angels

gels serve, to whom all things in heaven and in earth do bow and obey. Tis the highest Prerogative we can derive from Grace or Nature, to be capable of serving Him. His Divine Perfections transcend the Conceptions of inferiour Creatures, and can be known, contemplated, and adored by none, but such as are made but a little lower than the Angels; fuch as are endued, not only with the Light of Reason, but with a far brighter, that of the Spirit of God. This is indeed our utmost Perfection, and must be our utmost Ambition: This alone makes us considerable, who are in all other respects but mean and contemptible; for we draw but a precarious and dependent Breath; and the World we inhabit is a durk and tempestuous one, full of Folly and Misery. But even this will serve for a further Confirmation of what I further contend for. For being indigent and needs, standing at an infinite Distance from Selfsufficiency, 'tis plain that what we cannot find within us, we must seek without us. Some All-sufficient Good we must find out; something we must rest in, and repose our selves upon; and this will be our God, this we shall serve and adore. And what shall this be? Shall we serve Evil Spirits? These are our avowed and inveterate Enemies, and go about like a roaring lion seeking whom they may devour. Shall we serve the Good?

This were to dishonour our Nature, to serve our Fellow-creatures and Fellow-servants: Besides that such will never sacrilegiously usurp their Maker's Honour, nor admit that Service which is due to Him alone. Shall we then serve Man? Alas! the Breath of Great Ones is in their Nostrils; their Life is but a Vapour, tossed to and fro with restless Noise and Motion; and then it vanishes; they die, and all their Thoughts and Projects perish. What then, shall we at length be reduced to serve our Lusts? This is worse than Pagan Idolatry; Stocks and Stones indeed could not help or reward their Votaries; but our Lusts, like wild and savage Tyrants, defroy where they rule, and oppress and overwhelm us with Ruins and Mischiefs, while we fervilely court and flatter them. I have not done yet: I have proved it indeed to be our Duty and Honour to serve God; but these with some are cold and lifeless Topicks: I will now prove it to be our Interest and Happiness; and this too, laying aside at present, as I promised, the Consideration of a future Reward, and the Joys springing from it. To make good this Assertion, it will be necessary briefly to examine Two Things. First, The Design or End: And, Secondly, The Nature of this Service. If we enquire after the End of it, 'tis evidently our own Advantage and Happiness. The Lusts Lusts or the Humours, the Wants and Necessities of Man, may put him upon invading our Liberty, or purchasing and contracting with us for our Servitude: But God is All-Jufficient to himself, and has no Need of our Service: When He will be glorified by us, 'tis that we may enjoy his Protection and Bounty: When He obliges us to obey his Commands, 'tis in order to perfect our Natures, and purify and qualifie us for the Enjoyment of Spiritual and Divine Pleasures: When He enjoins us Prayer, 'tis because it does exalt and enlarge our Minds, and fit us for the Blessings it obtains: When He prescribes us Self-Resignation, 'tis because he will chuse for us, and manage our Affairs better than we can our selves. Let us in the next place consider the Nature of this Service. To serve God, what is it, but to love what is infinitely lovely; to follow the Conduct of Infinite Wisdom, and to repose our Confidence in that Being whose Goodness is as boundless as his Power? To serve God, 'tis to pursue the great End of our Creation, to act consonant to the Dignity of our Nature, and to govern our Lives by the Dictates of an enlightened Reason. How wisely has Our Church in one of her Collects expressed her Notion of the Nature of God's Service? whose Service is perfect Freedom. The Devil maintains his Dominion over us, by infainfatuating our Understandings, by enfeebling and fettering our Wills, by deluding and corrupting our Affections: But on the quite contrary, the more clear and impartial our Understandings, the more free and absolute our Wills, the more unbyass'd and rational our Affetions, the fitter are we to worship God; nay indeed, we cannot worship Him at all as we ought to do, unless our Souls be thus qualified. Therefore is the Service of God called a Rational Service, λογική λατράα: and the Word of God is called asonor yana, Sincere Milk; to fignify to us, that in the Service of God all is real and solid Good. Such is the Perfection of our Natures; the Might and Joy of the Spirit; the Protection and Conduct of Providence; and all the great and precious Promises of God in Christ are Yes and Amen. But in the Service of Sin all is Cheat and Imposture; and under a pompous Shew of Good, the Present is Vanity, and the Future, Repentance; but such a Repentance as does not relieve, but increase the Sinners Misery.

This is enough to be faid of the Nature of God's Service: And by the Concessions I made my Objector about the Beginning of this Head, I am restrained from taking Notice of the more glorious Effects of it: Yet some there are, very great and good ones, that fall not within the Compass of the Objection,

which

which I will but just mention. The first is Rest. While Religion regulates the Disorder. and reduces the Extravagance of our Affections, it does in effect lay a Storm, and composed Mutiny in our Bosoms. Whilst it enlightens our Minds, and teaches us the true Value, that is at least the comparative Worthlessness of worldly Things, it extinguishes the Troubles which present Disappointments and Losses. and prevents those Fears which the Prospect of future Changes and Revolutions is wont to create in us. A Mind that is truly enlightened, and has no Ambition but for Immortality and Glory, whose Humility with reference to these temporal Things is built upon a true Notion of the Nature of them; this Soul has enter'd already into its Rest. This is the Doctrine of our Lord and Master, Matt. 11. 28, 29. Come unto me all je that labour and are heavy laden; that is, all ye that are oppressed by the Weight of your own Cares and Fears, that are fatigued and toiled in the Deligns and Projects of Avarice and Ambition, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. I need not, I think, here shew, that the more we fear and serve God, the more we love and admire Him, the more clear is the Understanding, and the more pure the Heart: For the more we converse with solid and eternal Good, hood, the more insignificant and trisling will moral things appear to us; and the more Mind rejoyces in the Lord, the oftner is rapt up into Heaven, and as it were, msfigured into a more glorious Being, by Joy of the Spirit, and the Ardors of Diine Love, the more flat and insipid are all ribly and carnal Satisfactions to it. Anoer Effect that attends our shaking off the cominion of Sin, and our devoting our selves the Service of God, is our being purified om guilt. The Stains of the past Life are ashed off by Repentance and the Blood of fus; and the Servant of God contracts no wones by wilful and presumptuous Sin. Now neresore he can enter into himself, and mmune with his own Heart, without any measiness; he can restett upon his Actions, nd review each day when it is past, withut inward Regret or Shame. To break off vicious Course; to vanquish both Terrors nd Allurements when they persuade to that which is mean and base; to be Master of ne's self, and entertain no Affections but vhat are wife, and regular; and such as one Reason to wish should daily increase, nd grow stronger; these are things so far rom meriting Reproach and Reproof from me's own Mind, that they are sufficient to upport it against all Reproaches from without. such is the Beauty, such the Pleasure of a rell established Habit of Righteousness, that

it does more than compensate the Difficulties to which either the Attainment or the Pra-Etice of it can expose a Man. Lastly, He that is free from Guilt, is free from Fear too. And indeed this is the only way to get ril of all our Fears; not by denying or renouncing God, with Atheists, but by doing the things that please him. He that is truly Religious, is the only Man who upon rational ground is raised above Melancholy and Fear: For what should he fear? God is his Glory, his Boast, his Joy, his Strength; and if God be for him, who van be against him Neither things present, nor to come; neither life, nor death, can separate him from the lov of God in Christ Jesus. There is nothing within the Bounds of Time or Eternity that he needs fear. Man cannot hurt him; he is encompassed with the favour and loving kindness of God, as with a shield. But it God permit him to suffer for Righteousnes sake, happy is he; this does but increase me present Joy, and future Glory. But what most considerable, Death it felf cannot hun him, Devils cannot hart him; The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the land but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victor ry through our Lord Jesus Christ. For ther is no condemnation to them who are in Chris Fesus, who walk not after the slesh but after th spirit. These Considerations prove the pre Sent Condition of a Servant of God happy Happ

Jappy in comparison of the Loose and Wicked; ut in comparison with what he shall be herefer, he is infinitely short of the Joy and idory of his End. In this respect indeed he yet in a state of Tryal and Trouble, of discipline and Probation; in this respect his verfection and Happiness do but just peep up bove the ground; the Fulness and Maturity shoth he cannot enjoy till he come to Hea-

en. And this is,

6. 4. The Last Fruit of Christian Liberty. hat Heaven will confift of all the Bleffings, Tall the Enjoyments that Human Nature then raised to an Equality with Angels, is pable of; That Beauties and Glories, Joys nd Pleasures, will as it were like a fruitland ripe Harvest here, grow up there in the utmost Plenty and Perfection that Ompotence it self will e'er produce, is not at to be controverted. Heaven is the Masterece of God, the Accomplishment and Conmmation of all his wonderful Designs, the t and most endearing Expression of bound-6 Love. And hence it is that the Holy pirit in Scripture describes it by the most king and the most admired things upon orth; and yet we cannot but think that is Image, tho' drawn by a Divine Pencil, ust fall infinitely short of it: For what mooral things can yield Colours or Metafors strong and rich enough to paint Heaven the Life? One Thing there is indeed, S 2 which which feems to point us to a just and ade. quate Notion of an Heaven; it seems to excite us to strive and attempt for Conception of what we cannot grasp, we cannot comprehend; and the labouring Mind the more in discovers, concludes still the more behind; and that is, The Beatifick Vision. This is the which, as Divines generally teach, does and stitute Heaven; and Scripture Seems to teach so too. I confess I have often doubted Whether our feeing God in the Life to com did necessarily imply that God should be the immediate Object of our Fruition: Or only That we should there, as it were, drink ! the Fountain Head; and being near and da to Him in the highest Degree, should eve flourish in his Favour, and enjoy all Good heap'd up, press'd down, and running over. thought the Scriptures might be easily recon ciled to this fense; and the Incomprehensia Glory of the Divine Majesty inclin'd men believe it the most reasonable, and most east ly accountable. Enjoyment, and especial where an Intelligent Being is the Object it, feem'd to imply something of Proportion fomething of Equality, something of Family liarity. But ah! what Proportion, though I, can there ever be between Finite and In finite? What Equality between a poor Crus ture and his Incomprehensible Creator? Who Eye shall gaze on the Splendors of his Essen tial Beauty, when the very Light he dwells i

inascessible, and even the Brightness he uls himself in, is too dazzling even for Verubs and Seraphs, for ought I know, to chold? Ah! what Familiarity can there e between this Eternal and Inconceivable Tajesty, and Beings which He has formed ut of nothing? And when on this occasion reflected on the Effects which the Presence f Angels had upon the Prophets, and saw luman Nature in Man sinking and dying way, because unable to sustain the Glory f one of their Fellow-creatures, I thought ry felf in a manner obliged to yield, and and out no longer against a Notion which hough differing from what was generally eceived, seemed to have more Reason on its de, and to be more intelligible. But when called to mind, that God does not disdain, ven while we are in a state of Probation and Jumility, of Infirmity and Mortality, to acount us not only his Servants and his Peole, but his Friends and his Children; I bean to question the former Opinion: And when I had furvey'd the Nature of Fruition, nd the various Ways of it a little more atentively, I wholly quitted it. For I obsererved, that the Enjoyment is most transporing, where Admiration mingles with our Passion: Where the beloved Object stands ot upon the same Level with us, but conescends to meet a Virtuous and aspiring, and mbitious Affection. Thus the happy Favou-

262 Of Christian Liberty in General.

rite enjoys a gracious Master: And thus the Child does with respectful Love meet the tenderness of his Parent: And the Wisdom and Virtue, which fometimes raises some one happy Mortal above the common fize and height of Markind, does not furely diminib but increase the Affection and the Pleasur of his Friends that enjoy him. Again, the Nature of Enjoyment varies, according (the various Faculties of the Soul, and the Senses of the Body. One way we enjoy Truth and another Goodness: One way Beauty, and another Harmory; and so on. These thing confidered, I faw there was no necessity in order to make God the Object of our Fruition, either to bring Him down to an thing unworthy of his Glory, or to exalt ou selves to a Height we are utterly uncapable of. I easily saw, that we, who love and adore God here, should, when we enter in to his Presence, admire and love him infinitely more. For God being infinitely amiable, the more we contemplate, the more clearly wi discern his Divine Perfections and Beauties the more must our Souls be inflamed with a Passion for Him: And I have no Rea fon to doubt, but that God will make us the most gracious Returns of our Love and express His Affections for us, in such Condescensions, in such Communications o Himself, as will transport us to the utmos Degree that created Beings are capable of Will

Will not God, that sheds abroad his Love in our Hearts by his Spirit here, fully satisfy it hereafter? Will not God who fills us here with the Joy of his Spirit, by I know not what inconceivable ways, communicate Himself in a more ravishing and Ecstatick manner to us, when we shall behold him as be is, and live for ever encircled in the Arms of his Love and Glory? Upon the whole then, I cannot but believe, that the Bearifick Vision will be the Supream Pleasure of Heaven: Yet I do not think that this is to exclude those of an inferior Nature. God will be there, not only all, but in all. We shall see him as he is; and we shall see him reflected, in Angels, and all the Inhabitants of Heaven; nay, in all the various Treasures of that Happy Place: But in far more bright and lovely Characters than in his Works here below. This is a State, now, that answers all Ends, and satisfies all Appetites, let 'em be never so various, never so boundless. Temporal Good, nay a State accumulated with all temporal Goods, has still something def Etive, something empty in it: That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which wanting cannot be numbred. And therefore the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing: but all things are full of labour: Man cannot utter it. And if this were not the State of temporal Things, yet that one Thought of Solomon that he must leave

264 Of Christian Liberty in General.

leave them, makes good the Charge of Vanita and Vexation: And the contrary is that which compleats Heaven; namely, that it is Eternal. Were Heaven to have an End, that End would make it Non-That Death would be as much more in tolerable than this here, as the Joys of Head ven are above those of Earth. For the Teror, and the Evil of it, would be to be estimated, by the Perfection of that Nature and Happiness which it would put an End to. To Dye in Paradise, amidst a Crowd of Satisfactions, how much more intolerble were this, than to Dye in those accursed Regions that breed continually Brians and Brambles, Cares and Sorrows? And now, I doubt not, but every one will readily acknowledge, that an Heaven were it believed, were such a Fruit of Christian Liberty, such a Motive to it, as none could resist. Did I believe this, have I heard one fay, I would quit my Trade, and all Cares and Thoughts of this World; and wholly apply my felf to get that other you talk of. There was no need of going thus far: But this shews what the natural Influence of this Doctrine of a Life to comis; and that it is generally owing to Insidelity, where 'tis frustrated and defeated. What is in this Case to be done? What Proof, what Evidences are sufficient to beget Faith in him, who rejects Christianity, and and all Divine Revelation? He that hears not Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, neither will he believe though one rose from the dead. This Doctrine of a Life to come was generally believed by the Gentile World. It was indeed very much obscur'd, but never extinguish'd, by the Addition of many fabulous and superstitious Fancies; so strong was the Tradition or Reason, or rather both, on which 'twas built. The Jews universally embrac'd it. The general Promises of God to Abraham and his Seed, and the several Shadows and Types of it in the Mosaick Institution, did confirm them in the Belief of a Doctrine, which I do not doubt, had been transmitted to them even from Enoch, Noah, and all their pious Ancestors. Nor must we look upon the Sadducees amongst the Jews, or the Epicureans amongst the Gentiles, to be any Objection against this Argument of a Life to come, founded in Tradition, and the universal Sense of Mankind: Because they were not only inconsiderable, compared to the Body of the Jewish or Pagan World, but also Deserters and Apostates from the Philosophy and Religion received. To what End should I proceed from the Gentile and Jew to the Christian? Were Christianity entertain'd as it ought, the very supposal of any Doubt concerning a Life to come would be impertinent. Here we have

have numerous Demonstrations of it. Not only the Fortune of Virtue in this I've which is often very calamitous, but even the Origine and Nature of it, do plainly evince a Life to come. For to what End can the Mortification of the Body, by strattions and Meditations, be enjoyned, there be no Life to come? What need a there of Renovation, or Regeneration, by the Word and Spirit of God, were there we Life to come? One would think, the come mon End of this natural Life, might be well enough secured upon the common Found dation of Reason and Human Laws. When should I here add, the Love of God, and the Merits of Jesus? From both which we may derive many unanswerable Argument of a Life to come. For though, when we reflect upon it, it appears as much about our Merst, as it is above our Comprehen sion; yet when we consider, that Eterni life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ on Lord; what less than an Heaven can wi expect from an Infinite Merit and Almight Love? The Love of God must be Perfect an Himself: And the Merits of Jesus must be estimated by the Greatness of his Person, and his Sufferings. He that cannot be wrough upon by these and the like Gospel Arguments. will be found, I doubt, impenetrable to all others. 'Tis in vain to argue with such a one from natural Topicks: And therefore I will ftop here.

I should now pass on to the Third Thing, the Attainment of Christian Liberty: But this Chapter is grown much too big already: And to the Consideration of the Fruit of this Liberty, which I have fo long infifted on, nothing more needs to be added, but the Observation of those Rules, which I shall lay down in the following Chapters. For whatever Advice will secure the several Parts of our Liberty, will consequently secure the whole. I will therefore close this Chapter here; with a brief Exhortation, to endeavour after Deliverance from Sin. How many and powerful Motives have we to it? Would we free our selves from the Evils of this Life? Let us dam up the Source of them, which is Sin. Would we furmount the Fear of Death? Let us disarm it of its Sting, and that is Sin. Would we perfest and accomplesh our Natures with all excellent Qualities?'Tis Righteousness wherein consists the Image of God, and Participation of the Divine Nature: 'Tis the cleaning our selves from all filthiness of the flesh and Spirit, and the perfecting holiness in the far of God, that must transform us from plury to glory. Would we be Masters of the most glorious Fortunes? 'Tis Righteoulnels that will make us Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Christ: 'Tis the Conquest of our Sins, and the abounding in Good Works, that will make us rich towards

God, and lay up for us a good foundation for the Life to come. Are we ambitious of Honour? Let us free our selves from the Servitude of Sin. Tis Virtue only, that is truly Honourable and Praise-worthy: And nothing furely can entitle us to so noble a Relation; for this allies us to God. For as our Saviour speaks, they only are the Children of Abraham, who do the Works of Abraham; the Children of God, who the Works of God. These are they, who are born again: not of the will of the flips or of the will of man; but of God. These are they, who are incorporated into the Bod of Christ; and being ruled and animated by his Spirit, are entitled to all the bleffed Effects of his Merit and Intercession. These are they, in a word, who have overcome, and will, one day, sit down with Christ in his Throne; even as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father in his Throne, Rev. 3 21. Good God: How abfurd and perverle all our Desires and Projects are! We complain of the Evils of the World; and vet we hug the Causes of them, and cherisb those Vices, whose fatal Wombs are ever big with numerous and intolerable Plagues. We fear Death, and would get rid of this Fear, not by disarming, but (barpning its Sting; not by subdaing, but forgetting it. We love Wealth and Treafure: But 'tis that which is Temporal, not Eternal

Eternal. We receive Honour one of another; out we seek not that which comes from God only. We are fond of Ease and Pleasure; and at the same time we wander from those Paths of Wisdom, which alone can bring us to it. For, in a word, 'tis this Christian Liberty that makes Men truly free: Not the being in bondage to no Man, but to no Sin: Not the doing what we lift, but what we ought. 'Tis Christian Liberty that makes us truly great, and truly glorious: For this alone renders us Serviceable to others, and Easy to our selves; Benefactors to the World, and delightsome at home: 'Tis Christian Liberty makes us truly prosperous, truly fortunate; because it makes us truly happy, filling us with joy and peace, and making us abound in hope, through the Power of the Holy Ghost.

CHAP. IV.

Of Liberty, as it relates to Original Sin. The Nature of which considered chiefly with respect to its Corruption. How far this Distemper of Nature is curable. Which way this Cure is to be effected.

Hatever Difficulties the Doctrine of Original Sin really be involved in, or feem at least to some to be so, they will not concern me, who am no further obliged to consider it, than as it is an Impediment of Perfection: For though there

be much Dispute about Original Sin. there is little or none about Original Conruption; the Reality of this is generally acknowledged, though the Guilt, the Sinfulnes or Immorality of it, be controverted. And thought here be Diversity of Opinions concerning the Effects of Original Corruption in Eternity, yet there is no Doubt at all made but that it incites and instigates us to actual Sin; and is the Seed-plot of Human Folly and Wickedness. All Men. I think, are agreed, that there is a Byas and strong Propension in our Nature towards the Things of the World, and the Body: That the subordination of the Body to the Soul, and of the Soul to God, wherein consists Righteousness, is subverted and overthrown: That we have Appetites which clash with, and oppose the Commands of God; not only when they threaten Violence to our Nature, as in the Cafes of Confession and Martyrdom, but also when they only prune its Luxuriancy and Extravagance: That we do not only desire sensitive Pleasure, but even to that Degree, that it hurries and transports us beyond the Bounds that Reason and Religion set us: We have not only an Aversion for Pain, and Toil, and Death, but to that Excess, that it tempts us to renounce God, and our Duty, for the fake of Carnal Ease, and Temporal

Emporal Safety. And finally, that we re so backward to entertain the Belief of evealed Truths, so prone to terminate our houghts on, and confine our Desires within this visible World as our Portion, nd to look upon our felves, no other than he mortal and corruptible Inhabitants of t; that this makes us felfish and fordid, roud and ambitious, false, subtle, and ontentious, to the endless Disturbance of Mankind and our felves. That this, I fay the State of Nature, that this is the Coruption we labour under, all Men, I hink are agreed: And no wonder; for lid a Controversie arise about this, there would be no need to appeal any farther for he Decision of it, than to one's own Experience; this would tell every one that thus it is in Fact; and Reason, if we will consult it, will tell us why it is so: For what other than this can be the condition of Man, who enters the World with a Soul so dark and destitute of Divine Light, lo deeply immers'd and plung'd into Flesh and Blood, so tenderly and intimately affected by Bodily Sensations; and with a Body so adapted and suited to the Things of this World, and fastned to it by the Charms of Pleasure, and the Bonds of Inrerest, Convenience and Necessity? This Account of Original Corruption agrees very well with that St. Paul gives us of it. Rom. 7. and elsewhere: And with that Assertion of our Lord and Master, on which he builds the necessity of Regeneration by Water and the Holy Spirit, John 3. 6. The which is born of the spirit, is sless; and the which is born of the spirit, is spirit. Having thus briefly explained, what I mean in the Chapter by Original Sin, I am next to consider these two Things.

1. How far this Distemper of Nature is curable.

2. Which way this Cure is to be effected.

As to the first Enquiry, I would not be understood to proceed in it with a regard to all the Regenerate in general, but only to the Perfett; for the strength of Original Sin cannot but be very different in new Converts, or Babes in Grace, and in such as are advanced to an Habit of Righteous ness. This being premised, I think, may on good ground resolve, That Original Sin in the Perfett Man, may be so far reduced and mastered, as to give him but very rare and slight Disturbance. This seems to me evident from the great Change that must be wrought in him who is converted from a Sinner into a Saint; If any Man be in Christ, he is a new creature: Old things are

M away, behold all things are become new, Cor. 5. 17. And it is hard to conceive this w Nature, without new Propensions and nclinations, not only different from, but ougnant to our former Original and Corupr ones; or at least we must suppose this Ov Creation, fo far to have reformed and orrected the Man, that Original Corrupion has lost the Strength and Force which efore it had. This will be more clear yet, we observe never so slightly, the several arts of this great Change. First, the Soul an excellent Person is filled with an unigned and habitual Sorrow for, and Desitation of all Sin; I hate, faith the Pfalif, every false way. And how inconthent is the strength and Heat of corrupt topensions, with the Tears and Aversions of a true Penitent? How tame is the lody, how pure the Mind, when the Man possessed with a firm and holy Indignaion against Sin, when he dissolves in the lous Tenderness of a contrite Spirit! Next, he Soul of a Good Man is possessed with n ardent Love of God, and of Fesus; with firm Belief, and a steddy Hope of a blesed Eternity; with enlightened Eyes he cholds the Vanity of all earthly Things, and admires the Solidity, the Weight, and Juration of Heavenly Glory: He is risen with Christ, and therefore seeks those things hat are above, where Christ sits on the right hand

hand of God: He has set his affections on thing above, and not on things on the earth; for h is dead, and his life is hid with Christ in God And must we not now suppose such a one cleanfed and purified from all corrupt And Etions, when the very bent of his Soul a quite another way? Must we not suppose the force and strength of depraved Nature overpowered and subdued by these Han venly Affections? How mortified must such a Man be to the World and to the Body How feeble is the Oppolition, that inferior our Nature can raise against a Mind inve fted with so absolute and sovereign Author rity, and endowed with Light and Strength from above? Laftly, The Perfect Man ha not only crucified the Inordinate and find ful Lusts and Affections of the Body, bu has also obtained a great Mastery, eve over the natural Appetites of it; how ell can it be that his Desires and Hopes are Heaven; that he waits for the Lord from thence; that he desires to be dissolved an to be with Christ; and groans to be rid of the corruptible Tabernacle of the Body? He the is thus above the Body, may certainly b concluded, to be in some degree above even the most natural Appetites. He the has fet himself free in a great Measure even from his Aversion to Death, and i his Affection at least very much loosen' the bond, the knot, that unites Soul an Body

may certainly very reasonably be returned to be much more above all coverus ambitious, or wanton Inclinations. Incle are the Grounds on which I attribute to the Persect Man, so high a Degree Breedom from Original Sin as I do in the

Lopolition laid down.

ally. But yet I do not in the least think, the most Persect Man upon Earth can extinguish the sparks of Original Corprion, but that if he do not keep a Watch d Guard upon himself, they will gather ength and revive again: And the Reaof this is plain; because it has a undation in our very Nature. The Difconcerning the Existence of Original vruption in us after Baptism, or Regeration, is, methinks, a very needless one: r if it be about the Notion we ought to ertain of it, that is, whether it be proly Sin or not, this is a Contention out Words; for what signifies it by Name we call this Remainder of Orinal Pravity, when all grant, that the and Guilt of it, is washed off and rdoned? But if it be about the Force Efficacy of it, this indeed is a Controof some Moment; but a very foolish e on one side: For to what purpose can be, to fay a great many subtil and puz-Things against a Truth, that every fin feels and experiments at one time or other?

other? Upon the whole then, I may thus di scribe the Liberty of the Persect Man with respect to Original Sin: He has mortiful though not utterly extirpated it; he has for dued it, though not exterminated it; an therefore he is not only free from finful inordinate Lusts and Affections, but als in a far greater measure than other Ma from those Infirmities and Irregularity which are, as it were, the strugglings Ebullitions of Original Sin, not yet funciently tam'd. He has advanced his Aory very far, even over his natural Are tites; he has no stronger Inclination the Body, or for the World, and Things of it, than fuch as becomes a M that is possessed with a deep sense of Vanity of this World, and the Bleised of another. The World is in a high gree crucified to him, and he counts things but dung and dross in comparis with the Excellency of the knowledge Christ Jesus his Lord. His Sorrows his Joys, his Desires and his Fears, bell occasion never so just or lawful, pais n the modest Bounds of a wife Moderation He defires without Impatience, cares contrives, hopes and pursues, with Anxiety or Sollicitude; he is cautious will out Fear and Pulillanimity; he is fad wit out Dejection or Despondency, and Ple

The without Vanity. All this indeed lews him, not only to have conquered and Folly, but in a great measure also matural Propension to them. But after this happy Creature must remember, the is still in the Body; in the Body those Appetites will soon pass beyond reir due Bounds, if he be indulgent or cless: He must remember that he is not unutably holy, his Understanding is not clear and bright, but that it may be dewed; nor the Bent of his Affections fo ongly fet upon good, but that they may perverted; and therefore he must be soand vigilant, and fear always. Thus we I stated the Cureableness of our Orial Corruption. And as I think I have unly the Countenance of Scripture, fo lo not see, that I in the least clash with at Clause in the Ninth Article of our nurch, which affirms concerning Origi-1 Sin thus: And this Infection of Nature b remain, yea, in them that are Regenera-, whereby the Lust of the Flesh, called in rek Provua sapros, which some do expound Wisdom, some the Sensuality, some the As-Tion, some the Desire of the Flesh; is not to the Law of God. For this must be understood surely, as if the Flesh d always Lust against the Spirit in the egenerate, but only that the Regenerate emfelves are liable and obnoxious to thefe T 3 Lustings:

Lustings; which, on supposal, that it Perfect Man were here thought upon the Compilers of this Article, imports Contradiction to any thing I have delivered The Truth is, I have afferted no mo concerning the Cureableness of Origin Corruption, than what is necessary to cure the Interest of Holiness, as well as well Honour of the Word and Spirit. I bell too often had occasion to observe, that stating our Obligation to reduce Original Corruption too laxly, ministers not a hu to the Carnal Confidence of supine a careless Persons. How greedily do to imbibe, and how fond are they of this I tion, that the Flesh, even in the Regul rate, does always Lust against the Spirit And the next thing is, to look upon un darling Errors, as unavoidable Infirming flowing from the incurable Distemper Original Sin. To the end therefore, the under Colour and Pretence of the I possibility of a perfect Cure and Restim on of our Nature to perfect Innocence unspotted Purity, we may not sit down tented in an impure State, and never vance to those Degrees of Health and nocence, which we may, and ought all ally to arrive at, I think fit here, to gue the Doctrine of Original Sin, with I one general Caution.

Th

That we be very careful not to mistake Contracted, for Natural Corruption; not o mistake a Super-induced Nature, defaed by all the Slime and Mud which pomlar Errors and Fashions leave upon it, or Original Nature, or Nature in that tate in which it enters the World. 'Tis, doubt, a very hard thing to find but me arrived at any maturity of Years, in whom Nature is the fame thing now that was in the Womb or the Cradle; in whom there are no worse Propensions than that necessarily flow from the Frame and Composition of his Being. Alas! our Oriinal Depravation, be it what it will, is ery betimes improved by false Principles nd foolish Customs; by a careless Educaion, and by the Blandishments and Insinuations of the World: And every Man is o partial to himself, that he is very wiling to have his Defects and Errors pass unler the Name of Natural and Unavoidable ones, because this seems to carry in it its own Apology. This is a fatal Error, and continues Men in their Vices; nay, gives them peace in them too, to their Lives End: For why should not a Man forbear attempting what he despairs of effecting? To prevent which, I earnestly desire my Reader to consider, that all who have treated this Doctrine of Original Sin with any Solidity or Prudence, do carry the T 4 Matter

Matter as far at least, as I have done They teach not only that Original Corruption may be Prun'd and Lopp'd, but that it may be cut down, mortified, and dried up. That fince no Man can affure himself how far he may advance his Conquest over his natural Corruption, and the Interest of every Man's Safety and Glory obliges him to advance it as far as he can, he must never cease fighting against it, while it fights against him. That since every Sin is so far mortal as it is voluntary, and has we much Guilt in it as Freedom, every Min ought to be extreamly jealous, lest he be subject to any vicious Inclination, that is in reality the Product, not of Nature, but of Choice. And lastly, since though much less than Habitual Goodness may constitute a Man in a State of Grace, yet nothing les can produce Perfection, or a constant Assurance of Eternal Happiness; therefore no Man ought to acquiesce, while he see himself short of this; and every Man should remember, that his Goodness ought to confist in a Habit of those Virtues m which he is by Nature the most averse I have now dispatched my first Enquiry, and refolved how far Original Sin is curable. The next is,

§. 2. How this Cure may be effected. And here 'tis plain what we are to aim at

in

n general: For if Original Righteousness onlists, as I think it cannot be doubted, in he Subordination of the Body to the Soul, and the Soul to God; and Original Coruntion, in the Subversion of this Order; hen the Cure must consist in restoring this Subordination, by the weakning and reduing the Power of the Body, and by quickning and strengthning the Mind, and to re-establishing its Sovereignty and Auhority. The Scriptures accordingly let us know that this is the great Design of Religion, and the great Business of Man, I Cor. 9. 25. And every Man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. And this St. Paul illustrates and explains by his own Example, in the following Words: I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection. The Preference niven to the Cares and Appetites of the Body, or of the Mind, is the distinguishing Character which constitutes and demonstrates Man either Holy or Wicked: They that are of the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; and they that are of the Spirit, the things of the Spirit, Rom. 8. 5. And the Threats of the Gospel belong to the Servants of the Flesh, its Promises to the

Servants of the Spirit: For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall dye; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, re shall live, Rom. 8. 13. He that soweth me his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, Gal. 6. 8. I grant that in these places and elsewhere very commonly, as by the Spirit is meant the Mind enlightened and aided by the Grace of God; so by the Body or Flesh is means our inferior Nature; not just such as it proceeds out of the Womb, but as it is further deprayed by a Carnal and Worldly Conversation. However since Original is the Seed or Root of Voluntary or Customary Corruption, these Texts do properly and directly enough ferve to the Confirm tion of the Doctrine for which they are alledg'd. This then is the great Duty of Man, this is the great End which he is always to have in his Eye, the mortifying the Body, and entirely subjugating it to the Reason of of the Mind. Here the Christian Warfare must begin, and here end; for he who has crucified the Body, with the Lusts and Affections thereof, has entred into Rest, as far as this Life is capable of it: He that lays the Foundation of Morals here, does build upon a Rock; and he that here pushes his Success to the utmost Point,

has reached the highest Round in the Scale of Persection, and given the finishing Scrokes to Holiness and Virtue. This I lay then; He that will be free, must lay down as a general Rule to himself, from which he must resolve never to swerve, That he is by all rational and possible Methods to diminish the Strength and Authority of the Body, and increase that of the Mind. By this we ought to judge of the Conveniencies or Inconveniences of our Worldly Fortunes; by this we are to determine of the Innocence or Malignity of Actions; by this we are to form and estimate our Acquaintance and Conversation, and by this we are to judge of the Bent and Tendency of our Lives; by this we are to regulate our Diversions; by this we may resolve of the Nature and Degree of our Pleasures, whether lawful, whether expedient, or not: And in one word, by this we may pass a true Sentence upon the Degrees and Measures of our Natural Affections. There are many things that are in their own nature indifferent enough, that prove not so to me; and there is such a Latitude in the Degrees and Measures of Duty and Deviations from it, that it is a very hard matter in several Cases to define nicely and strictly what is lawful or unlawful: But I am sure, in all Cases this is a wise and fafe Rule, that we are to aim at the strengthning

ning the Authority of our Minds, and the weakning the Force and Power of our carnal Appetites. By consequence, every Man ought to examine himself, by what Arts, by what Practices the Light of his Understanding comes to be obscured, the Authority of his Reason weaken'd, and the Tenderness of his Conscience to be so much blunted and worn off: And when he has discovered this, he must avoid these things as Temptations and Snares; he must shun these Paths, as those that lead to Danger and Death; and whatever he finds to have a contrary Tendency, these are the things that he must do, these are the things that he must study, contrive, and follow. How happy would a Man be, how perfect would he foon grow, if he did conduct himself by this Rule? How little need would he have of outward Comforts; how little value would he have for Power and Honour, for the State and Pride of Life? How little would he hunt after the Pleasures of Sense? What Peace should he maintain within, when he should do nothing that were repugnant to the Reason of his Mind? What Joy and Hope would he abound with, when he should have so many daily Proofs of his Integrity, as the living above the Body would give him? And how would all this strengthen and exalt the Mind; what Flights would it take towards Heaven,

and how invincible would it prove to all Temptations? Happy and Perfect that Man, who has the Kingdom of God thus within him, whose Life is hid with Christ in God! when Christ who is his Life shall appear, he also shall appear with him in Glory. This is a comprehensive Rule, and if well pursued, sufficient of its felf to do the Work I am here aiming at: But that it may be more easily reduced to Practice, I think it not amiss to take a more particular View of it: And then it may be resolved into these two:

1. We must lay due Restraints upon the

Body.

2. We must invigorate and fortify the Mind, partly by the Light of the Gospel, and the Grace of the Holy Spirit; and partly by accustoming it to retire and withdraw it self from the Body.

on, but also because they are injurious to our Neighbour, and a Dishonour to our holy Profession, but also because they are injurious to our Neighbour, and a Dishonour to our holy Profession, but also because they have an ill Influence upon the Strength and Liberty, the Power and Authority of the Mind. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims,

grims, abstain from slessly lusts which was against the Soul, 1 Pet. 2. 11. And whoever enters into the Account of things, will easily discern this to be true; There is a Deceitfulness in Sin, a Sensuality in Lust: Who sees not that there is more Attraction in the Pride and Ostentation of Life, than in the Simplicity and Plainness of it? That there is more Temptation and Allurement in Riot and Luxury, than in Frugality and a Competency? That the Imagination of a Solomon himself cannot but be wretchedly abused, if he give it leave to wander and wanton in Variety? In a word, If the Mind follow a Carnal or Worldly Appetite and Fancy in all its Excesses and Debauches, it will soon find it felf miserably inslaved and intoxicated; it will be wholly in the Interest of the Body, and wholly given up to the Pleafures of it. Secondly, Though the Scripture do not prohibit some States or Conditions of this Life, which feem as it were more nearly allied to, or at least-wise at less distance from the Lusts of the Flesh, than others are, yet it forbids us to covet and pursue them. Thus St. Paul, Rom. 12. 16. Mind not high things. The Apostle does not here oblige any Man to degrade himfelf beneath his Birth, or to fly from those Advantages which God's Providence and his own Merits give him a just Title to; but

certainly he does oblige the Christian not o aspire ambitiously to Great Things, for fondly to pride himself in Successes of his kind. So when a little after he com-nands us in honour to prefer one another, ertainly he does not teach how to Talk, out how to Act; not how to Court and Compliment, but how to deport our felves consonant to those Notions with which Charity towards our Neighbour, and Hunility towards our Selves ought to inspire is. Thus again, we are not forbidden to pe rich; no man is bound to strip himself of those Possessions which he is born to, or to shut out that Increase which God's Bleffing and his own Diligence naturally bring in: But we are forbid to thirst after Riches, or to value our selves upon them, and commanded to be content with those things that we have; and if God bless us with Wealth, to enjoy it with Modesty and Thankfulness, and dispense it with Liberality, I Tim. 6.6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Godliness with contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out; and having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and burtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many forrows. Ver. 17, 18, 19. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate: Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. And to multiply no more Instances of Restraints of this or the like nature, thus we ought to stand affected towards Praise and Reputation, Interest and Power, Beauty, Strength, &c. We must neither be too intent upon them, nor enjoy them with too much Gust and Satisfaction; for this is that Disposition which appears to me to fuit best with the Spirit and Design of the Gospel, and with the Nature of fuch things as being of a middle fort, are equally capable of being either Temptations or Bleffings, Instruments of Good or Evil.

3 dly. The Scripture regulates and bounds our natural and necessary Appetites, not so much by nicely defining the exact Degrees and Measures within which Nature must be strictly contained, as by exalted Examples of, and Exhortations to a Spiritual, Pure, and Heavenly Disposition. Thus our Lord and Master seems to me to give some check

heck to the stream of Natural Affection, nd to call off his Disciples from it, to the Consideration of a Spiritual Relation; Mark 3. 34, 35. And he looked round about them which sat about him, and said, Beold my mother and my brethren: For whover shall do the will of God, the same is brother, and my lifter, and mother. To thich words of our Lord I may joyn those St. Paul, Henceforth know we no man ter the flesh ---- yet now henceforth know we n no more, 2 Cor. 5. 16. The Answer four Lord to a Disciple who would have ferr'd his following him, till he had bued his Father, Matth. 8. 21. and to him ho begged leave to go and bid farewel off to his Relations and Domesticks, Luke . 61. does plainly countenance the Dorine I here advance; and so does St. Paul Cor. 7. 29. so often cited by me. Not at our Saviour or his Apostles did ever ecount our natural Affections vicious and "pure; for 'tis a Vice to be without them, om. 1. 31. Not that they went about to iminish or abate, much less to cancel the Juties flowing from them: No; They nly prune the Luxuriancy of untaught Naure, and correct the Fondnesses and Infirmies of Animal-Inclinations. Our Natural Mections may entangle and enflave us, as vell as unlawful and irregular ones, if we y no Restraint upon them. Religion indeed

deed makes them the Seeds of Virtue, but without it they easily betray us into Sir and Folly. For this reason I doubt not, under pretence of satisfying our most Man tural and Importunate Appetites, w should be ensnared into the Love of the World, and entangled in the Cares of it our Saviour forbids us to take thought lo to-morrow, even for the Necessaries of no morrow, what we shall eat, and what we sha drink, and wherewithal we shall be cloatles Matth. 6. These are the Restraints line upon the Body in Scripture; which if am Man observe, he will soon discern himsel as far purified and freed from Original Cor ruption, as Human Nature in this Life i capable of. And that he may;

\$. 2dly. He must fortify and invigorathe Mind. And this must be done two ways. First, By possessing it with the Knowledge of the Gospel, and the Grac of the Spirit. Secondly, By withdrawing it often from the Body. As to the forme Branch of this Rule, the Necessity of it apparent: Since the state of Nature is such as has before been described, we stand in need not only of Revelation to enlighten up but also of Grace to strengthen us; of the former to excite us to exert all the Forcand Power we have; of the latter to enable us to do that which our Natural Forc

nver can effect. It cannot be here expectthat I should treat of the Operation of B Spirit, and the Ways of obtaining it, reving, and quenching it; this would nand a peculiar Treatife. I will here by observe, That 'tis the Work of the Strit to repair, in some degree at least, the Kins of the Fall; to rectify Nature; to mrove our Faculties, and to imprint in us Divine Image: That Meditation and yer, and a careful Conformity to the Wine Will, obtain and increase the Grace of the Spirit: That Negligence and pre-Imptuous Wickedness grieve and extin-Mh it. As to the Knowledge of the Gool, I shall not need to say much here, I we consider'd this Matter in the Chapter dIllumination, and will only observe, Tat the Doctrines of the Gospel are such if they be thoroughly imbibed, do eftually raise us above a State of Nature, Il set us free from the Power and Prevawe of our Original Corruption. Were but once perswaded, That we are langers and Pilgrims upon earth: That Carnal Gratifications do war against the Sil: That our Souls are properly our wes, and That our first Cares are to be them: That God is himself our Sovengn Good, and the Fountain of all infeor Good: That our Persection and Happess consist in the Love and Service of II 2 Him:

Him: That we have a mighty Mediato who once died for us, and ever lives make Intercession for us: That a kingdo incorruptible and undefiled, and that fade not away, is reserved in heaven for all mee faithful, and holy Souls: were we, I fa but once thoroughly perswaded of the Truths, with what Vigor would they in pregnate our Minds? How clear would the Convictions of Conscience? How u controulable the Authority of Reason How strong the Instincts and Propensio of the Mind towards Righteousness as Virtue? These would alienate the Mi from the World and the Body, and tu the Bent of it another way; these wor inspire it with other Desires and Hopes, a make it form different Projects from wh it had before; Old things are done away, a all things are become new. The seco Branch of this fecond particular Rule That we must accustom our selves to ret frequently from the Commerce and Co versation of the Body. Whether the ex ing the forbidden Fruit did open to t Mind new Scenes of Senfuality which thought not of, and so called it down from the Serenity and Heights of a more pi and contemplative Life, to participate t turbulent Pleasures of Sense, immersing as it were by this means deeper into t Body, I pretend not to judge. But

rtain a too intimate Conjunction of the flind with the Body, and the satisfactias of it, does very much debase it. 'Tis or great unhappiness, that the Soul is alays in the Senses, and the Senses are alays upon the World; we converse with e World, we talk of the World, we think the World, we project for the World; nd what can this produce, but a carnal and orldly frame of spirit? We must meditate cavenly Things; we must have our Conrsation in Heaven; we must accust om our lves to inward and Heavenly Pleafures, if e will have Heavenly Minds: We must let day pass, wherein we must not withdraw ir selves from the Body, and sequester our lves from the World, that we may converse ith God and our own Souls. This will on enable us to disdain the low and begirly satisfactions of the outward Man, id make us long to be fet free from the eight of this corruptible Body, to breathe purer Air, and take our fill of refined d spiritual Pleasure. I have insisted thus ng on the Cure of Original Sin, not only cause it is the Root of all our Misery, ut also because there is such an Affinity etween this and the Sin of Infirmity, hich I am next to speak to, that the same emedies may be prescribed to both; so lat I am already eafed of a part of the U 3 · Labour,

Labour, which I must otherwise have un

dergone in the following Chapter.

I am now by the Laws of my own Me thod obliged to confider the Effects of this Branch of Christian Liberty in the Perfet Man, and to shew what Influence it he upon his Happiness. But having Sett. 1 Chap. 4. discoursed at large of the subser viency of Perfection to our Happiness and in Sett. 2. Chap. 3. of the happy Effed of Christian Liberty in general, I have the less need to say much here on th Head: Yet I cannot wholly forbear faying fomething of it. The Conquest over Or ginal Corruption, such as I have describe it, raises Man to the highest pitch of Pe fection that our Nature is capable o makes him approach the nearest that Mo tality can, to the Life of Angels, an plants him on the Mount of God, when Grace, and Joy, and Glory, shine alway on him with more direct and strong Ray Now is Virtue truly Lovely, and tru Happy; now the Assurance of the Min is never interrupted, its Joy never ove cast; it enjoys a perpetual Calm withi and sparkles with a peculiar Lustre the cannot be counterfeited, cannot be equall' Some faint and partial Resemblance, I co. feis, of this Virtue, or rather of this Sta or Consummation of it, have I, though very rarely, feen in some masterly Strok

of Nature. I have observed in some, that Sweetness of Temper, in others that Coldness and absolute Command over themselves, with respect to the Pleasures, and in several that innate Modesty and Humility, that natural Indifference for the Power, Honour, and Grandour of Life, that I could scarce forbear pronouncing, That they had fo far each of them escaped the Contagion. of Original Corruption, and could not but bless and love them. But after all, there is a vast difference between these Creatures of Nature, and those of Grace: The Persection of the one is confin'd to this or that particular Disposition, but that of the other is in its degree universal: The Persection of the one has indeed as much Charm in it as pure Nature can have: but the other has a mixture of fomething Divine in it, it has an Heavenly Tincture, which adds fomething of Sacredness and Majesty to it, that Nature wants: The Persection of the one is indeed eafy to its felf, and amiable to others; but the Perfection of the other is Joy and Glory within, and commands a Veneration as well as Love from all it converses with. Bleffed State! when shall I attain thy lovely Innocence! when shall I enter into thy Divine Rest! when shall I arrive at thy Security, thy Pleafure!

CHAP. V.

Of Liberty, with respect to Sins of Infirmity.

An Enquiry into these three Things, 1. When ther there be any such Sins, viz. Sins in which the most Perfect live and die. 2. If there are, what they be; or what distinguishes them from Damnable or Morta! Sins. 3. How far we are to extend the Liberty of the Perfect Man in relation to these Sins.

HIS is a Subject, wherein the very Being of Holiness or Virtue, the Salvation of Man, and the Honour of God, are deeply interested: For if we allow of such Sins for Venial, as really are not fo, we destroy the Notion, or evacuate the Necessity of Holiness; endanger the Salvation of Man. and bring a Reflection upon God as a Favourer of Impiety. On the other hand, if we affert those Sins damnable, which are not really so, we miserably perplex and disturb the Minds of Men, and are highly injurious to the Goodness of God; representing Him as a severe and intolerable Master. But how important soever this Subject be, there is no other, I think, in the compass of Divinity, wherein so many Writers have been so unfortunately engaged; so that it is over-grown with Dispute and Controverfy, with Confusion and Obscurity, and numberless Absurdities and Contradictions. This I have thought necessary to obferve in the Entrance of my Discourse, not to insult the Performances of others, or to raise in the Reader any great Expectation for my own; but indeed for a quite contrary Reason, namely, to dispose him to a savourable Reception of what I here offer towards the rendring the Doctrine of Sins of Insirmity intelligible, and preventing the Disservice which Mistakes about it do to Religion.

By Sins of Infirmity, both Ancients and Moderns, Papists and Protestants, do, I think, understand such Sins as are consistent with a State of Grace and Favour; and from which the best Men are never intirely freed in this Life, though they be not imputed to them. This then being taken for granted, I shall Enquire into these Three

Things.

I. Whether there be any fuch Sins, Sins in which the most Perfect live and dye.

2. If there are, what these be. What it is that distinguishes them from Damnable

or Mortal ones.

3. How far we are to extend the Liberty of the Perfect Man in relation to these.

the best Men are not without Errors, without Desects and Failings, and that not only in their past Life, or unregenerate State,

but their best, and most Persect one, is a Truth which cannot, one would think, be controverted: For what Understanding is there which is not liable to Error? What Will that does not feel fomething of Impotence, fomething of Irregularity? What Affections, that are meerly Human, a e ever constant, ever raised? Where is the Faith that has no Scruple, no Diffidence; the Love that has no Defect, no Remission; the Hope that has no Fear in it? What is the State which is not liable to Ignorance, Inadvertency, Surprise, Insirmity? Where is the Obedience that has no Reluctancy, no Remissness, no Deviation? This is a Truth which, whether Men will or no, they cannot chuse but seel; the Consessions of the Holiest of Men bear Witness to it. And the Pretention of the Quakers, to a Sinless and Perfect State, is abundantly confuted by that Answer, one of the most eminent of them, makes to an Objection, which charges them with arrogating and affuming to themselves Infallibility and Persection, viz. That they were so far Infallible and Perfect, as they were led by the Spirit of God. For what is this, but to desert and betray, not defend their Cause? 'Tis plain then, as to Matter of Fa&, that the most Perfect upon Earth are not without Frailties and Infirmities; and fuch Infirmities as discover themselves in actual Slips and Errors.

Errors. But the Question is, Whether these are to be accounted Sins? I must confess, if we strictly follow the Language of the Scripture, we should rather call them by some other Name; for this does so generally understand by Sin, a Deliberate Transgression of the Law of God, that it will be very difficult to produce many Texts wherein the Word Sin is used in any other sense. As to Legal Pollutions, I have not much considered the matter. But as to Moral ones, I am in some Degree confident, that the word Sin does generally fignify fuch a Transgression as by the Gospel Covenant is punishable with Death; and rarely does it occur in any other fense; I say rarely, for, if I be not much mistaken, the Scripture does sometimes call those Infirmities I am now talking of, Sins. But what if it did not? 'Tis plain, That every Deviation from the Law of God, if it has any Concurrence of the Will in it, is in strict speaking Sin: And 'tis as plain that the Scripture does frequently give us such Descriptions and Characters, and such Names of these Sins of Infirmity, as do oblige us both to strive and watch against them, and repent of them. For it calls them Spots, Errors, Defects, Slips, and the like. But, what is, Lastly, most to my Purpose, it is plain, That this Distinction of Sins, into Mortal and Venial, or

Sins

Sins of Infirmity, has its Foundation in express Texts of Scrupture. Numerous are the Texts cited to this purpose: But he that will deal fairly must confess, that they are most of them improperly and impertinently urged, as relating either to Falls into Temporal Calamity; or to Mortal, not Venial Sins; or to the Sins of an unregenerate State; or to a comparative Impurity, I mean the Impurity of Man with respect to God; a Form of Expression frequent in Job. I will therefore content my felf to cite three or four, which feem not liable to these Exceptions, Deut. 32. 4. They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of his Children: They are a perverse and crooked Generation. Here two Things seem to be pointed out to us plainly, First, that the Children of God are not without their Spots. Secondly, That these are not of the same Nature with those of the Wicked, in Comparison with those wilful and perverse Transgressions, the Children of God are, elsewhere, pronounced Blameless, without Offence, without Spot, Psal. 19. 12, 13. Who can understand his Errors? cleanse thou me from secret Faults: Keep back also thy servant from presumptuous Sins, let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be inno-cent from the great Transgression. Here again the Pfalmist seems to me to place Upright-

Uprightness in Freedom from Deliberate or Mortal Sin, and to admit of another fort of Transgressions, in which, even upright Men slip sometimes. Nor does the Pfalmist here only affert Venial Sins; but he seems to me to suggest the Springs and Sources of them, namely, some secret Dispositions in our Nature to Folly and Error, which he prays God to cleanse and free him from more and more; Cleanse thou me from secret faults. The word Fault is not in the Original; but something of that kind must be supplied to render the Sense intire in our Language. The words of Solomon, Prov. 20. 9. seem to relate to this Corruption lurking in us, and never utterly to be extirpated; Who can say I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin? For if this should be applied to Mortal Sin, every one sees, that it will contradict a hundred Places in Scripture, which attribute to Righteous Men, Purity of Heart, and Deliverance from Sin. Lastly, James 3. 2. we are told plainly, that in many things we offend all, wlajouer άπαντες, not Sinners only, but Righteous and Upright Men, have their Defects and Slips. And accordingly there is not any Life which we have the History of in Scripture, how excellent soever the Person be, but we meet with some of these recorded; as will appear from those several Instan-

ces I shall produce, when I come to describe the Nature of these Sins. And certainly when David fays of himself, My Sins are more in number than the hairs of my head: He that shall interpret this Place of Mortal or Presumptuous Sins, will both contradict the Scriptures, which acquit him, except in the matter of Uriah, and highly wrong the Memory of David, making him a Prodigy of Wickedness, instead of a Saint. Nor does that make any thing against me, which he adds in the next Words, My heart fails me; or that in the foregoing Verse, Mine Iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up. For I do not affirm that the Pfalmist here has regard only to Sins of Infirmity exclusively of others; no, he reckons all together, and so discerns the one aggravated by the other; and the Guilt of all together very far enhanced. Nor do I, Secondly, interest my self here in that Dispute between Protestants and Papists, Whether Sins of Infirmity are not damnable in their own Nature, though not imputed under the Covenant of Grace? Nor do I, Lastly, examine what a vast Heap of Sins of Infirmity may amount to, though the Guilt of this or that alone were not fo fatal. I have then, I think, proved the Matter in question; having shewed, both from the Experience of Mankind, and the Scripscripture, That the best Men have their Infirmities and Defects; And that these may properly enough be called Sins. I think t superfluous to prove, that they consist with a State of Salvation; fince 'tis not by any, that I know of, denied; and may be easily enough made out, from what I have already said. I am now to Enquire,

§. 2. What these Sins be; and how distinguish'd from Mortal or Damnable ones. To this purpose we may distinguish Human Actions (under which I comprise both Internal and External) into three forts,

Voluntary, Involuntary, and Mixt.

6. 1. There are Actions properly and truly Voluntary; fuch are those deliberate Transgressions of a Divine Law, which Man commits in Opposition to the direct Remonstrances of Conscience; he knows the Action is forbid; he fees the Turpitude and Obliquity of it; he is not ignorant of the Punishment denounced against it, and yet he ventures upon it: This is plainly mortal, damnable Sin, and I cannot think, that any Circumstance or Pretence whatever, can render it venial. And therefore I must be pardoned, if I cannot be of their Opinion, who suppose, that the smalness of the Matter, the Reluctancy of Conscience, or the Length and Force of a Temptation, can so soften and miti-

gate a Voluntary Transgression, as to diminish it into a Sin of Infirmity. 1. As to the Smallness of the Matter. Some cannot but think those Transgressions Venial, which are, for the Matter of them, fo flight and infignificant, that they feem to be attended by no mischievous Consequence, nor to offer any Dishonour to God, nor Injustice to Man. But I doubt this Notion of Venial Sin has no Solidity in it; for either Men perform such Actions Deliberately, or Indeliberately, knowing them to be finful, or believing them to be innocent. Now if we perform any Action Deliberately, and knowing it to be finful, we never ought to look upon this as a little Sin, much less a Verial one. The Reason of this is plain. The First Notion that every Man has of Sin, is, that it is forbidden by, and displeasing to God; and then to do that deliberately, which we know will provoke God, is an Argument of a fearless and irreligious Heart, a Heart destitute of the Love of God, the Love of Righteousness, and Heaven. But if a Man transgress in a trisling Instance in deliberately; this alters the Case; for the Matter not being of Importance enough to excite the Intention and Application of the Mind; and there being consequently no Malignity of the Will in an Action, where there was no Concurrence of the Judgment, I cannor

annot but think, this may very well pass or an Human Infirmity; for all the Fault hat can be here laid to the Charge of Man s, Incogitancy or Inadvertency; and that oo as excusable a one as can be. Lastly, where the Matter of an Action is very rifling and inconsiderable, and draws after r no ill Consequence, either with respect o God or Man; in this Case, if a Man udge it no Sin, I cannot think it is any o him; though by a nice and scrupulous Construction, it may fall within the Compass of some Divine Prohibition. The Ditinction of the Schoolmen is good enough nere; it is besides the Law, but not against t: Or it is against the Letter, but not the Defign and Intention of the Law of God. I cannot think that it is conlistent with the Infinite Goodness of God, to punish such Things as these with Eternal Misery, or that it can become a Man of Sense, seriously to afflict his Soul for them. I cannot for my Life persuade my self, that I should provoke God, if passing thorough a Field of my Neighbour's Corn or Pease, I should pull off an Ear or Cod; or passing thorough his Orchard, should eat an Apple. The Notion I have of God, and the great End and Defign of his Laws, will not fuffer me to entertain such triffing, weak, and superstitious Fancies. And here I cannot but take

Notice of two Things, which very much perplex the Minds of some good People; that is, an Idle Word, and Jesting: Concerning both which, 'tis very plain, That fuch are miserably mistaken; and that they are no Sins at all, unless unreasonable and superstitious Scruples make them fo: This, I say, on supposition that by Idle Word, they mean only such Talk, as does not tend to Edification; and by Jesting, only that which is Innocent and Divertive. By an idle Word (Mat. 12.) our Saviour plainly means a blasphemous Word. if that Saying of our Saviour, of every idle Word, &c. be to be limited and confined by the sense of the Context: For the occasion of the Assertion of our Lord, was the Blasphemy which the Jews belch'd out against his Miracles. Or if our Lord here, on this Occasion, advances a general Do-Erine, then, by an idle Word, we much understand a wicked one, proceeding from a corrupt and naughty Heart; and tending as directly to promote Impiety, as gracious and wholfome Difcourse does to promote Edification. This is evident from ver. 25. A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. And ver. 37. for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

mned. By Jesting, Eph. 5. 4. the Apole understands the modish Raillery of the meks, which was generally made up of sophanenes and Wantonnes; or brisk and harp Ironies. This is plain, both from the Company we find it in αισχεότης η μωλογία, Filthiness and Foolish Speaking; d from the Character given it in comron with the other two, Τα έκ ανήκοντα, ling the very same that is given the most mous and vilest Lusts and Passions. m. 1. 28. Things not convenient is a dinutive Expression, implying such things contain much Turpitude and Wickeds in them. Beza, as appears by his ores, reads 3, not & in this place, foolish eaking, or, not and, Jesting; which (as observes) makes Jesting the same thing th foolish Speaking, or Buffoonry. And tifies that Jesting, which consists in a easant and divertive Facetiousness from Kings 18. 27. 2 King 3. 23. Isa. 14.

2. Some think, that the meer Reluctant and Opposition of Conscience against a, is sufficient to constitute a Sin of Instruct. And this has received no small buntenance from such an Interpretation Rom. 7. as makes Holiness to be nothing but a Vicissitude of Desires and Action, repugnant to one another. But at its rate no Man's Sins would be Damning

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but his whose Conscience were seared; and when One's Heart did condemn one, Goo would be fure to acquit one: Which agree very ill with St. John, If our heart condem us, God is greater than our heart, and know eth all things, 1 Joh. 3. 21. No Man, un less arrived at a Reprobate sense, can de that which is evil, without Reluctancy for his Conscience will forbid him, as long as it has the least Degree of Tendernel in it; and restrain him as far as it ha Power. And as to Rom. 7. it has been abundantly consider'd; and, I think fufficiently proved to belong to those who are the Servants of Sin; as Rom. { does to those who are set free. St. Austr indeed tells us, that he understood the Chapter at first as the Pelagians did, for Person under the Law, and under the Power of Sin; but that he found himfe constrained afterwards to understand it St. Paul himself. I will not examine the Solidity of his Reasons: 'Tis enough 1 me, that his Change of Opinion does R ligion no harm: For he is fo far from m king a State of Holiness to consist with A& of Deliberate Sin against Conscience, th he will not excuse so much as rebellion Motions and Appetites, if confented t All that he contends for, in a good Ma from this Chapter is, That lapfed Natu will sometimes exert it self, even in the be Me

Men, in disorderly and distemper'd Appe-

3. Others, Lastly, will have those Sins, nto which we fall, either overpower'd by he Strength, or wearied out by the Affiluity or Length of a Temptation, pass for Infirmities. But this Opinion has as little Ground as the two former. I can find no Scripture that countenances this Notion. There are indeed, some of great Reputaion, who have promoted it. But, I think, he words of St. Paul make against it, I Cor. 10. 13. There hath no temptation taken you, out such as is common to Man; but God is aithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted shove that you are able; but will with the temrtation also make a way to escape; that ye may be able to bear it. The Design of which Words, is certainly to encourage Chritians against the biggest Temptations, by in Affurance of Relief from God, proporionable to our Necessities; and consequently must imply, that if we yield to Temptation, 'tis our own fault. God expects we should stand firm under the highest Trials. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life, Rev. 2. 10. To him that overcometh will I grant to lit with me in my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his Throne, Rev. 3. 21. But whosoever shall leny me before Men, him will I also deny

before my Father which is in Heaven, Mat 10. 33. If therefore, by Sins of Infirmity, Men mean, such as are consistent with the State of Grace, i.e. fuch as good Men may frequently fall into, without forfeiting the Peace of Conscience, and the Favour of God, I cannot possibly think, that any Deliberate Sin can be fuch, upon the Score of the Temptation; or that any of those Sins, reckoned in the Catalog Gal. 5. and Eph. 5. can be such on the account of the Violence or Perseverant with which they attack us. But, Second ly, If by Sins of Infirmity, they mean fuch Sins as Righteous Men are liable to, I know not what they are from which the are exempted. But if, Lastly, by Sins Infirmity, they mean fuch, for which Go is more easily intreated, then there is no Question to be made, but that there is Difference in Sins; which is to be estimated by the different Measures of Grace and Knowledge; by the different Degrees of Deliberation and Surprize; and by the Force or Weakness, the Continuance of Shortness of a Temptation: And finally by the different Effects and Tendencies of Sins. To all which, I do not question but that the Spirit has regard in those Dire ctions, which it gives us, for our Behaviour towards such as fall, Gal. 6. 1. Brethren, 1, a Man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are Spiri

spiritual, restore such a one in the Spirit of Meekness; considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the sire, Jude 22, 23.

§. 2. A Second fort of Actions are such as we call Involuntary; that is, those wherein we exercise no Deliberation, no Choice. Some have reduced Sins of Infirmity to this Head, but with what Colour of Reason any one may judge. For since Actions truly Involuntary, are neither the Object of the Understanding nor Will, 'tis hard to conceive what Morality there can be in them. The Grounds on which this Opinion is built are fuch as these. First, the Measure, say they, of Good and Evil is the Law of God; but Involuntary and unavoidable Actions are not a proper Subject of Laws: For to what purpose is it to prescribe Rules, or to propose Rewards and Punishments to such Actions, as are no way subject to our Choice? Secondly, They tell us, 'tis inconsistent with the Goodness of God, and the Riches of Gospel Grace, to impute those Things to a Man as Damnable Sins, which fall not within the Compass of his Power or Deliberation. Now, I must confess, I am so far from denying any Actions, that can lay a just claim to this Apology, to be Venial,

that I cannot forbear thinking that they are not finful: For where there is no Law, there is no Transgression. But how does this way of arguing for the Excusableness of Involuntary Transgressions, consist with those other Doctrines which they maintain concerning them; namely, That we are bound to Repentance for them; That thefe Sins are not Venial in their own Nature, but only thro' the Favour of God? For the Law, taken in its Rigour, denounces Death against all Sin in general, without Limitation or Exception; fo that if God should judge rigoroufly, even Involuntary Sin would fall under that Sentence, The wages of Sin is Death. This, I must confes, feems to me very incoherent. For if an Action be of that Nature, that it cannot properly be the Matter or Subject of a Law, How can it fall under the Condemnation of Law? If it be of that Nature that it is incapable of any Moral Regulation, nor subject to the Influence of Reward or Punishment, How can it be meer Matter of Grace that a Man is not damned for it? In a word, if an Action be truly and properly Involuntary, it can by no means be Sin; And if it be Voluntary, it is subject to the Regulation of Laws: 'Tis a proper Instance of Deliberation and Freedom, and capable of Rewards and Punishments. And the Truth is, the one needs

no Apology, and the other is not capable of any; the one is a Mortal Sin, and the other no Sin at all. And therefore, we must look for Venial Sin in some other Species of Action.

§. 3. The last Class of Actions are those which are of a mixt Nature; partly Voluntary, and partly Involuntary: And here, I think, we must place Sins of Infirmity, by whatever Names we may call them. For these surely, if they are to be rank'd (as by all they are) amongst Actual Sins, must be such Actions as have in them, something of Voluntary, some-thing of Involuntary, much of Human Frailty, and fomething of Sinful; much of Unavoidable, and fomething of Moral Obliquity. These are the Transgressions which the Scripture seems to me, to intend by Errors, Defects, Slips, Motes, the Spots of God's Children; and these certainly, if any, must be the Sins that can confist with a State of Grace. For these do not imply a deliberate Wickedness in the Will, much less an Habitual one; nay, they do not include in them any Wickednels at all, strictly speaking, but are truly the Effects of Human Frailty, and the unhappy Circumstances of this Mortal Life. Thus then I describe a Venial Sin; it has in it so much of Voluntary as to make it

Sin, so much of Involuntary as to make i Frailty; it has so much of the Will in it that it is capable of being reduced; and ve fo much of Necessity in it, it is never utter ly to be extirpated: It has fomething in i Criminal enough to oblige us to watch against it, and repent of it; and yet so much in it pitiable and excusable, as to en title us to Pardon under the Covenant o Grace. And thus I distinguish Venia from Mortal Sin: Mortal Sin proceed from a Heart, either Habitually corrupted or deceived and captivated for the time but Venial Sin refults from the Imperfecti ons and Infelicities of our Nature, and our State. Mortal Sin is truly Voluntary and Deliberate in the Rife and Birth of it, and mischievous and injurious in its Conse quence: But Venial Sin is very far Indeliberate in its Beginning, and, if not indul ged, almost harmless in its Effects: Deficiency is, as it were, the Essence of the one, Malignity of the other; in the one we fee more of Frailty, in the other more of Wickedness: In the one something nearly ally'd to Necessity, in the other to Presumption: The one is the Transgress fion of the Law of Perfection, the other of the Law of Sincerity; the one is repugnant to the Letter, the other to the Defign and End of the Law; the one is a Violation of God's Commands, taken in the

the most favourable Construction; the other a Violation of them in a rigorous one. That this was the Notion of St. Aufin, St. Jerome, and others, who impugn'd the sinless Perfection of the Pelagians, is very plain.

1. From the Distinction they made between Karia and âmáptnma, Crimen and Peccatum, i. e. between Wickedness and Desects, between Crimes and Faults; for this is plainly the Sense wherein they used these Words. And next from those very clear and lively Descriptions of Venial Sin, which occur trequently in St. Austin; after whom, 'tis well known, others writ.

Such is that * through Ignorance or Infirmity, for want of exerting our utmost Strength against Concupiscence, we are drawn away by it to some unlawful Things; and the worse we are, so much the more and the oftner; but the better we are, so much the less and the seldomer do we give way to it. And thus & St. Ferome imputes Venial Sin, to our not making use of our utmost Strength and Diligence. I might content my felf with having given this general Description of Sins of Infirmity, did I not know, how ill a Talent some have at

*— Fit per Ignorantiam vellnsirmitatem non
exertis adversus cam totis
viribus voluntatis, eidem
ad ilicita etiam nonnulla
cedamus, tanto magis &
crebrius quanto deteriores, tanto minus & rarius
quanto meliores sumus.
Tom. 7. De Peccat. Rem.
p. 689.

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

Application of Generals to any particular

Case; and how little satisfactory such Account is to the weak and scrupulous. For the fake of these therefore, I think fit to be a little more distinct and particular on this Argument. In Venial Sin then, Two Things must be considered.

- 1. The Matter of it.
- 2. The Manner of Committing it.
- 1. As to the Matter, I conceive it ought to be flight and inconsiderable. There is no room for a Venial Sin in things of a crying provoking Nature; as in Adultery, Idolatry, Murther; for in these, the Injustice and Wickedness, with respect to God and Man, is palpable and formidable; and can never, for ought I see, be extenuared by any Circumstances into Sins of Infirmity. But when I say, the Matter of the Sin of Infirmity, must not be a detestable and crying Provocation, I do not mean to extend this to the first Tendencies and Dispositions even towards such Sins. Thus though Adultery cannot be a Venial Sin, yet the first Sallies of the Desire, the first Glances and Wandrings of the Eye, may. And the same thing may be said of the first Motions towards any other Sin.

2. As to the next thing to be considered in a Venial Sin, that is, the manner of committing it, it must proceed from Ignorance, Frailty, or Surprise.

1. From Ignorance. By Ignorance I do not mean that which is utterly invincible, but that which has some Defect, some Frailty, some Degree of Negligence in it. Of this kind, I take those Errors to be, against which David prays, Psalm 19. 12. Who can understand his Errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. He that considers Human Nature, and the Power of Education; the Influence of Prejudices which we fuck in betimes, and fuch like, will easily acknowledge, that there may be such Errors. When we have used a moral Diligence in examining our Lives, and trying our own Hearts; yet considering the vast Variety of Duties we are to run through, no humble Man can be confident, that he has omitted nothing, that he is mistaken in nothing. This I take to be the fense of Solomon, Prov. 20. 9. Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin? And this I take to be the sense of St. Paul, Cor. 4. 4. For I know nothing by my self, yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. There are Mistakes and Errors, which might indeed have been prevented or removed, by the frietest Impartiality, and the strictest Diligence. But alas! How often do Good Men fall short of both these? How common is it for Good Men to be too far transported by the best of Principles, even Zeal? How often do Good Men mix their Errors in Reproof and Reprehension, and in the one and the

other, they discern it not?

2. Surprise and Inadvertency is another thing that renders Sin Venial. The Multitude of Affairs and Temptations, the Suddenness and Unexpectedness of some unusual Temptation, or something of this kind, may betray a Good Man into some Slips or Errors, in Word or Deed. This I take to be the Case of Sarah, when she faid, I laughed not: Of Jonah, when he replied upon God, I do well to be angry, Jon. 3. Of David, when he pronounced rashly, do thou and Zibah divide the land, 2 Sam. 16. 4. Of Saul and Barnabas, when they broke out into Heat and Anger. But that which was a Sin of Infirmity in the beginning, became, I doubt, a Deliberate one in the end, when they parted from one another. Some extend this Circumstance of Surprize to excuse Sins, which imply notorious Wickedness, and are of very ill Consequence; but, I think, very erroneously. 'Tis true, these Sins of Surprize, whatever the Matter of them be, are generally conceived to be much extenuated through want of Opportunity to fummon our Strength, and to make use of mature and fober Deliberation; especially where the Temptation is not only sudden but violent too. For in this case, the Sol-

dier of Christ, taken, as it were, in an Ambush, or blown up with a Mine, seems to be lost and defeated before he discern his Danger: I do not doubt then, but this Suddenness of a Temptation does very much diminish the Guilt of a Sin. But we ought to remember too, that there are nany Things that do abate and take off rom this Excuse: As First, It is not easy to conceive how any Thing that is a direct Wickedness, that is a Sin of a deeper Dye han ordinary, on the account of its mifchievous Consequences, should make its Approach so filently, and so suddenly, that we should fall into it indiscernibly. Secondly, The Christian is bound to shun not only every Evil, but every Appearance of it; and 'tis hard to imagine, that a fincere Man, who does indeed strain at a Gnat, should swallow a Camel. He that preserves the Tenderness of Conscience, as he will have an Aversion for small Sins, so will he have an Horror for great ones. Thirdly, The Mind of a Christian ought to be polfessed and awed by the Fear of God; and that not a slight and transient, but a deep and lasting one. The Psalmist was not content to fay, I am afraid of thy Judgments; but to express how thoroughly this Fear had feized him, he adds, my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, Psal. 119. And certainly, this Fear is a fort of impenetrable

ble Armour, which extinguishes all the fiery Darts of the Devil. In vain is the Suddenness, or the Briskness of a Temptation, unless we first lay aside this Shield. Fourthly, We are bound to be always on our Watch and Guard; and therefore if we relax our Discipline, if we live secure and careless, if we rashly cast our selves upon Dangers, our Sin then will be but the Confequence of our Folly; and therefore one Error cannot be an Excuse, or an Apology, for another. I think therefore the Apology of Surprize should be confin'd and limited to flight Offences; it cannot properly have room in great ones, or if it have, it may be urged in Mitigation of our Punishment; but never, I doubt, for total Impunity.

3. Lastly, Venial Sin has its Rise from the Desects and Impersections of our Nature, and the disadvantagious Circumstances of our State. Here come in the Failures and Desects in the Measures and Degrees of Duty; if these can be properly reckon'd for Sins: I say, if they can; for I do not see that this is a good Argument: We are bound to the highest Degree of Love by that Law. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; therefore whatsoever falls short of the highest and most absolute Degree of Love, is a Sin: For at this rate, whatever were short of

Per-

erfection, would be Sin. We must love, othing better than God, nothing equal to Im: This will constitute us in a State of incerity. What is farther required is, that re are bound to aim at, and pursue after he highest and most perfect Degrees of ove; but we are not bound under Pain Damnation to attain them. But on the ther hand, I readily grant, that our falng short in the Degrees of Faith, Love, lope, and the like, may be properly recened amongst Sins; when they spring om the Defects of Vigilance and Industry: nd if these Desects be such as can consist ith Sincerity, then are the Impersections the Abatements of our Virtues, pardoable; and then only. Here again fall in missions, wandring Thoughts, Dulness and leaviness in Duty, the short Titillations of me irregular Fancies, Forgetfulness, flight id short Fits of Envy, Discontent, Anr, Ambition, Gaiety of Mind. Thus e find the Disciples falling asleep when ey should have pray'd, Mat. 26. and uvid praying, quicken thou me, Psal. 119. hus his Soul too was often cast down, and Iquieted within him, Psal. 42 2 Chron. 18, 19. Job cursed the Day of his Birth.
I short, our Natures are Human, not ingelical; and our State is full of Variety Accidents, that they are too apt to Mompole the Mind, and divert it from

its great End. The Ebbs and Flows of Blood and Spirits, and an unlucky Constitution, or a Distemper; the Multitude or Consusion of Affairs; the Violence of the Length of Trials; the Ease and Flan tery of Prosperity; the Weariness of the Body, or of the Mind; the Incommod oufness of Fortune, Roughness of Conversation; these, and a thousand other things, are apt to produce Defects and Failures in our Obedience, short Disorder in our Affections; and fuch Emotions and Eruptions as abundantly prove the best to be but Men; and the highest Persection if it be but Human, to be wanting and defective. I think I have now omitted no thing necessary to form a true Notion the Sin of Infirmity. My next business therefore is, to consider,

§. 3. How far the Liberty of the Perfect Man, in respect of Venial Sin, ought to be extended. There is great Affinity between Venial and Original Sin; and therefore the Perfect Man's Liberty, as it relates to the one and the other, consists in much the same Degrees, and is to be attained by the same Method; so that I might well enough dismiss this Subject, and pass on to Mortal Sin. But reflecting on the Nature of Man, how prone we are to sin, and yet how apt we are to think well of our selves.

indge it necessary to guard the Doctrine Venial Sin by fome few Rules, which my at once serve to secure our Sincey, and point out the Perfection we are aspire to. 1st, Then, Is we would preent any fatal Event of Sins flowing from morance, we must take care, that our Igprance it felf be not Criminal; and that will not be, if our Hearts be sincerely sposed to do our Duty, and if we use mo-Diligence to know it: If we be impar-il, humble, and honest, and have that uncern for the Knowledge and Practice our Duty, that is in some fort proportioble to the Importance of it. The Ignoince that arises from natural Incapacity, want of sufficient Revelation, is invinble; and therefore innocent, John 9. 41. esus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye ould have no sin; but now ye say, we see erefore your sin remaineth: And 15. 22. I had not come and spoken unto them, they ed not had sin: but now they have no cloke r their sins. This Rule must be undernod of necessary Knowledge in General; d more legible and conspicuous Lines of Juty: Both which notwithstanding, there my be room for fins of Infirmity to enter, here Mortal ones cannot: There may be sperfect Dispositions of Mind, and latent rejudices; there may be Instances of Duof a flighter moment; there may be feveral

veral Circumstances, and small Emergencies that may either be without the Aim, or escape the Discovery of a moral Search, that is, of a Human one; which though it be without Hypocrify, is not yet without more or less Frailty. As to Persection it differs in this, as it does in other Cafes, from Sincerity only in the Degrees by which it is advanced above it. He that will be Perfect, must search for Wisdom as for hid Treasures: His Delight must be in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law must he meditate day and night: His Thirst of Truth must be more eager and impatient his Diligence more wakeful, more circumspect, more particular, more steady and constant than that of the Beginner; or o one who is no farther advanced, than fuc-Measures of Faith and Love, as are indispensably necessary to Sincerity, will carry him. 2dly. Sins that are occasion'd by Sur prize and Inadvertency will not prove de structive, if the Inadvertency it self be in a manner innocent: That is, First, Then is no room for Inadvertency in complea Acts of crying Sins. Secondly, there i no pretence for Inadvertency, if we had any Mifgivings within, or Warnings with out concerning that particular Sin, into which we fell afterwards; much less i we cherish ill Motions till they grow to strong for us. And last of all, if we re

est the same Sin frequently and contemruoully. And to this I may add, he annot be faid to fin through furprize, who hrows himself into the Way of Temptaion, even though he be conscious of his wn Infirmity. 3dly. As to those Moral efects which flow from natural Infirity, they will not destroy us; if the Inrmity it felf be pardonable. There are nfirmities which we acquire; Infirmities hich grow stronger by Indulgence; Inrmities which continue meerly because e do not take Pains to subdue them: ur Moral Defects must not flow from ese kinds of Infirmities; but from such confidering Human Nature, and the ate of this World, 'tis impossible utterly root out. These Moral Desects will do t no harm; if, First, We take Care to ttle in our Minds the Habits of those irtues that are directly opposite to them. condly, if we watch and fight against or natural Infirmities; and endeavour to duce our Appetites, even our natural ppetites, within strict and narrow funds. Thirdly, If we wash off the ans of our Slips and Defects by a gene-Repentance: For upon the Notion I we here given of Venial Sin, Repentance pears to be very necessary; For I require them something of Voluntary, someing of Freedom; enough to make an

Action finful, though not to prove the Heart corrupt or wicked. And because the degrees of Voluntary and Involuntary are not so easily distinguishable from one ano ther, 'tis plain our best security against any ill Consequence of our Defects and Frailties is a Godly Sorrow. And therefore I wonder not if David charge himself more severely than God does, My sins are more in number than the hairs of my head. This was a Confession that became the Humility and Soli citude of a Penitent; that became the Reflections of a Wise and Persect Man, and the Corruption of Human Nature; the Al loy of Human Performances; the Slips and Defects, the Interruptions, Neglects, and Deviations of the best Life.

CHAP. VI.

Of Liberty, as it imports Freedom or Deliverance from Mortal Sin. What Mortal Sin. How the Perfect Man must be free from a And which way this Liberty may be best at tain'd; with some Rules for the Attanment of it.

THERE I will Enquire into Three Things;

1. What Mortal Sin is; or what kin

of Sins they be, which are on all hand acknowledged to be inconfishent with State of Grace and Favour.

a. Ho

- 2. How far the Perfect Man must be set free or delivered from this kind of Sins; ut how remote he is from the Guilt of them.
- 3. Which way this Liberty may be best attained.
- §. 1. The First Thing necessary is, To state the Notion of that Sin, which passes under the Name of Mortal, Wilful, Presumptuous, or Deliberate Sin: For these in Writers are equivalent Terms, and promiscuously used to signify one and the same thing. Sin (faith St. John, 1 Ep. 3.4.) is the Transgression of the Law. This is a plain and full Definition too of Sin: For the Law of God is the Rule of Moral Actions; 'tis the Standard and Measure of Right and Wrong, of Moral Good and Evil. Whatever is not within the Compass of the Law, is not within the Compass of Morality neither: Whatever cannot be comprehended within this Definition, cannot have in it the entire and compleat Notion of Sin; or which is all one, it cannot be Sin, in a strict, proper, and adequate sense of the word. Hence St. John in the same Verse tells us, That whosever sinneth, transgresseth the law. And St. Paul, Rom. 4. 15. Where there is no law there is no iransgression. Sin then must always suppose a Law; without which there can be Y 4 neither

neither Vice nor Virtue, Righteousness nor Wickedness: For these are nothing else but the Violation or Observation of the Law of God; or Habits and States resulting from the one or the other. But this is not all: Two things more must be remark'd, to render this Definition, which the Apostle gives us of Sin, clear and sull. First, The Law must be sufficiently revealed. Secondly, The Transgression of it must

be truly Voluntary.

1. By sufficient Revelation of a Divine Law, every one understands, That the Law must be so publish'd to the Man who is to be govern'd by it, that the Authority and Sense of it may be, if it be not he own fault, render'd evident to him. I the Divine Authority of any Rule or Precept be doubtful and uncertain, the Obligation of it will be so too: And it is as necessary that the Sense of the Law should bo evident, as its Authority. The Law that is penn'd in dark and ambiguous Terms is, properly speaking, no Law at all; fince the Mind of the Lawgiver is not sufficiently made known by it. Whatever is necesfarily to be forborn or done by us, must be fully and clearly prescribed in the Law of God; and if it be not, it can never be ne-cessary. Men through Weakness or Design may enact Laws that are but a heap of Letters, a Croud of dubious, Delphick Sentencentences: But God can never do so, beause this is repugnant both to his Wisdom and Goodness, and to the very End of a Law too, which is to be a Rule, not a snare; 'tis to give understanding to the simale; to be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths; not like an Ignis Fatuus, to betray us into Brakes and Precipices, and

Ruin, and Death.

2. The Transgression must be a Voluntary one. And this imports two things: 1. A Knowledge of the Law. 2. A Confent to the Breach of it. First, As to the Knowledge of the Law. All that I have to fay here in few words, is, That Igno. rance of the Law excuses a Transgression, when it is it self excusable; but if the Ignorance it felf be Criminal, the Effect of it must be so too. We must never think of excusing our Sins, by alledging an Ignorance into which, not our own Incapacity, or any other reasonable Cause, but Neglect or Contempt of the Truth, or some other vicious Lust or Passion has betray'd us. Secondly, As to the Consent of the Will, This is necessary to demonstrate any Action sinful or virtuous; without this the Mind will be no Partner in the Sin, and by consequence cannot be involved in the Guilt of it. Whatever we cannot help, is our Missortune, not our Fault; Actions merely natural, or merely forc'd, can neither ther be good nor evil. The concurrence of Reason and Choice is indispensably necessary to the Morality of an Action. All this is plainly taught us by St. James 1. 14, 15. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when Lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Which words do certainly imply, That the Spring and Principle of Sin is within our selves; That 'tis our natural Corruption that entices and allures us; and 'tis our Consent to its Enticements that gives Being to Sin, and defiles us with Guilt.

From all this now put together 'tis eafy to conclude what fort of a Description we are to form of Mortal Sin: 'Tis such a Transgression of the Law of God, as is vicious in its Original, deliberate in its Commission, and mischievous in its Tendencies or Effects: The Heart is corrupted and misled by some Lust or other, and so consents to the Breach of the Moral Law of God, a Law of Eternal and Immutable Goodness: Or if the Sin consists in the Breach of any Politive Law, it must yet imply in it some Moral Obliquity in the Will, or it the Tendency of the Action, or both. So that Presumptuous, or Mortal Sin, call in by what name we will, is a Deliberate Transgression of a known Law of God, tending to the Dishonour of God, the Inju-

ry of our Neighbour, or the Depravation of our Nature. Such are those Sins which the Prophet Isaiah exhorts those who will repent, to cease from. And such are those we have a Catalogue of, Eph. 5. Gal. 5. and elsewhere: Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, for-nication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, nitchcrast, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. These are the Sins, of which, as of fo many Members, the Body of Sin confifts: These constitute the Old Man: These are fometimes called, the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, ungodliness, wickedness, iniquity, the lusts of the slesh, worldly lusts, and such. like. These and the like Sins have, as I faid, in them very apparent Symptoms of Malignity and Mortality: They are always the effect of some carnal and worldly Lusts, prevailing over the Law of the Mind; and they imply a Contempt of God, Injustice to our Neighbour, and some kind of Defilement and Pollution of our Nature. And that these are the plain Indications of fuch a Guilt as excludes a Man from Heaven and the Favour of God, is very plain from the Account which the Scripture gives us both of the Origine and Influence of Sin. from the Care it takes to fortify the Heart against all Infection; from

from the constant Representations it makes us of the Shamefulness and the Mischief of Sin, even in reference to this World as well as the other. I cannot fee any thing further necessary to the Explication of deliberate or presumptuous Sin, unless it be here fit to add, That it is Mortal, though it proceed no further than the Heart: There is no need at all that it should be brought forth into Action, to render it Fatal and Damnable. This is evident, not only from the Nature of Divine Worship, which must be entire, fincere, and spiritual; and therefore can no more be reconciled to the Wickedness of our Hearts, than of our Actions; but also from the express Words of our Saviour, Out of the heart proceed for-nication, adultery, theft, &c. And elsewhere he pronounces the Adultery of the Heart damnable, as well as that of the Body, Mat. 5. 28. But I say unto you, That whospever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.

§. 2. I am next to give some account of the Liberty of the Persect Man, in reservence to the Sin I have been discoursing of, I shall not need to stop at any General or Preliminary Observations; as, That Abstrinence from Sin regards all the Commandments of God alike; and to do otherwise

wise were to mutilate and maim Religion, and to dishonour God while we pretend to worship and obey Him: For the Breach of any fingle Commandment is a manifest Violation of the Majesty and Authority of God, whatever Observance we may pay all the rest: For he that said, Do not commit adultery; said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law, Jam. 2. 11. That the Restraints Man is to lay upon himself, relate no less to the Lusts of the Soul than the Actions of the Body: Except your Righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven, Matth. 5. 10. That to begin well will avail us little, unless we finish well too. Universality, Sincerity, and Perseverance are generally acknowledged to be effential and indispensable Properties of Saving, Justifying Faith. These things therefore being but just mentioned, I proceed to the Point to be enquired into and refolved.

1. To be free from the Dominion and Power of Mortal Sin, is the first and lowest Step; this is indispensable to Sincerity, and absolutely necessary to Salvation: Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies, to fulfil the lusts thereof, Rom. 6. 12. And the advancing thus far, does, I acknowledge, constitute Man in a state of Grace: For

in Scripture Men are denominated righteous or wicked, not from fingle Acts of Vice or Virtue, but from the Prevalence and Dominion, from the Habit or Custom of the one or the other: Know ye not, that to whom ye yield your selves servants to obey, bis servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righ-teousness? Rom. 6. 16. But then I must here add two Remarks, by way of Cau-tion. 1. We must not presume too soon of Victory over an Habitual Sin. An evil Habit is not foon broken off; nor is it an easy matter to resolve, when we have set our felves free from the Power of it. Sometimes the Temptation does not prefent it felf as often as it was wont, or not with the same Advantages; sometime one Vice restrains us from another; fometimes worldly Confiderations, or fome little Change in our Temper, without any thorough Change in our Minds, puts us out of humour for a little while with a darling Sin; and fometimes the Force and Clearness of Conviction, produces some pious Fits, which though they do not utterly vanquish a Lust, do yet force it to give way, and retreat for a while, and interrupt that Love which they do not extinguish: Ali this may be, and the work not yet be done, nor our Liberty yet gain'd. If therefore we fall, though but now and then,

then, and though at some distance of time, into the same Sin, we have great reason to be jealous of its Power and our Safety: Nay, though we restrain our selves from the outward Commission of it; if yet we feel a strong Propension to it; if we discern our felves ready to take fire on the appearance of a Temptation; if we are fond of approaching as near it as we can, and are pleas'd with those Indulgences which are very near a-kin to it, we have reason to doubt that our Conquest is not yet entire. Nay, the truth is, we cannot be on good grounds affured that we are Masters of our felves, till we have a fettled Aversion for the Sin which before we doated on and shun the Occasions which before we courted. till we be possess'd of a Habit of that Virtue which is a direct Contradiction to it; and take as much pleasure in the Obedience, as ever we did in the Transgression of a Divine Command.

2dly. There are some Sins of that provoking Nature, so criminal in their Birth, and mischievous in their Consequences, That one single Ast or Commission of one of these, is equivalent to a Habit of others: Such is Murther, Idolatry, Perjury, Adultery; these cannot be committed without renouncing Humanity as well as Christianity; without resisting the Instincts and Impulses of Nature, as well as the Light of the Go-

spel, and the Grace of the Spirit. We must break through a great many Difficulties and Terrors, 'ere we can come at these Sins; we must commit many other, in order to commit one of these; we must deliberate long, resolve desperately, and in defiance of God and Conscience; and what is the Effect of Habit in other Instances, is a necessary Preparative in these, that is, Obduration. In this Case, therefore, the unhappy Man, that has been guilty of any one of these, must not look upon himself as set free, when he is come to a Resolution of never repeating it again; but then when he loaths and abhors himself in Dust and Ashes; when he has made the utmost Reparation of the Wrong he is capable of: When, if the Interest of Virtue require it, he is content to be oppress'd with Shame and Sufferings: When, in one word, a long and constant Course of Mortification, Prayers, Tears and good Works have washed off the stain and guilt.

2. We must be free, not only from a Habit, but from single Acts of deliberate presumptuous Sin. The Reason is plain; Mortal Sin cannot be committed without wounding the Conscience, grieving the Spirit, and renouncing our Hopes in God through Christ, for the time at least. The wages of sin is death, is true, not only of Habits, but single Acts of Deliberate Sin.

Death

Death is the Penalty, the Sanction of every Commandment; and the Commandment does not prohibit Habits only, but fingle Acts too. Nor is there indeed any room for Doubt or Dispute here, but in one Case; which is, If a Righteous Man should be taken off in the very Commission of a Sin, which he has fallen into. Here indeed, much may be faid, and with much Uncertainty. But the Resolution of this Point, does not, as far as I can fee, miniser to any good or necessary End; and therefore I will leave it to God. In all other Cases, every Thing is clear and plain; For if the Servant of God fall into a Prefumptuous Sin, 'tis universally acknowledg'd, that he cannot recover his Station but by Repentance. If he repent presently, he is safe; but if he continue in his Sin, if he repeat it, he passes into a State of Wickedness; widens the Breach between God and his Soul, declines infensibly into a Habit of Sin, and renders his Wound more and more incurable. 'Tis to little purpose, I think here, to consider the vast Difference there is in the Commission, even of the same Sin, between a Child of God, and a Child of Wrath; because a Child of God must not commit it at all: If he do, though it be with Reluctancy; though it be, as it were, with an imperfeet Consent, and with a divided Soul; though

though the Awe of Religion and Conscience seems not utterly to have for sken him, even in the midst of his Sin; though his Heart smite him, the very Minute it is finished, and Repentance and Remorse take off the relish of the unhappy Draught; yet still 'tis Sin; 'tis in its Nature Damnable: And nothing but the Blood of Jesus

can purge the Guilt.

3. The Perfect Man may be supposed, not only actually to abstain from Mortal Sin, but to be advanced so far in the Mortification of all his inordinate Affections, as to do it with Ease and Pleasure, with Constancy and Delight. For it must reafonably be prefumed, that his Victory over ungodly and worldly Lust, is more con-firm'd and absolute; his Abhorrence of them more deep and fensible, more fixt and lasting than that of a Beginner or Babe in Christ. The Regenerate at first fears the Consequence of Sin; but by degrees he hates the Sin it felf. The Purity of his Soul renders him now incapable of finding any Pleafure in what he doted on before; and the Love of God and Virtue raiseth him above the Temprations which he was wont to fall by: Old things are past away, and all things are become new.

4. Lastly, The Persect Man's Abstinence is not only more easy and steady, but more intire and compleat also than that of others: He has a regard to the End and

Design

Defign of the Law; to the Perfection of his Nature; to the Purity and Elevation of his Soul; and therefore he expounds the Prohibitions of the Law in the most enlarg'd Sense, and interprets them by a Spirit of Faith and Love. He is not content to refrain from Actions directly criminal, but shuns every Appearance of Evil; and labours to mortify all the Dispositions and Tendencies of his Nature towards it; and to decline whatever Circumstances of Life are apt to betray the Soul into a Love of this World, or the Body: He has crucified the World, and the Body too. That Pleasure, that Honour, that Power, that Profit, which captivates the Sinner, tempts, and tries, and disquiets the Novice, is but a burthen, a trouble to him: He finds no Gust, no Relish in these Things. He is so far from Intemperance, so far from Wantonness, so far from Pride and Vanity, that could be without any Disadvantage to the Interest of Religion, he would imitate the Meanness, the Plainness, the Labouriousness, the Self-denial of our Saviour's Life; not only in Disposition and Affection of his Soul, but even in his outward State and Deportment; and would prefer it far above the Pomp and Shew of Life. In one Word, he enquires not how far he may Enjoy and be Safe, but how far he may deny himself and be wife: He is so far from desiring

defiring forbidden Satisfactions, that he is unwilling and afraid to find too much Satisfaction in the natural and necessary Actions of an animal Life. I need not prove this to any one who has read the foregoing Chapters: For it is what I have been doing throughout this Treatife. It is nothing but what is consonant to the whole Tenour of the Scripture; and to the Example of the best Times. And 'tis conformable to what the best Authors have writ, who have any thing of Life and Spirit in their Works: Or have any true Notion of the great Defign of Christian Religion, which is, an Heavenly Conversation. Let any one but cast his Eye on St. Basil, or any other after him, who aim'd at the same thing I now do, the promoting Holiness in the World in the Beauty and Perfection of it, and he will acknowledge, that I am far from having carried this Matter too high. I will quote but

(a) Μόλις κὸ χη μικεςν την αναγκαίων άπτομμον. Καὶ ώς λεπτες·
γίαν έπαχθη ιποτελοιώτα τῆ φύσει, κὸ διυσχεςαίνοντα μὴν το καιρῶ
τ πεεὶ ταῦτα διατειδῆς.
"Οςςι χη πλατ . p. 454.

one or two Passages of St. Basil; (a) His Description of the Perfect Man with regard to his Self denial runs thus. He is one that consults the Necessities, not the Pleasure of his Nature; and seems to grudge the Time which he bestows on the Support and Nourish

ment of a corruptible Body. He is so far from looking upon eating and drinking, &

as an Enjoyment, that he rather accounts it a Task or troublesome Service which the Frailty of his Nature demands at his Hands. Nor was this great Man more severe against the Lusts of the Flesh, than against those other Branches of the Love of the World, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life. (b) All Vanity and Affectation of Praise and Respect; all the Ostentation (faith he) and Shew of Life, is utterly unlawful for a Chri-Itian. And all this is directly consonant to his Glos (c) on those Words of St. Paul, They that use the World as not abusing it. Whatever is beyond use is abuse; directly consonant to his Definition of Temperance. (d) That it is the Extirpation of Sin; the Extermination of unruly Passions, and the Mortification of the Body, extending even to the natural Appetites and Affections of it.

(b) Ἡ κενοδοξία, κ; ἡ ἀνθρωπαςέσκαα, κ) τὸ कहरेड टेमारीसहीं मी मगसँग. όλως टेमो जवश्यें जिल्ली paro xeistiavois annγόςυτα. p. 456.

(c) Παεέχρησις Αξ Έςν ή ύπερ το χρέιαν Лата́ин. р. 457.

(d) Esiv Evn Eynedτεια, άμαρτίας άναίρεσις, πάθαν απαλλοτείωσις, σώματ Θ νέκρωσις, μέχει η αυτή φυσικών παθημάτων τε κί έπιθυμίων. p. 445.

I know not what Scruples or Mistakes the Doctrine I here advance concerning this Part of my Perfect Man's Liberty, may be encounter'd with: But I am confident, I have given no just Occasion for any. I do not say of the Perfect, with Jovinian, that they cannot fall; but I fay, they may, and

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ought

ought to stand; and, if it be not their own Fault, will do so. I do not affirm of them, as the Hereticks in Vincentius Lyrinensis did of their Party, that they are privileg'd from Sin by a peculiar Grace, and transcendent Favour; but I affirm, that they shall not want Grace to preserve them from it, unless they be wanting to themfelves. I do not go about to maintain that God sees no Sin in his Children; but I maintain, That Mortal Sin is not the Spot of his Children. But do not I in this fall in with the Papists, who affert the Possibility of keeping the Commands of God? I Answer, that taking them in the Sense, in which they themselves in the Conference at Ratisbone defend this Doctrine, I do. They there tell us, that when they talk thus, they take the Law or Commands of God, not in a strict and rigid, but in a favourable and equitable, i. e. a Gospel Construction: And this is so far from being Heterodox, that Davenant accounts it a plain giving up the Question in Controversy. But am I not run into the Error of the Pelagians and Quakers? I Anfwer, If the one or the other affert, That the Perfect Man passes thorough the whole Course of Life without falling into any Sin; or, That in the best part of Life, he is impeccable, and not subject to Sin (as in the Heat of Disputation their Adversaries

feem sometimes to fasten on them) I am at a wide Distance from them. But if they teach, That the Perfect Man has Grace and Strength enough to forbear Wilful Sin, and that many actually do so, I am, I must confess, exactly of their Mind. But then, I am, at the same time, of the same Mind with St. Austin, and St. Jerome too; for they teach the very same Doctrine: For they never contended about the Possibility of Freedom or Deliverance from Mortal Sin, but only from Venial. St. Jerome * * Dial. shall explain his own Sense, Etenim absque secund.
vitio, quod grace dicitur Kania, hominem p. 189. posse esse aio: 'Araudotntov id est, sine Peccato, effe nego. Which is the same Thing that St. Austin commonly admits; That Man may be sine Crimine, but not sine Peccato; without Mortal, but not without Venial Sin. And in this, they are certainly of the Mind of the Scripture; which every where represents the Perfect Man, as holy, blameless, undefiled, without Spot, walking with God: And in one word, as free from Sin. If any Man can reconcile these Texts, which are very numerous, with Mortal Sin, I will not say in the best State of the best Men, but a State of Sincerity, and Regeneration, I will acknowledge my Mistake. But till then I cannot but think, the Doctrine I advance, necessary to establish the true Notion of Holiness, and convince us Z 4

of our Obligation to it. This Doctrine is again necessary to wipe off those Aspersions and Calumnies the Quakers cast upon our Church; as if it held, That the Regenerate themselves may continue in their Sins; nay, cannot be freed from them. Our Church teaches indeed (Artic. 4.) That the most Perfect Men are never utterly exempt from Defects, Failings, and Human Infirmities; and I believe they themselves are not confident enough to teach otherwise: Only they will not call these Instrmities Sins: And then the whole Controversy is reduced to this; We agree in the Thing, but differ in the Name: And in this Difference, we are not only on the humbler, but the fafer Side too: For acknowledging them Sins, we shall be the better disposed sure, to be forry for them, to beg pardon of them, and watch against them.

The Fruit of this Liberty has been sufficiently accounted for in Chap. 3. And there-

fore I proceed.

§. 3. To propose some Rules for the Attainment of it.

1. The Mind must be grounded and rooted in the Faith; it must be thoroughly convinced and persuaded of these great Articles of the Christian Religion, That there is a God, and such a God, a Holy, Just, Omniscient, and Omnipotent one; the Incarnation,

carnation, Suffering and Glory of the Bleffed Jesus; a Judgment to come, and the Eternal Rewards and Punishments of another Life. The firm Belief of these Things does naturally promote these two Effects. 1. It will awaken a Sinner out of his Lethargy and Security, it will disturb him in his finful Enjoyments, and fill his Mind with guilty Fears, and uneafy Reflections. And when the Man finds no Rest, no Security in his Sins, this will naturally oblige him to endeavour the Conquest of them. But then we must not stifle and suppress these Thoughts; we must give Conscience sull Liberty; we must hear the Dictates of our own Minds patiently; and confider feriously those terrible Truths, which they lay before us; till we go from this Exercise deeply impress'd with such Notions as these: That our Sins, sooner or later, will certainly bring upon us temporal and eternal Mifery: That nothing but fincere Righteousness can produce true and lasting Happiness: That it is a dreadful Danger to dally too long with Indignation, or presume too far on the Mercy of a Just, and Holy, and Almighty God: That the neglecting the great Salvation tender'd by the Gospel, and procured by the Blessed Jesus, the slighting the Blood of the Covenant, and grieving the Holy Spirit (all which we do by wilful Sin) is a Guilt, that will fink down the obstinate

obstinate Sinner into the lowest Hell; and render his Condition more intolerable than that of Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrab. 2. The second Effect of the firm Belief of these Gospel Truths, is, that it begets in us a Contempt of this World, and all the Things of it. To him that believes, How Mort is Time compar'd to Eternity? How false, how empty are the Pleasures of Sin, compared with those of Heaven? How infignificant the Esteem or Love of Man to that of God? How worthless are all our worldly Hopes and Pretensions in respect of an Interest in Jesus? Now the Soul that is once thoroughly posses'd with these Notions, what will it not do. what will it not fuffer, rather than fall short of, or forfeit its Crown? In what State will it not be contented; nay, in what State will it not abound in Joy, whilst it holds fast the Stedsastness of its Hope, and is secure of the Love of Jesus? Here begins that Purity of Heart, which is the Fountain of true Epicurism, that Greatness of Mind which alone is true Honour and Fortitude. But that Faith may have these Effects upon us, it must not be only a true, but a lively Faith: Therefore my

2. Second Rule, or, if you please, another Branch of the former Rule shall be this. They that will be free indeed, must not only believe the great Truths of the

Gospel,

Gospel, but must frequently and seriously ponder them, till they have imprinted in themselves as clear, distinct and perfect Idea's of them as we are capable of. This will foon mortify the Appetites of the Body, correct our false Opinions of worldly Things: And baffle all the Sophistry and Confidence of Lust. A lively Faith, is a Faith that imports the most clear and natural, the most full and enlarg'd Notions of its Objects; a Faith, that not only looks upon the Articles of our Creed as true, but beholds them in a manner as prefent; and so represented and drawn to the Life, that they fill the Soul with great and moving Considerations. This Faith does not only believe that there is a God, but it beholds Him, and walks before Him as present; it sees Him array'd in all his Glory, and in all his Majesty, in all the Power and all the Terrors, in all the Beauties and all the Graces of the Divine Nature: It does not only believe that there are Rewards and Punishments; but is extreamly fensible of the Terrors of the one, and Attractions of the other; and looks upon both as at the Door. It does not only acknowledge a Mediator, but takes a full view of the Mifery of that State, wherein we lay thro' Sin; and of the Blessedness of that, into which we are translated by the Redemption which is in Jesus. It Contemplates this Mediator in

all the feveral Steps of Condescension and Humiliation; in all the Tenderness and Transports of his Passion; in all the melancholy Scenes of his Sufferings, and the bright and chearful ones of his Glory. This is the Faith that sets us free.

3. We must not stop in Faith, till it be made perfect in Love. We must meditate Divine Truths till they have fired our Souls; till they have enkindled our Affections; till we be posses'd by an ardent Love of God, of Jesus, of Righteousness, and of Heaven; till all our other Desires and Passions be converted into, and swallowed up of Love; till God becomes the Center of our Souls; and in Him we rest, in Him we glory, and in Him we rejoyce, O Love! how great and glorious are the Things that are faid of Thee! 'Tis Thou who dost impregnate and animate Faith it self: 'Tis Thou who dost furmount the Difficulties of Duty, and make the Yoke of Christ easy, and his Burden light: 'Tis Thou, who dost cast out Fear, and make Religion full of Pleasure: 'Tis Thou that dost make us watchful against Temptations, and impatient under the Interruptions of Duty: 'Tis Thou that makest us disrelish the Pleasures of this World, and long to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Here is the Liberty of the Sons of God. Bleffed are they even in this World who attain it. But one Caution

I must here add, That our Love must not be a Flash, a Fit, but a steddy and well-set-led Affection; an Affection that has the Warmth of Passion, and the Firmness of Habit. We must therefore by repeated Meditations and Prayers, daily nourish this Flame of the Altar, and not suffer it to go out.

4. We must never be at rest, till we have possessed our Minds with a perfect Hatred of the Sin which we are most subject to. The Love of God, his Long-suffering and Forbearance, the Sufferings of Jesus, the Strugglings of the Spirit, the Peace and Pleasure of Holiness, the Guilt and Vexation, the Shame and Punishment of Sin, its ill Influence on our present Perfection and Happiness, on our Peace and Hopes, are proper Topicks to effect this. A thorough Hatred of Sin once settled and rooted in us, will produce that Sorrow, that Indignation, that Watchfulness, that Zeal, which will remove us far enough, not only from the Sin, but also from the ordinary Temptations to it; and place us almost without the Danger of a Relapse.

To this Fourth Rule, I should add this other; That when once a Man has resolved upon a new Course of Life, whatever Difficulties he finds in his Way, whatever Bassles he meets with, he must never quit the Design of Virtue and Life; he must never give over Fighting till he Conquer:

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The Reason is plain, for he must either Conquer or Die. But this belonging rather to Perseverance in Virtue, than the Beginning of it, therefore I but just mention it.

- 5. It will not be imprudent in this Moral, as in Physical Cures, to observe diligently, and follow the Motions and Tendencies of Nature. Where there are Seeds of Generosity and Honour; the Turpitude and Shame of Sin, the Baseness and Ingratitude of it, the Love of God and of Jesus, and fuch like, are fit Topicks to dwell upon. Where Fear is more apt to prevail, there the Terrors of the Lord are the most powerful Motive: And fo whatever the Frame and Constitution of Nature be, it will not be difficult to find Arguments in the Gospel adapted to it, which will be so much the more prevalent, as they are the more natural.
- 6. Lastly, We must use all Means to obtain the Spirit of God; and to increase and cherish his Influence: We must ask, and seek, and knock, i. e. we must Pray, and Meditate, and Travel with Patience, and with Importunity, that our Heavenly Father may give us his Holy Spirit: And when we have it, we must not grieve it by any Deliberate Sin; nor quench it by Security or Negligence, by sensual Freedoms and Presumption; but we must cherish every

every Motion, improve every Defire and Passion that it works in us; we must shun every Appearance of Evil; we must press on towards Perfection; we must watch unto Prayer; we must spend the Time of our fojourning here in Fear; we must rejoyce and glory in the Lord; and we must wait for the blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Christ Jesus. And now I have finished what I had to say on this Subject. of the Perfect Man's Liberty as it relates to Mortal or Wilful Sin. I have shewed what this Sin is; and how far Man may be freed from it, referring the Reader to Chap. 4. for the Fruit of this Freedom. I have here, Lastly, given that Advice which I thought most ferviceable to the Attainment of it. And through this whole Chapter, I have had regard, not only to Perfection, but Sincerity; it being indeed improper to do otherwise, since we cannot arrive at the one, but through the other. For Sincerity is Perfection in its Infancy, or Non-age; and Perfection is nothing else but Sincerity cultivated by Meditation and Discipline, and cherish'd by the Influence of Heaven. And now let no Man's Heart fail him while he contemplates the Difficulties which block up the Way to his Liberty. The Way indeed is steep, and the Top is high; but Serenity and Happiness, Security and Glory dwell there. Many indeed are the Temptations which would forbid our Ascent, and thrust us down; but we are Armed all over; they cannot hurt us; the Spirit supports and encourages us; and nothing but our Cowardise and Inconstancy can prevent our Success: Watch ye, stand fast, quit ye like men, be strong; and then you shall be sure to Conquer and enter into Rest.

C H A P. VII.

Of Unfruitfulness, as it consists in Idleness.
Idleness, either Habitual or Accidental.
Considerations to deter Men from the Sin of Idleness.

ONfruitfulness is a fit Subject to conclude a Discourse of Liberty with, or begin one of Zeal; for lying, like a Tract of Ground, between two bordering Kingdoms, it may indifferently be laid to either. As it implies a direct Opposition to Spiritual Life and Sincerity, it naturally falls in under the Consideration of Zeal: As it implies a servile Subjection to some vile Lust or other, it naturally falls in under the Consideration of Liberty: So that by allotting it this Place, I shall at once compleat my Resections on the Argument of Liberty,

Barrenness, or Unfruitfulness, may in eneral best be understood by comparing with a State of Wickedness: From which, it is usually distinguished in the Notion the Vulgar, so does it really differ on lany Accounts The one has in it an Air Defiance, the other of Unconcernment for eligion; the one forgets God, the other ntemns Him; the one has no Relish nor wour of that which is Good, the other nds too much Gust and Pleasure in that hich is Evil; the one makes us by Derees Enemies, the other Strangers to God. 1 short, there is little Doubt to be made, ut that the Omission of a Duty, and the ommission of a Crime; Lukewarmness in that thich is Good, and Eagerness and Considence that which is Evil, may, and generally o differ very widely in the Degrees of uilt: From hence it is (the Sinner being ways a partial and indulgent Judge of imself) that it is not unusual for many, ho feem to have fome Abhorrence of Vickedness, to be far enough from appreending much Evil, or much Danger in Infruitfulness. This is a fatal Error; it ultrates the great Delign of Religion, nd robs it of its truest Honour, Good Vorks. For what can Religion effect by hat Man, who retains nothing of it but he bare Form and Profession, and dares romile himself not only Impunity, but Aa

a Heaven, in an useless and unprofitable Life?

Unfruitfulness, if more particularly enquired into, consists in Two Things, a Neglect of Duty; or a Lifeless and Unprositable Performance of it. The former I will call Idleness, the latter Lukewarmness, Coldness, Formality; and treat of each in order; of the former in this, and of the latter in the following Chapter. And because each of them are encumber'd with Mistakes and Errors, which arise not only from Selflove and Partiality, but also from Shallowness of Judgment, join'd with Tenderness of Conscience; I shall endeavour so to manage this Subject, as neither to discourage the Weak, nor embolden the Careless.

- §. 1. Of Idleness. The Omission of a Duty may be either *Habitual*, or Occasional and Accidental: And accordingly the Case of Omission may be very different.
- consist with Sincerity: A general Neglest of Duty defeats the main End of Religion, which is to honour God, adorn our Holy Profession, and promote the Good of Human Society; all which can never be attain'd but by following after Righteousness and abounding in the Fruits of it. By

his Rule, an Idle, though Innocent, Life, nust necessarily be accounted irreligious and vicious, being a flat Contradiction to our excellent Profession. He who does not pray, nor meditate, nor pursue any and of Charity, though he be otherwise ivil and regular in his Life, yet because he loes not work Righteousness, because he s fo far from imitating the Zeal and Chaity of the Blessed Jesus, that he acts diectly repugnant to both; therefore must ne not be looked upon as a Disciple of Jesus, out as an Alien and a Stranger. He whofe Life is spent in Vanity or Drudgery, in Pleaure or Business, though his Pleasure be not impure, nor his Business unjust, yet is he, before God, a Criminal, because unprofitable; he has received the Grace of God in vain; the Light of the Gospel has risen upon him in vain; and he has ferved no Interest of Vertue or Religion in his Generation; and therefore he will be excluded Heaven, with the sothful Servant, who hid his Master's Talent in a Napkin, Luke 19. 20.

2. The Case of an accidental or occasional Omission of Duty, is very different from that of Habitual Neglect of it; an occasional Omission may be, not only lawful, but necessary; but the Neglect of Duty never can be either. The Circumstances of positive

fitive Duty, and the Measures or Degrees of Moral Good, are not strictly fix'd and settled; and therefore a single Omission, either in the one or the other, where ever there is a sufficient Reason for it, can neither grieve the Spirit, nor frustrate the Design of Religion; nor consequently imply any Corruption in the Heart. But

then we must take care,

1. That our Omission be not too frequent. We must always have Regard, in this Matter of Duty, to the great End and Designs of its Injunction; we must take care that our Omissions in Moral Duties be not so often, that either the Honour of our Religion, or the Welfare of our Neighbour fuffer by it. Nor must we so often omit Instrumental Duties, Prayers, Reading, the Sacrament, and the like, as thereby to abate, or much less extinguish, our Spiritus Gust and Fervour. Omission of Duty, too often repeated, breeds a kind of Indifference, or Lukewarmness; and Lukewarmness soon passes into Coldness and Insenfibleness; and this often ends in a reprobate Mind, and an utter Aversion for Religion.

2dly, We must endeavour some way of other to compensate the Omission of a Duty; to make up by Charity, what we have defalk'd from Devotion; or to supply by short Ejaculations, what we have been

forced

fices of Prayer. And he that watches or Opportunities, either of Improvement, or ing Good, will, I believe, never have eason to complain of the want of them: od will put into his Hands either the one the other; and for the Choice, he cannot do better, than follow God's.

adly, A fingle Omission must never prored from a finful Motive; from a Love of e World, or Indulgence to the Body; Nelity or Charity is the only just and proper pology for it. Instrumental or Positive uties may give way to moral ones; the eligion of the Means, to the Religion of e End; and in Moral Duties, the less ay give way to the greater. But Duty ust never give way to Sin, nor Religion to terest or Pleasure.

Having thus briefly given an Account, hat Omission of Duty is, and what is not iful; and consequently so settled the Noon of Idleness, that neither the Careless, or the Scrupulous can easily mistake their ase; I will now propose such Considerations as I judge most likely to deter Men from and such Advice as may be the best uard and Preservative against it.

i. The first Thing I would have every le lay to heart is, That a State of Idleness a State of damnable Sin. Idleness is dialy repugnant to the great Ends of God,

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both in our Creation and Redemption. As to our Creation; Can we imagine that God, who created not any thing but for fome excellent End, should create Man for none, or for a filly one? The Spirit within us, is an active and vivacious Principle our rational Faculties capacitate and qualify us for doing Good; this is the proper Work of Reason, the truest and most na tural Pleasure of a rational Soul. Who car think now, that our wife Creator light of this Candle within us, that we might op press and stifle it by Negligence and Idle ness? That he contriv'd and destin'd such a Mind to squander and fool away its Ta lents in Vanity and Impertinence? As t our Redemption, 'tis evident both what the Design of it is, and how opposite Idlenes is to it. Christ gave himself for us, to re deem us from all Iniquity; and to purify t himself a peculiar People zealous of good work Tit. 2. 14. And this is what our Regent ration, or Sanctification aims at: We at God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus un to good works, which God has before ordaine that we should walk in them, Ephes. 2. It How little then can a useless and barren Li answer the Expectations of God? What miserable Return must it be to the Bloc of his Son; and how utterly must it di appoint all the Purposes of his Word an Spirit? But what need I argue further

the Truth I contend for is the express and constant Doctrine of the Scriptures: Is not Idleness and Fulness of Bread reckoned amongst the Sins of Sodom? What means the Sentence against the barren Fig-tree, Luke 13.7. but the Destruction and Damnation of the Idle and the Sluggish? The Indignation of God is not enkindled against the Barrenness of Trees, but Men. What can be plainer than the Condemnation of the unprofitable Servant, who perished because he had not improved his Talent, Matth. 25. 38. And how frequently does the Apostle declare himself against the Idle and Diforderly? And all this proceeds upon plain and necessary Grounds: Our Lord was an Example of Vertue, as well as Innocence; and he did not only refrain from doing Evil, but he went about doing good. We can never fatisfy the Intention of Divine Precepts by Negative Righteousness: When God prohibits the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, he enjoins the perfecting holiness in his fear: When he forbids us to do Evil, he at the same time prescribes the learning to do well. What need I multiply more Words? Idleness is a flat Condiction to Faith, Hope, Charity; to Fear, Vigilance, Mortification; and therefore certainly must be a damning Sin: These are all active and vigorous Principles; but Idleness enfeebles and dis-spirits, manacles and Aa4 fetfetters us: These are pure, strict, and self-denying Principles; but Idleness is soft and indulgent: These conquer the World and the Body, raise and exalt the Mind; but Idleness is far from enterprizing any thing, from attempting any thing that is good; it pampers the Body, and esseminates and dissolves the Mind; and finally, whatever Innocence or Innosfensiveness it may pretend to, it does not only terminate in Sin, but has its Beginning from it; from Stupidity and Ignorance, from Vanity and Levity, from Sostness and Sensuality, from some

prevailing Luft of other.

2. Next after the Nature, the Consequences of Idleness are to be considered; and if it be taken in the utmost Latitude, there is scarce any Sin which is more justly liable to so many Tragical Accusations; for it is the Parent of Dishonour and Poverty, and of most of the Sins and Calamities of this mortal Life. But at present I view is only as it is drawn with a half Face, and that the much less deformed of the Two: I consider it here as pretending to Innocence; and flattering it felf with the Hopes of Happiness: And yet even thus, suppofing it as harmless and inoffensive as it can be, yet still these will be the miserable Effects of it: It will rob Religion, and the World, of the Service due to both: It will bereave us of the Pleasure of Life, and the Comfort of Death; and fend us down at last to a cursed Eternity. For where are the Vertues that should maintain the Order and Beauty of Human Society; that should relieve and redress the Miseries of the World? Where are the Vertues that should vindicate the Honourof Religion, and demonstrate its Divinity as effectually as Predictions or Miracles can do? Where are the bright Examples that should convert the unbelieving Part of Mankind, and inflame the believing Part with a generous Emulation? Certainly the lazy Christian, the slothful Servant, can pretend to nothing of this kind. As to the Pleasure of Life, if true and lasting, if pure and spiritual, 'tis easy to discern from what Fountains it must be drawn. Nothing but Poverty of Spirit can procure our Peace, nothing but Purity of Heart our Pleasure. But ah! how far are the Idle and Unactive from these Vertues? Faith, Love, and Hope, are the Seeds of them: Victories and Triumphs, Devotion, Alms, and Good Works the Fruits of them: But what a Stranger to these is the Drone and Sluggard? Then for the Comfort of Death, it must proceed from a well-spent Life: He that sees nothing but a vast Solitude and Wilderness behind him, will never, like the Israelites, see a Canaan before him. Life must be filled with Good Works, or else Death will

will look but dark and gloomy: When the Conscience enquires every where after the Effects of the Word, and the Spirit, and the Blood of Jesus, and can discover in all the Parts, in all the Paths of Life, no Tracks of any thing but Fancy and Fortune, Humour and Indulgence; how will it shrink, and faint and tremble! what pensive, melancholy Doubts will damp and choak its Hope! And how can it be otherwise? Alas! the Mind of a Christian is sufficiently informed that every Man shall receive according to what he has done in the Body; God will judge every Man according to his Works; what then must become of him who has none to shew? If Immortality and Glory, if Life and Peace be the Reward of well-doing, nay, of patient continuance in well-doing, what will become of the Drowfy, the Supine, and Careless, the Sot and the Sluggish, who have flept, and fool'd, and trifled away Life?

3. I might aggravate the Guilt of Idleness, by taking an Estimate of the Talents it wastes, the Obligations it slights, and the Hopes it forfeits. I might render Man more jealous and apprehensive of falling into it, by observing how generally it prevails; which is a plain Proof, either of the Strength of the Temptation, or of our Propension; a plain Proof either that there is I know not what secret Magick in

the Sin, or else that the Cheat it imposes upon the World is a very clever, a very dexterous one. But I have said enough; and where the former Considerations sail, these will hardly succeed: Therefore I will now pass on from Arguments, to Advice, which was the next Thing proposed to be done.

And here my Advice must have regard so Two different Sorts of Persons. 1. To such as are born to plentiful or competent Fortunes. 2. To such as are to raise their own, or to provide for the Support and Maintenance of themselves and their Families, by their Labour or Industry in some Calling or Prosession. To the former the best Directions I can give, are these:

r. He that is Master of his Time, ought to devote the more to Religion: To whom God hath given much, of him much will be required: Nor has such an one any Excuse left, either for Omission, or a hasty and cursory Performance of Duty, but one, one that will encrease his Guilt, i. e. Laziness, Pleasure, or some Sin or other. Such an one therefore ought to be constant and diligent in frequenting the Publick Assemblies of the Church; his Attendance upon Prayers, Sacraments, Sermons, must be such as becomes a Man, who as it has pleased God seems born not to provide for Life, but only to live, only to improve and enjoy Life,

and

and carry on the nobler Designs of it; and as becomes a Man whose good or ill Example is of such vast Importance to the Service or Disservice of Religion. Nor must such an one's Attendance on the Publick excuse him from the Religious Offices of the Closet, or his Family; he ought to abound in each: He may be more frequent in Meditation and Prayer, in Reading and Instruction, and perform each with more Justness and Solemnity than others can.

2. Persons of Fortune ought to be careful in the Choice of Intimates and Friends. Conversation is not always a Loss, but fometimes a Gain of Time: We often need to have our Forgetfulness relieved, our Drowsiness awakened by the Discourses and Reflections of our Friends. course were generally season'd with Grace, Conversation would be the greatest Blesfing; If with Sense and Reason, Innocence and Prudence, it would be the most agreeable Entertainment of Human Life. But how mischievous is the Acquaintance which infects us with Vanity and Lightness of Spirit, which shews us nothing but a gaudy Outside and a frothy Soul! whose Example binds Men in Civility to be foolish, and makes Confidence, and Vice, and Misfpence of Time, a Fashion.

3. It were to be wished, that Persons of the best Rank, were ever bred up to

fome-

something; to something that might improve, to something that might amuse and innocently engage their Minds; to something that might employ Life, without incumbring it. And yet, alas! what need I wish this? How many excellent Qualities are necessary to render a Gentleman worthy of the Station where God has placed him? Let him pursue these. How many are the Vertues, how many the Duties to which a Christian is obliged? Let him attend these. There is a great deal requisite to make a good Master, a good Husband, a good Father, a good Son, a good Neighbour, a good Parishioner, an excellent Subject, and an excellent Friend; and yet there are many other Relations besides these. In a Word, there is no Man, who, when he shall appear before God, will not be found to have omitted many Duties; and to have perform'd many other with less Care and Diligence than he ought; and furely fuch an one cannot justly complain for want of Business. I doubt rather on the contrary, that whoever takes a just and full View of Things, will have reason to complain, that Life is short, and our Work great; That let us use all the Diligence we can, and be as frugal of our Time as we will, we arrive much fooner at a Maturity of Years, than of Knowledge and Vertue.

366 Of Unfruitfulness, as it consists

4. The Diversions of Persons of this Quality ought to be well regulated; such as become the Character of a Gentleman, and the Dignity of a Christian; that is, they must be neither mean nor vicious. But I have treated this and the foregoing Heads more copiously in Human Life; to which I

refer my Reader. As to fuch, in the next Place, who are engag'd in a Profession, I have particularly considered their State in several Places, and find little to add here, but only to mind them, that they may be guilty of Idleness too; That their Idleness is the more criminal, the less Temptation they have to it. They may neglect the Duties of their Calling, I mean their Secular Calling; and if they be unfaithful and negligent in their Temporal Concern, it is not to be expected that they should be more solicitous and industrious about their Spiritual one. They may again fuffer the Cares of this Life to thrust out those of another; and then they are truly idle and flothful Servants to God, how industrious and faithful soever they are to the World: For Life is but wasted and mif spent, if it makes not Provision for Eternity; and it matters little whether it be wasted in Pleasure or in Drudgery.

CHAP. VIII.

Of Unfruitfulness, as it consists in Lukewarmness or Formality. The Causes from which Lukewarmness proceeds. The Folly, Guilt, and Danger of a Laodicean State.

N the former Chapter I consider'd that Part of Unfruitfulness which consists in the Omission of Duty: I am now to confider another Part of it, which consists in too perfunctory a Performance of it. Befides those who are truly unprofitable, because they slight or neglect the Duties of Religion; there is another fort of Men, who at the last Day will fall under the same Character and Condemnation; not because they perform no Duties, but be-cause their Performance of them is depretiated by Coldness and Formality: Men who make a fair Appearance of Religion, and yet have no inward spiritual Life: Men, who do generally observe the exter-nal Duties of Religion, but with so little Gust, with such Indisference and Lukewarmness, that they are neither acceptable to God, nor useful to themselves. This State of Deadness may be consider'd either more generally, as it runs through the whole Course of our Lives and Actions; or more particularly, in this or that Instance of Religion. 1. When

1. When 'tis fo general, that the Bent and Course of our Lives is, for want of Relish of the Things of God, perverted and depraved; when we have no Designs, drive on no Ends, that are suitable to the Excellency and Dignity of our Nature; to the Holiness of our Profession, and to the great and manifest Obligations of God: When we have no Joys or Pleasures, no Thirsts or Appetites, that do truly become a Christian; when we make no Progress, no Advance towards our great End; when our Discourses and Employments have no Tincture of the Spirit, and no Tendency to Edification. I think we may then boldly conclude, that this is a State of Carnality and Death. And that this want of Relish in the general Course of our Lives, proceeds from a real Want of a sincere Faith, and true Illumination. For were the Mind once truly enlightened; were it once clearly convinced, firmly and habitually perfuaded, of the Beauty and Excellency of the Things of God; as we should have Notions different from those of worldly carnal. Men, so would there consquently be a Difference in the Nature of our Hopes and Fears, of our Desires and Defigns, of our Joys and Sorrows; and as necessarily in the main Scope and Tendency of our Conversation. Whoever therefore finds this general Stupidity in the

ourse of his Life, let him not flatter himf in the Performance of any of the Dus of Religion: He has a corrupt, carl, and blind Heart; his Performances oceed not from true Principles, and have t that Life and Vigour in them that they ght; they are as different from the Permances of a Man truly Regenerate and nctified, as the Civilities and Compleents of a Well-bred Acquaintance, from ubstantial Offices of a Sincere and fectionate Friend. Nor can any Man, no will take the least Pains to examine nself, be ignorant of, or mistaken in the Indition of his Soul, if this be it. For boever will act honestly and impartially, the not to pass a Sentence of Absolution himself, upon the bare Performance of ne relative, or instrumental Duties of ligion; but he ought to enquire, First, hat Vertues he practifes, which put him on Expence, Hazard, or Travel; what orks of Piety or Charity he performs; I what Proportion they bear to his Abi-1. Next, he ought to consider the Deand End he proposes to himself in all Religious Performances; whether he k the Honour of God, the Welfare of in, and his own Improvement and owth in Goodness; or whether he does s meerly to acquit himself of a Task,

B b and

and discharge himself of what he takes for granted as a Duty, though he finds no Pleafure, no Advantage in it. Thirdly, He must reflect upon the Frame and Temper of his Mind in reference to these Duties: what Hunger and Thirst he has for Righ. teousness; what Warmth, Ardor, Eleva tion, or Earnestness of Mind accompanie his Performances; what Peace and Plafure his Reflection on them; or whether Religion be not a Burthen to him, or some thing to which Custom only reconcile him. Lastly, He ought to examine wha Operation, what Influence his Religious Performances have upon him. Prayer Hearing, Reading, and fuch-like Duties do naturally tend to enlighten the Mind purify the Heart, encrease our Love strengthen our Faith, and confirm ou Hope; and therefore where this is not the Effect of them, we may conclude, the they are not discharged in that manner and with that Sincerity they ought. therefore that will examine himself arigh must not ask himself how often he Read how often he Hears, &c. and then re there; but must ask himself what Est these Performances have had upon h Mind; which he will foon discern, if the demand of himself, what the Bent an Scope of his Life is; how much he advar ces and improves in the Conquest of an

Vice, and the Attainment of any Vertue; what he loves, or what he hates; what Esteem he has for the Things of God, and what for the Things of Men. And, in a Word, how he follows after Universal Righteousness; and how he encreases in Purity

of Heart, and Poverty of Spirit.

2. Lukewarmness, or Coldness, may be confidered more particularly, as it discovers it felf in the Performance of this or that Duty; in Hearing, Reading, Prayer, and Participation of the Lord's Supper. Now 'tis certain, that there is a Deadness in these Duties, which proceeds from a carnal and unsanctified Heart, and is a plain Symptom of a State of Sin: And yet it is too commou, that they who are subject to it, make little Reflection upon it, and are little concerned for it. On the other hand, many complain of Lifelessness in Duty, where there is no just Ground for this Complaint; and this is no small Evil to such; for it disturbs the Peace of their Minds, damps the Chearfulness and Alacrity of their Service, and clogs and encumbers their Religion with needless Doubts and Scruples. Some have gone about to fet this Matter right very unskilfully; and whilst they have, as they thought, shunn'd Enthusiastick Raptures, and Irregular Heats, have really betray'd the Cause of true and solid Fervency of Spirit; and talk'd of Prayer, and fuch

372 Of Unfruitfulness, as it consists

fuch other Duties, in fuch a manner, as cannot but reflect difadvantagiously on themselves, amongst such, as are mode-rately vers'd in the Scriptures, and have any Experience of the Power of God's Word and Spirit upon their Souls. But what furprizes me most is, that some, of very deserved Repute, have taught, That the seeking Spiritual Pleasure in Prayer, is an Enemy to Perfection; That Heat and Ardor of Spirit in Prayer, does often happen to the weakest Christians; and very seldom to the Perfect. But my Business not being to combat the Opinions of Men, but to advance Truths in the most charitable, and in the most effectual manner that I can: Therefore, without taking notice of the Motives or Reasons which have byass'd any on this Subject, I will lay down two or three Propositions, which will, I hope, clear this Matter, and promote the Delign I am now carrying on.

1. Then, Lifelessness or Lukewarmness in these Duties must never be constant. There is a vast Difference between habitual and accidental Coldness in Duty, the former is the Symptom of worldly, carnal, and unregenerate Minds; but not the latter. Many are the Accidents which disturb and indispose the Body; many are the Things which distract and clog the Mind:

Mind; from both which because we shall never be utterly free in this World, therefore our Devotion will never be so constant and uniform, but that it will have its Interruptions and Allays; and Dulness and Lifelessness will sometimes seize upon the best of Christians. But then, if this spiritual Deadness in Religious Exercises be fix'd, constant, and habitual, it must needs be a Proof of a corrupt Mind: For 'tis impossible that there should be a true Principle of Grace within, which should never, or very rarely, shew it self in the Sincerity and Fervency of our Devotion. How is it possible, that that Man, who is generally flight and superficial in his Confession, should have a true Compunction, and fincere Contrition for Sins? How is it possible that he, who is generally indifferent, formal, and cold in his Petitions, should have a just Sense either of his Wants or Dangers; or a true Value for the Grace and Favour of God? The Sum is, Deadness in Duty is either General or Rare, Common or Accidental: If it befals us Cimmonly, 'tis an Argument of an unregenerate Heart; if Rarely, 'tis not. But if the Returns of Life and Deadness in Duty be so frequent and unconstant, that 'tis impossible to determine whether the one or the other prevail most; then 'tis B b 3 plain

374 Of Unfruitfulness, as it confists

plain that the State also of such a Man invery dubious.

2. Duty must never be destitute of Some cerity, though it may of Pleasure and Transport; it must never be without Serion for and Concernment, tho' it may be very defective in the Degrees of Lots and Me-Durg. Thus in Prayer, the Tendernell and Contrition of the Soul, dillolv'd in Love and Sorrow, is a Frame of Spirit much above what the Penitent common arrives at. But an Aversion for Sin, firm Resolution to forsake it; and a hearty Desire to be enabled by the Grace of God fo to do, is what he must not want So again, Joy and Transport, the Ardor and Exultancy of Mind, is the Effect of clear Understanding, an assur'd Conscience, an Heart enflamed with Love, and a strict Life: Whoever therefore falls short in the one, will generally fall short in the other too. But every Christian, that is truly such, must have a true Sense of his Wants, a hearty Desire to please God, true Notion of his Goodness, and a steddy Dependance upon it through Christ. And these things are sufficient to unite ou Hearts and our Lips in the same Petitions to make us in earnest, in all the Duties we perform, and careful to intend the main End of them.

3. The

3. The Prayer of the Perfect Man is generally offer'd up with the tenderest and most exalted Passion; and a holy Pleasure mingles it felf in every Part of his Office: His Petitions and Praises; his Confessions, Deprecations and Confidences, are all of them Expressions of warm and delightful Passions. And how can we well conceive it otherwise? Must not those Praises and Magnificats be full of Joy and Transport, which flow from a full Assurance of the Divine Favour, from a long Experience of his Love, and from the glorious Prospect of a Blessed Eternity? Can those Deprecations and Confidences want a heavenly Calm and Tranquillity of Spirit, which rest upon the Mediation of Jesus, the Promises of an immutable God, and the Pledge of his Spirit? Can those Confessions want Contrition, that have all the Tenderness that holy Zeal, and the humblest Resections can inspire them with? Which are poured forth by a Soul enlighten'd, purified, strong in the Faith, rooted and grounded in Love; by a Soul consequently that has the liveliest Sense of the Deformity and Danger of Sin, of the Beauty and Pleasure of Holiness, of the Infinite Goodness of God, and of that Love of Christ that passeth Knowledge? Can, finally, those Petitions want Desire and Flame, which are offer'd Bb 4

offer'd up by a Soul that hungers and thirfts after Righteousness, that counts all things but Dung and Drofs in comparison of Jefus, that pants after God, that longs to be dissolved and to be with Christ? And as we may thus, from the Nature of Things, collest what kind of Prayers those of the Perfest Man generally are; so may we, from the Example of the Royal Psalmist and others, demonstrate all this to be no vain Speculation; but real Matter of Fact. 'Tis true, Weight and Dignity of Matter, Gravity and Significancy of Expression, are the Character most conspicuous in Publick Offices, in the best and most ancient Prayers: And particularly in the Lord's Prayer. We find in them few or no Figures of Speech, no Vehemence of Expression. But it is true too, That the Devotion of a Soul disengaged, as it were, from the Body, retired from the World, collected within it felf, raifed by daily Contemplation, and accustom'd to converse with Heaven, flows naturally and eafily. Those great Ideas, which such a Prayer as that of our Lord's Composure present to the Mind, inflame the Defire, awaken all the Passions of the Holy Man, without any Labour of Imagination, or Artifice of Words.

Thus have I considered the Nature of Lukewarmness; and shew'd how far the Perfect Man is remov'd from it. My next Business is, to perswade and exhort Men to quit it; and become fincere and zealous. Only I must, First, take notice by the way, That besides Idleness and Lukewarmness, there is sometimes a Third Cause or Occafion of Unfruitfulness; which deserves never to be slighted: That is, Fickleness, Unsteadiness, or Inconstancy. Many there are, who often purpose, project, and resolve great Matters; but never bring forth any Fruit to Perfection: What they build one Day, they throw down another. They put on as many various Moral Forms, as Proteus in the Poets does Natural ones; fometimes they are in a Fit of Zeal; at other times nothing but Coldness and bare Form; fometimes they are in the Camp of Vertue; sometimes in that of Vice. In a Word, they halt, like the Israelites, between God and Baal; and are divided and distracted between a Sense of Duty, and the Love of the World and the Body; between the Checks and Incitements of Conscience on the one hand, and some foolish Inclinations on the other. This State I have had an Eye to very often, nor shall I forget it here; but shall propose such a Method for the Cure of Lukewarmness and Formality, as may be also of very good use to all such, 378 Of Unfruitfulness, as it consists

as fall short of the main End of Religion; being not truly and thoroughly changed; but are only almost perswaded to be Christians: And only not altogether so far from the Kingdom of Heaven as others. This being premised, I proceed, and,

1. I will enquire into the Causes from whence Lukewarmness and all abortive Attempts after Vertue, flow.

2. I will shew the Folly, Guilt, and Dan-

ger of a Laodicean State.

§. 1. Of the Causes, &c. These are generally Four.

1. Men finding themselves under great Difficulties in coming up to Holiness, in the true genuine and Gospel-Notion of it, have endeavour'd to enlarge the Way, and widen the Gate that leads to Life; and have therefore form'd to themselves more foft and pliant Notions of Vice and Vertue: Such as may be more easily accommodated, either to their particular Inclinations, or to the Modes and Fashions of the World, than those of Christ and the Apoftles can. Hence it is, that amongst such as pretend to fome Regard for Religion, Humility, Poverty of Spirit, Self-denial, Abstinence and Mortification, are so far from being visible in their Practice, that we feem

to have almost lost the Notion of them. And the Pride of Life, and the Lust of the Eves, are so universally practifed, that tho' we know, that these in St. John are the Names of Vices, we scarce know what the Things themselves are. We have confounded the Mears and Bounds of Vice and Vertue; and fuch are the Freedoms. I will not fay of those who profess Debauchery, but Christianity, that if they be consistent with the Sanctity and Purity of the Gospel, 'twill be hard to determine, what Excess is. And, in a word, how many are there, who making a Profession of living by Faith, and looking for the bleffed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of Christ, do yet live, as if all the Business of Life were to get and enjoy as much of this World as they can; who professing themselves the Disciples of Christ, whose Heart was lowly, his Fortune mean, and his Appearance humble, do yet lay out their Time, their Labour, their Wealth on this one Design, to make such a Shew, fuch a Figure in the World, as may render them the Gaze and Envy of their Neighbours? And, as our Indulgence to our felves in these Things, which relate to the Pride and Vanity of Life, and the Ease and Appetites of the Body, is very great; so on the same Ground, and for the same Reason, is our Zeal for the Interest

terest of Vertue, and the Honour of God, very little, faint, and remiss. Conversation has very little Savour, very little Grace in it; and we are so far from being resolute, and industrious to awe or shame Vice abroad, that we our felves should be almost out of Countenance, if we should be observed to pay any particular Respect to Religion or Vertue in Company. The Government of our Families is fo lax and easy, that it favours more of Coldness and Indifferency, than Fervency of Spirit. 'Tis true indeed, these I am speaking of do generally frequent the House of God; and they sit before him as his People; and delight to hear his Word: But so did the Jews, when God tells them, in the Prophet Ezek. 33. 31. that their hearts went after their Covetousness: And in the Prophet Isaiah, we have but an odd Character of the Morals of these People; of whom God saith, Yet they feek me daily, and de-light to know my ways: Nay, farther, they delight in approaching to God, Isa. 58. 2. Now though such, as I am speaking of, may not be guilty to this Degree, so as to be chargeable with open Wickedness; yet I am very much afraid, that even in this Duty they but promote the Cheat and Imposture they put upon themselves; and make their Diligence in this Point minister to quiet their Consciences in their Laodi-

ean State; for 'twere easy to prove that uch as these do more generally aim at the Entertainment of the Ear, than the Reformation of the Heart. And we may say of Preachers now, as God did of Ezekiel; And lo, thou art unto them as a lovely Song, of one that has a very pleasant Voice, Ezek. 33. 32. The Musick of the Voice; the Gracefulness of Delivery; a Flow of Words; the Surprize of Novelty, and Notion; the Beauty of Sentences; and the Sparkling of Wit and Fancy, or an Appearance of Learning: These are, I doubt, too often the Things that draw together and charm an Auditory: And fo all are pleased, but none converted or edified; for who sweats or blushes, who trembles or grows pale at these Sermons? Who goes away from them wounded, or struck through, serious, and pensive, full of pious Fears, and devour Defires?

2. A Laodicean State springs from Sloth and Pulillanimity, or the Want of a thorough and well-grounded Resolution. This was one Cause of the Israelites Fluctuation and Uncertainty; they were indeed desirous of a Canaan, but were not forward to purchase it, by tedious Marches, hazardous Encounters, and the Hardship of Hunger and Thirst, and such like: They were ever and anon willing to have preferr'd

ferr'd the Dishonour and Servitude of Egypt, with Security and Fulness, before a Canaan on these Terms. And thus it is, this Day, with Christians of a Laodicean Spirit, and a doubtful staggering Allegiance. An Heaven they would have, but would not purchase it at too dear a rate; they would be accounted the Disciples of Christ, and share in the Merits of his Sufferings, but they would not take up his Cross, in any Sense, and follow him. But alas! Israel might as well have gained their Liberty without going out of Egypt, or a Canaan without Travel, and Hardship. and Blood, as These, Verrue, and Heaven, without Watchfulness and Industry: We may as well hope to support and encrease the Health and Strength of the Body, without Food or Exercise, as that of the Soul, without Meditation and Prayer: We may as foon conquer our Enemies without Discipline, Expence, and Blows, as master our Corruptions, and become Vertuous, without spiritual Watchfulness, Travel, or Contention. There is indeed Force and Efficacy enough in the Word of God, to enlighten the Mind, and purify the Heart; if we would but frequently and feriously read and meditate it. The Grace of the Spirit is sufficient to conquer our Corruptions, and strengthen and establish us in Faith and Obedience, if we did but earnestly

earnestly and frequently pray for it; and cherish and improve it when obtain'd. The Means which God has prescrib'd are undoubtedly proper and fuitable, powerful and effectual to the Attainment, Preservarion, and Increase of Holiness; and all his Ordinances have a Divine Vertue and Energy in them, if they be but duly and conscientiously made use of. But if we do not watch; if we do not meditate; if we do not pray; if we expose our selves to a vain and trifling Conversation; if we indulge the Body all the Ease it is inclined to; and put our selves upon no Duties; practife no Discipline that we have any Reluctancy for, 'tis not to be wonder'd at, if our Vertue be crazy and fikly, if our Performances be cold and uneditying, our Faith weak, our Affections low and groveling, our Life unsteddy and unprofitable, our Religion destitute of true Pleasure, and our latter End of any rational Comfort, or well-grounded Confidence. 'Tis naturally to be expected that the Soul of the Sluggard should be like his Field. Prov. 24. 30. I went by the Field of the Slothful, and by the Vineyard of the Man void of understanding; and lo it was all grown over with Thorns, and Nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down: This is one plain Cause, and commonly the first of our

halting between God and Baal; namely, our Idleness and Sloth in Religion, joined with Pulillanimity and Cowardife, which moves us to decline all Difficulties, and difables us to make a bold Resistance against Temptations: How criminal and guilty this must render us in the Sight of God, 'tis no Difficulty to guess. Is this the Zeal, the Revenge of an humble and active Penitent? Is this to redeem the Time, and efface the Memory of our past Sins and Provocations? Is this the Conversation that becomes the Children of the Light, and of the Day? Is this our Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness? Is this our Ambibition, our Passion for an Heaven? Finally, Is it thus we require the Mercies and Obligations of God, and the Love of Jefus, that passeth Knowledge? Shall such halting trimming Christians as these, think ye, ever be judged endued with a true and Living Faith, who express in the whole Tenour of their Lives, fo much Coldness and Indifference for their Salvation, which the Son of God thought worth the purchasing, by so much Travel, and so much Sorrow, fo much Shame, and fo much Blood?

3. A Third Cause of our Halting between God and Baal is some Degree of Infidelity. This was the Case of Israel too.

"hey were ever prone to Idolatry; part-train'd up to it in Egypt, and elsewhere; artly being more capable of forming an lea of a Finite and Topical God, than of n Infinite and Universal one, Jer. 23. 23. artly being fond of following the Fashions other Nations. And, lastly, mov'd, partby that great and long Prosperity, which eypt and other Idolatrous Nations enjoy'd; id no doubt, comparing it too, with the ariety and Uncertainty of their own Forine, and the frequent Disappointment of eir Expectations, Hosea 2. never laying to Heart all the while, that the Way to cure their Prosperity, was to change, not eir God, but their Manners. I would God, this were not too lively a Description of the State of too many Christians; nd that we could not trace our Lukearmness and Fickleness in Religion, too ainly back to the same Source or Oriine; namely, fome Degrees of Infidelity. wish the Prosperity of the Wicked do not mewhat undermine the Belief of a Proidence: I wish, whatever we talk of a reasure in another World, we do not ow and then think it wifest to have our ortion in this. I am afraid, that the Deays and Dissolutions of our Nature in leath, the Rottenness and Corruption of ne Grave, and the Variety of Changes nd Fortunes, our very Dust undergoes, may

may tempt us to some Scruples and Jealou fies about a posthumous Life. But how ever it be in these Points, I am too too we assured, that we do often doubt, whether Vertue be the true Blessedness of Line whether there be that Pleafure in Right oulnels the Scripture affirms there is. am confident, the Notions of Righteon ness and Holiness, with which the Scrie ture furnishes us, are often blurr'd an blotted by the Maxims and Customs of the World; and perswade my self, that there scarcely one of those, that are Landice and Trimmers in Religion, that do n flatter themselves, that God will not be fevere as his Threats; and that he will r ceive them into Heaven upon milder at fofter Terms than the Gospel propose Some fuch kind of Infidelity as this mu possess the Heart, where-ever the Life is infinitely below our Profession. When t Word preached doth not profit, it is because is not mingled with a due Measure of Fai in those that hear it. If we did truly b lieve the Revelations of God; if we d fee the Promises of God as evident and pr fent by Faith, though distant in ther selves, 'twere impossible but they mu move, but they must take us; 'twere in possible but they must enkindle in us an ther fort of Desire, and this Desire wou foon produce another fort of Endeavour

nother fort of Life. When Moses beheld naan from Pisga, how passionately did e desire to enter into that good Land? Then the Disciples had seen Jesus ascend p into Heaven, how were they transportd with a Desire of following him! how nspeakable was their Joy! how fervent heir Prayers! how lasting and enlarged heir Gratitude! They returned to Jerusalem ith great foy; and were continually in the emple praising and blessing God. How does Prospect of Gain captivate the Coveous? How does the Fancy or Expectatin of Pleasure inslame the Voluptuary? low does the Sight of Vanity and Granlour infect the Proud? And the Hope of Glory fire the Ambirious? What, hath he Beauty and Pleasures of Holiness no Attraction? Has Heaven no Charms in it? Has the Fayour and Love of God, and of esus, no Force, no Power in them? Surely we have not the Face to deny, but that the Promises of God are great and precious ones, and if they raise no Passion in us, it must not be through want of Excellence and Loveliness in them, but want of Fath in m. And then judge you, how acceptable this kind of Insidelity must render us to God; What Value can God have for a People whom no Kindness can oblige, no Arguments convince; with whom no Miracles can gain Belief; no Assurances or CC 2 ProPromises find Credit? Hell is the Portion of the Fearful and Unbeliever, Rev. 21. 8. And what dreadful Judgments did overwhelm Israel, as often as they thus halted between God and Idols! It did not excule them that they had some fort of Veneration for the Memory of Moses and his Miracles: fince this was not able to over-rule their Prejudice and Superstition; that they retain some Honour for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that God which was the Fear of their Fathers, fince they had as much, or more, for the Nations round about them, and their Gods too. And whatever Power they did acknowledge in the God of Heaven, or whatever Benefit they did own themselves to have derived from him, as can hardly think the Memory of either was utterly extinguish'd amongst them; al this avail'd them nothing, while they made their Court to other Gods too, and pu their Trust in their Patronage and Prote Ation. Though this be sufficient to make us sensible of the Guilt of a Laodicean Ver tue, and an uncertain halting Faith, yet I must advance on, and observe unto your worse Principle, if worse can be, of this Deportment yet, which is,

^{4.} The Fourth Fountain of this Un steadiness and Remissness in Religion is some Remains of Corruption; the Preva lency

mcy of fome vicious Passion or other. Vens Actions are the plainest Indications their Affections. If the Life looks two ways, we need not doubt but that the leart does so too. This was that made e young Man in the Gospel fluctuate so tween Christ and Mammon; this was the ase of Herod, he had yielded, no doubt, the Power and Force of the Baptist's Reaws, if he had not been drawn back by the drarms of his Herodias. And this is the ase of every Man who is but almost a hristian; he is under the Ascendant of me filly or vile Lust or other; this is that hich spoils the Taste of the hidden Man-; and diminisheth the Price of Canaan. lithout doubt Men would apply themlves more vigoroully to spiritual Things, ere they not too fond of the Body and the leasures of it; they would certainly seek ne Kingdom of Heaven more earnestly, nd make a better Provision than they do or the other World, were they not too such taken with this, and therefore too pt to set up their Rest on this side Jordan. Jow if this be so, What can we expect? They only who conquer, are crowned; they cat sow to the Flesh and to the World, can l'ap nothing from these but Corruption. hese kind of Christians, though peradenture, they are not Slaves to any infamous ind scandalous Lusts, are yet entangled by Cc 3

fome other, not much less injurious, though not to Reputation, yet to Purity of Heart they are captivated to the World and Flesh though their Chains feem better polished and of a finer Metal; they cannot mount upwards, they cannot conquer, being retarded and kept under, if not by the Strength of Temptation, yet by their own Softness and Weakness; and yet, Why should I doubt but these are conquered by Tempo tation? The more innocent the Object of any one's Passion is, generally the more fatal, because we are the more apt to mandalge our selves in it. The Causes of Luke warmness being thus pointed out, 'tis evi dent what the Cure of it confists in, name ly, in forming just and correct Notions of Vertue and Vice; in strengthening and confirming our Faith, and in perfecting and compleating our Reformation. I wil now endeavour to possess the Minds o Men with an Aversion and Dread of thi State of Lukewarmness, by shewing,

1. The Folly.

2. The Guilt; and,

3. The Danger of it.

1. The Folly. How reasonably may here address my self to the Lukewarm is the Words of Elijah to the Israelites: How halt ye between two opinions? if the Lore

be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow bim, 1 Kings 18. 21. If you do indeed believe, that your Safety and Happiness depends upon God, then ferve him in good earnest; but if you think this depends upon the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, then serve these, if you really think that Vertue and Religion are the most solid and stable Treasure, then strive sincerely and vigorously to possess your selves of them; but if you really think, that the Ease and Pleasure of the Body, Respect, and Pomp, and State, is the proper Portion, and fovereign Good of Man, than devote and offer up your selves to these. For what a Folly is that Life, which will neither procure us the Happiness of this World, nor of another? To what purpose is it to listen only so much to Conscience, as to damp and chill our Pleasure; and so much to Pleasure, as to disturb the Peace and Repose of Conscience? But indeed, as the Words of Elijah were rather an Irony than any real Doubt, whether Baal or the Lord were God; rather a scornful Derision of their Folly and Stupidity, than a ferious Exhortation to deliberate, whether Idolatry or the Worship of the True God, were to be chosen: I doubt not, but mine will feem to you to carry no other Sound in them. The Disparity is so vast between God and the World, between Religion and CC 4

Sensuality, Covetousness and Ambition; between those Hopes and Enjoyments we may reap from the one, and those we can fancy in the other; that there is no place for doubting what Choice we are to make, or to which Side we are to adhere; nay in this we are more criminal than the Israelites, being self-condemn'd. The Israelites indeed, seem to be at a Loss, whether the Lord or Baal were God; they doubted under whose Protection they might thrive best. But at this Day, whoever believes a God, knows very well there is none besides him. Whatever Passion we have for the World, and the Things of it; whatever spiritual Idolatry we are guilty of, our Opinions are not yet so far corrupted, as to attribute to them, in Reality, any thing like Divinity. Whilst we dote on Wealth, we at the same time know that it makes its felf Wings and flies away; whilst on Greatness and Power, we know that 'tis but a Piece of empty and toilsome Pageantry, and often the Subject of Misery and dismal Tragedies, not incident to a lower State; whilst we dote on Pleasure, we are well assur'd that 'tis dishonourable and short, and intermix'd with Fears, and Shame, and Torment; we know that nothing here below is able to free our State and Fortune from Calamity, our Mind from Guilt, the Body from Death, much less the whole Man from a miserable Eternity. In one word, we know that what we admire is Vanity, and what we worship is indeed an Idol. This being fo, I will infift no longer on this Topick; for fince the World bears no Competition with God in our Opinion, though it often rival him in our Affections, we are not to impute the Halting of a Laodicean Christian to any Perswasion of Omnipotence or All-sufficiency, or any thing like Divinity in the Things he dotes on, serves, and worships; but we must find out some other Reason of it. And that is generally this, We are willing to believe, that our Fondness for the World, and our Indulgence to the Body, is confistent enough with Religion; that it is no Violation of our Faith, nor Provocation to God; nor confequently, Prejudice to our Eternal Interest; and then 'tis no wonder if we blend and compound Religion and Sensuality; and stand divided in our Affections; and confequently halt in our Service between God and the World. To prevent this, I will shew,

2. That this is a great Sin; which is sufficiently evident from this single Consideration, That it frustrates the Efficacy of the Gospel and the Spirit, and entirely deseats the great Design of the Christian Religion. For, 1. Religion has no effectual Instuence

upon

upon the Lukewarm himself; the Gospel works no thorough Change in him. The Sinner is not converted into a Saint; nor Human Nature perfected by Participation of a Divine one. 2. The Laodiceans can never offer up to God any Gift, any Sacrifice worthy of him; nor render him any Service acceptable to him; the Kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. 14. He that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of Men. But alas! These Men are almost utter Strangers to these Things; a few faint and irresolute Wishes, formal and customary Prayers, nigardly and grumbling Alms, and an Attendance upon God's Word, rather out of spiritual Wantonness, than Devotion, these are the Offerings they can make God; and will God be better pleased with these, than he was with those of Israel that were deformed with Maims and Blemishes? Mal. 1. 8. Offer now these to thy Governour; will he be pleased with thee, or accept of thy person? saith the Lord of hosts. The Magi, indeed, left their Country, and offer'd Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh to our Saviour, Matt. 2. David would not sacrifice to God of that which cost him nothing, 2 Sam. 24. 24. The Primitive Christians offer'd up to God Prayers and Tears, Labours and Travels; nay their Honours, their Fortunes, their Lives, their Blood.

Blood. But, alas! What have these Men to offer? They have not Love enough to put them upon any Expence; nor Faith enough to put them upon any Hardships, for the sake of God and Vertue. For the they think themselves rich and increased in goods, and to have need of nothing, yet are they poor, wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, Rev. 3. 17. And shall these receive a Crown of Righteousness? Shall these share in the Kingdom of Jesus? Shall these partake in the Triumph of the Last Day? It can never be; they do nothing worthy of the Gospel, nothing worthy of the Spirit of God: nothing that can entitle them to the Benesit of the Cross of Christ.

^{3.} The Life of the Laodicean Christian will never do any Credit to Religion, or reflect any Honour on the Gospel. No Man will be ever able to discern the Beauty of Holiness, or the Power and Efficacy of Divine Truths, from the Practice and Conversation of such an one. Ah! had the Carriage of the Primitive Times been fuch as his, I know not what Miracles might have done, I am fure Examples would never have made any Profelytes. But the Christians then afted those Vertues, which the Pagan only pretended too; and Faith in Jesus atchiev'd those Victories over the World, which the Jews (so debauch'd

bauch'd and stupid were they grown) did in the Declension of that State neither understand nor pretend to: This was that which made the World admire and love Christianity. After thus much said of the Effects of this fort of Carriage; I need scarcely put any one in mind, what will be the last and saddest Effect of it; for if our Christianity be such, that it neither truly fet us free from our Bondage to the World and Flesh; nor enrich our Soul with true and folid Vertues; if it neither promote the Honour of God, nor the Good of Man, it must unavoidably follow, that having no true Title to God's Favour, nor any rational Ground, on which to build an Assurance of it, we can reap no true Comfort or Pleasure from Religion here, or any Reward from it hereafter. Alas! What talk I of Comfort and Reward? Distress and Anguish must take hold of the Sinners in Sion; and Fearfulness must surprize the Hypocrite: And from the Troubles and Miseries of this Life, they must go down into the Everlasting Torments of another. The Scripture is plain; God will spue them out of his Mouth, as he did the Laodicean: He will shut the Gate of Heaven against them, as against the foolish Virgins that had no Oil in their Lamps; And their Hell will have one Torment in it, which is incident to no others, that they

had once the Hopes of Heaven; and it is no small Aggravation of Misery to fall into it, even from the Expectation of

Happiness.

This is not, as I observed above, to be apply'd to accidental Dulness or Deadness in Duty; nor are the Decays or Abatements of Love, which Good Men sometimes suffer, immediately to be pronounced damnable. But yet these are to be put in mind of the Danger they are in; and recall'd to their former Zeal, in the Words of the Spirit to the Church of Ephesus; Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first Love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do the first Works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of his place, except thou repent, Rev. 2. 4, 5.

CHAP, IX.

Of Zeal. What in general is meant by Zeal; and what is that Perfection of Holiness in which it consists. Whether the Perfect Man must be adorn'd with a Confluence of all Vertues; and to what Degree of Holiness he may be supposed to arrive.

Am arriv'd at the last Stage of Perfection, which I chuse to call a State of Zeal; not only because the Scripture seems to direct me to this Expression, but also because it seems to me more full and proper than others, that may be, or are made use of for the same End. A State of Union is an Expression that better suits another Life than this. For the Lesson the Perfect Man is ever and anon to revolve in his Mind, is, That the present Life is a Life of Labour, and Travel, and Sufferings; the future one, of Rewards, and Crowns, and Enjoyments. Then as to that other Expression, The State of Love, it suits my Purpose well enough; but does not come up so justly and exactly to it, as the State of Zeal; for I take Zeal to be Love, in the utmost Elevation and Vivacity that it is capable of.

And now, what a noble, what a fruitful Argument am I entring upon? Methinks I feel my Soul grow warm, and en-

kindle

kindle upon my approaching it; and my first Views or Contemplations of it inspire me with Desires of the same Nature with it felf. I am concern'd to fee my felf confin'd and limited by the Laws of Method; and find my felf inclin'd to wish, That I were now to write, rather a just Volume, than a few Pages. Here the Heroick Acts. or, what is more, the Heroick Lives of Saints, Martyrs, and Confessors, present themselves to my Thoughts: Here Human Nature, enrich'd, adorn'd, and elevated to the utmost Degree, by a Participation of the Divine one; Here the Power of God's Word, the Energy of the Holy Ghost, the Triumphs of Faith, and the Extasses of Love, would be described; Here the different Excellencies of different Vertues, and the different Value of good Works, should be stated and settled, and the various Paths, in which Men pursue the Heights of Vertue, and the noblest Designs be examin'd, and solid Piety and true Wisdom be refined from the Alloys and Mixtures of Enthusiasm, Superstition, Fancy, or whatever else they are disfigur'd and debas'd by. But this cannot now be done, and it may be it could not at all be done by me: No Measure of the Spirit, peradventure, below that with which the Apofles were inspir'd, is sufficient to treat this Argument as it requires. Besides, accord-

ing to my Capacity, I have been all along making this Point. When, in the First Section, I stated the Notion of Perfection, shew'd by what Steps we advanced to it, what Means we are to make use of, and what would be the Fruit of it, I did in effect describe to my Reader, the State of Zeal, and mark'd out the Path that leads to it. When, in the Second, I labour to establish the true Liberty of Man, upon the Overthrow and Extirpation not only of Mortal Sin, and of Idleness and Lukewarmness, but also, as far as it might be, even of Sin of Infirmity, and Original Corruption; what else was I doing, but profecuting this one Defign, namely, the implanting and propagating in the World the State of Zeal? However, fomething there feems to me yet wanting to compleat my Undertaking; and that I am to endeavour now. To which End I will here discourse of Three Things,

1. What it is in general I mean by Zeal.

2. What is that Perfection of Holiness or Righteousness, wherein it consists. And,

3. Of the Efficacy or Force of this Holiness, as it exerts it self in good Works. Of these, the Two Former shall be the Argument of this; the Third of the following Chapter.

6. 1. Of Zeal in General, what it is. do not exclude some Degrees of Zeal, om every Period of the Christian's Life; incerity cannot fublist wholly without The Hunger and Thirst after Righteousof, which is the Subject of one of our aviour's Beatitudes, must be more or less a every Child of God. But it may figniy one thing in the Infant, another in the Idult Christian; in the one, the Conquest f Sin, or rather of the Reliques and Renains of former finful Habits, and the Attainment of habitual Goodness, is the Objest of this Hunger and Thirst: In the ther, it imports a vehement Desire of vhatever is yet wanting to a farther Acomplishment and Consummation of Righeousness already fix'd and establish'd; the ntire and ultimate Persection of it in Heaen; and in the mean time, the promoing the Divine Glory upon Earth, whatver it cost him to do so. By a State of Leal then, I here mean Vertue or Holiness, not in the Bud, or in the Blossom, out in its full Strength and Stature, grown op, and ripe, and loaded with bleffed Fruits: I mean that Holiness that is the Refult of Illumination, or Clearness of Judgment, of the Strength and Force of Holy Resolution, and the Vigour and Energy of Holy Passions. In a Word, I Dd mean

mean that folid, spiritual, and operative Religion, which may be felt and enjoy'd by us our felves, in the Serenity and Tranquillity of Conscience, the Longings and Breathings of Pious Desires, the Joys and Pleasures of a Rational Assurance; discern'd by the World in our Lives and Actions. in the Modesty of our Garb, in the Plainness and Humility of all Things else, that pertain to the Port of Life; in the Temperance of our Meals, the Purity and Heavenliness of Conversation, the Moderation of our Designs and Enjoyments, the Instruction of our Families; with a tender and indefatigable Watchfulness over them; the Constancy of our Attendance apon, and the Devoutness of our Deport ment in, the Publick Worship of God; and finally, in the Activity and Generolity of our Charity: Or, to speak my Thoughts in the Language of St. Paul, A State of Zeal, is that Perfection or Maturity o Holiness, which abounds in the Works of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patiens of Hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the light of God, and our Father, I Thess. 1. 2 Now the End of all this is, the advancing the Glory of God: And therefore Zeal is well enough describ'd or defin'd, by an ardent or vehement Desire of doing so. Now this is advanced Two Ways: First, By our Personal and Inherent Holiness: And,

gondly, By the Fruit of it, Good Works. If both which I will now speak a little fore particularly.

- §. 2. Of that Perfection of Holiness which onstitutes the State of Zeal. Here I will aquire into Two Things.
- 1. Whether the Perfect Man must be posessed of all the Treasures of Goodness; Whether he must be adorn'd by a Conflunce, and an Accumulation of all Vertues.

2. What Height of Vertue, what Degree of Holiness, he may be supposed to arrive at.

1. Of the Extent of Righteousness. It s generally thought, that Universality is is essential and necessary a Property of Gospel-Righteousness, as Sincerity and Pereverance: That there is an inseparable Connexion and Union, between all Christian Vertues; fo that he who wants any, must be concluded to have none: This Want being, not like a Blemish that diminishes the Beauty, or a Maim that weakens the Strength; but like a Wound that diffolves the Frame and Contexture of the Natural Body. This Opinion is partly built upon Reason, which tells us, That there is a native Lustre and Beauty in all Vertues; and therefore there is no one in the whole

System of Morality but must be lovely and amiable to a good Man. Partly upon Scripture, in which we find the Christian represented, as holy in all manner of Conversation, 1 Pet. 1. 15. Perfect in every good work, Heb. 13. 21. As fill d with all the Fulness of God, Eph. 3. 19. As fruitful in every good work, Col. 1. 10. and exhorted in the most comprehensive Terms imaginable, to the Practice of every Vertue. Finally, Brethren what soever things are true, what soever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, what soever things are lovelj, what soever things are of good report; I there be any vertue, and if there be any praise think on these things. To which may be added numerous Texts, importing, That Paith is a Principle of Universal Righteoufness; and that the Fear and Love o God, do equally oblige us to all his Commandments; and that the Violation of one involves us in the Guilt of all. And the Refult of all this seems to be plainly this, That the whole Chain of Graces is dissolved and lost, if there be but one Lim wanting But at this rate, as the Sincer Man must be endow'd with all manner o Vertues, so must the Perfect excel in all But the one and the other Assertion, if we confider things closely, feems to have in them insuperable Difficulties. There is a vast J'ariety in the Natures of Men, in the State

lates and Conditions of Life, and in the inds and Degrees, as well of the Sanctiring, as of the Miraculous Gifts of God. t. Paul tells us, Every Man has his proper Gift God, 1 Cor. 7. 7. From whence it seems aturally to be inferr'd, That every Man not capable of attaining to an Excellence ad Eminence in every Vertue. Experience ells us, That there are different kinds of Vatures, as well as Soils; and that some inds of Vertues, like some kinds of Seed, vill thrive better in one than in another. Jor does Grace alter the Matter much: nce it generally accommodates it felf to Vature. Lastly, it seems very hard, That very Man should have the Vertues of all Ien, of all States, of all Capacities; every articular Member, the Vertues of the whole Church; the Beauty and Strength of the Church, as well as of the natural Body, or Commonwealth, confisting, not in the Allofficiency of every Member, but in that. Tariety of Gifts and Graces, that cements nd unites, enriches and supports the whole. To come to the Matter of Fast; I read of he Faith of Abraham, the Meekness of Moes, the Patience of Job, the Love of Mary Magdalen, the Zeal of St. Peter, and the Labours and Travels of St. Paul; which Firmness and Constancy is too mean a Name for. These Vertues seem therefore. o have been the peculiar Excellencies of Dd 3 these

these Persons; and to have shone in them with more transcendent Lustre, than any other: These seem to have been the Vertues, for which Grace and Nature eminently qualified them; and to which the Providence of God more immediately and directly called them. All this confider'd, feems it not enough to come up to the Perfection of these great Men? May in not suffice to excel in these Vertues, which Nature, Grace, and Providence prescribid May not the Perfect be allow'd to want, what he does not need? Would not one think, that, in many Respects, it were enough for him to be free from this or that Vice, rather than to expect that he should be adorn'd with this or that Vertue, which he has no use for? Especially, if by Vertue we understand strictly, such a Habit as enables us to act easily and delightfully. To adjust this Matter;

1. The Perfect Man must, as I have proved before, not only be set free from the Dominion of Sin, but also abstain even from a single Act of presumptuous Wickedness: He must neither Criminally omit a Duty, nor Deliberately commit any thing regugnant to it.

2dly, He must be endowed with Spiritual Wisdom and Understanding, with Faith, Hope, Charity, with the Graces

which

which I will call Universal, because necessary and indispensable to all as Christians, abstracting from their particular Capacities and Relations; and that too, in an eminent Degree, so as to be strong in the Grace which is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. 2. 1. This will render him holy in all manner of Conversation, and thoroughly furnished to all good Works. These Two Things constitute Universal Righteousness, compleat the Perfett Man, and fully satisfy the Texts alledged, Or if uot, what follows will.

3dly, He must excel in those Vertues which are most Natural. I call those Vertues Natural, to which Grace and Nature most powerfully dispose and incline him; for these he seems to be design'd by God; these will soon grow up to Maturity; and much will be their Fruit, and great their Beauty. I do not all this while Suppose, that the Perfect Man ought not so far to subdue and rectify his Temper, as not only to overcome the Sin of his Constitution, but in some Degrees possess the Vertue that is most repugnant to it. But to expect him to be eminent here, is, I doubt, too hard and unreasonable. For here, when he has bestowed much Pains and Travel, much Care and Cost, his Progress may not be so much, as where he bestowed least. But here I must add Two Dd 4 CauCautions; the one is, That no Man mistake contracted Habits for Nature, and then conclude, that it will be impossible for him to attain the Perfection of this or that Vertue, through a natural Incapacity. In the next Place, let no Man satisfy and content himself, in a weak and impersect State of that Vertue, which is directly opposed to the Sin of his Constitution; but let him think, that here, if any where, his Vertue must be always growing; and let him not doubt, but that our Saviour's Promise, as far as it can be accomplished on Earth, belongs to his sincere Endeavours here; Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness; for they shall be filled, Matth. 5.6.

4. The Perfect Man must be eminent in those Vertues which are most Necessary: Such are those which his particular Station and Calling, or any other Dispensation of Providence he is under, requires of him. Whatever Vertues may be more delightful, these are more important; others may be more natural, these have more of Vse and more of Merit. A Man may fall short of Perfection in others, without either Disparagement or Guilt; but Desiciency in these, can hardly escape both. Besides, every thing is lovely in its Place, and in its Time. There is a peculiar Grace and Lustre, that

attends the Vertues of a Man's Station, that is scarcely to be found in any other. I would, therefore, have my Perfect Man truly great in his own Business; and shine with a dazling Lustre in his own Sphere. To this purpose, surely, speaks the Advice of St. Paul, Rom. 12.6, 7, 8. Having then Gifts, differing according to the Grace that is given to us, whether Prophecy, let us prophefy according to the Proportion of Faith: Or Ministry, let us wait on our Ministring: Or he that teacheth, on teaching: Or he that exhorteth, on Exhortation: He that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity: He that ruleth, with Diligence: He that sheweth Mercy, with Chearfulness.

5. Lastly, As there is different Guilt in Sins, so there is different Merit in Vertues: As amongst Miraculous, so amongst sanctifying Gifts, some are more excellent than others; and he is the most Perfect Man, who is enrich'd with the most Perfect Gifts. The Three Heroick Vertues of the Gospel are Faith, Love, Humility. Nor do I presumptuously, contrary to the Apostle, exclude Hope; but comprehend it under Faith. Of Faith I have often had Occasion to speak. Humility will make the last Chapter of this Section; and therefore, I will only exhort to Love. Love is the noblest Fruit of Illumination and Faith,

the true Source and Parent of Joy and Peace. Love is the most pregnant Seed of a Divine Life; 'tis the Principle that animates, moves, and forms the whole Body of Righteousness: Love is the Bond of Union and Communion with the Father and his Son Jefus through the Spirit. And tis but fit, that what renders us most like God, should render us most dear to him too: And this Love does; for God is Love. In short, Love is the fulfilling of the Law; 'tis the Beauty and Perfection of a Disciple of Jesus; and the great Subject of Praise and Glory in the Day of Judgment. Love is the last Round in the Scale of Perfection; and therefore my Perfect Man must abound in this. What Degrees of Love, of Desire, or Complacency for the Things of this present Life, may consist with Sincerity, what with Perfection, may be easily learn'd from several Parts of this Work. There is no doubt but the Perfeet Man must love God to that Degree, that he must always cleave to him; walk as always before Him; ever meditate and contemplate on Him and his Works; contrive and study, labour and contend to please Him: It must be an Affliction to him to be divided from Him but for a little while; and he must ever and anon, by Day and Night, break out into his Praises, and rejoyce and glory in him. 2. He must love love God to that Degree, as that all things, in Comparison of Him, must appear blasted and withered, empty and contemptible, without Pleasure, without Beauty: And consequently, he must so thirst after the Beatifick Vision, after the Presence and Fruition of God, that he must earnestly desire to be dissolved, and pant and long to be dismissed from the Pilgrimage of this World, and from the corruptible Tabernacle of the Body. Nor do I, Lastly, doubt, but that this Love is often fenfibly transporting: 'Tis a Fire within, that strives to break out, and exert it self in the Fruitions of Heaven: 'Tis a rich and mighty Cordial, that raises Nature above it felf, and makes it all Purity or Glory.

Thus have I consider'd the Extent or Compass of the Perfect Man's Vertues. And the Sum Total is: In some he must excel, because Natural and Easy; in others, because necessary. Universal ones he cannot want; they are essential to Christianity; others of a peculiar Nature he may, unless his Circumstances exact them: Nor is this any Diminution of his Perfection. Patience, Fortitude, Moderation, Vigilance, &c. are the Vertues of Earth, not Heaven; and yet none think the blessed Inhabitants of that Place impersect, because not endow'd with Habits which they do not want. Above

Above all, he that will be Perfett, must abound in those Graces, which are for the most Heroick Nature; Faith, Love, and Humility: For these are they, which most effectually exalt Man above himself, and above the World; which inslame him with a Zeal for the Honour of God, and the Good of Man; and enable him to surmount the Difficulties which he meets with, in prosecuting this glorious Design. I am next to enquire,

6. 2. To what Height, to what Degrees of Vertue, the Perfett Man may advance. I have in part anticipated this Enquiry already; yet cannot forbear adding here Two Observations. First, That Reason and Scripture seem to press us on towards an endless Progress in Vertue. And yet, Secondly, That both feem to propose to us such a State of Perfection as attainable, beyond which we cannot go; that so the Beginner may not despair of Perfection, nor the Perfect abate any thing of their Vigilance, and their Industry. Such a Degree of Excellence, to which nothing can be added; fuch a Height, above which there is no room to foar, if apply'd to Man, and this World, is furely but an imaginary Notion. To dream of such a Perfection, were to forget our Nature, and our State: No Saga-city of Judgment, no Strength of Relolution,

lution, no Felicity of Circumstances, can ever advance us to this Height. Such a Perfection as this, that is incapable of any Increase, belongs, I believe, to God alone: Or if we may allow it to Angels, we must certainly deny it to Man: In whom, one would think, the Appetites of the Body can never be so entirely subdued, that there should be no Place to extend his Conquest, or render his Victory more entire and compleat: And in whom, one would think, the Spirit of God should never reside in that measure, that there should be nothing to be added to his Fulness. 'Tis hard to conceive, how we should study the System of Divine Faith, how we should daily reflect upon our Lives and Actions, without growing in spiritual Wisdom and Understanding; 'Tis hard to conceive, how we should give God, the World, and our felves, repeated Proofs of our Integrity in the Day of Tryal, without increasing our Strength and Assurance: And Love must naturally increase with these. Whence it is, that St. Paul, acknowledging himself not yet Perfect, resolves, that forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forwards to those things that are before, he would press on towards the Mark, for the prize of the high Calling of God, in Christ Jesus, Phil. 3. 13, 14. And St. Austin resolves, Plenissima Charitas, quamdiu hic homo vivit, in Nemine

mine est: An absolute Plenitude of Charity is

in no Mortal upon Earth.

And yet, if we come to Fact and Pra-Etice, one would be tempted to think, that the Disciples of our Lord and Master, had arrived at that State, wherein their Business was not to climb higher, but rather to make good the Ground they had gain'd. What could render St. Paul's Vi-Hory over the Body more compleat, who assures us, I am crucified with Christ? And again, I am crucified to the World, and the World is crucified to me? What could render the Authority and Dominion of his Mind more absolute, or its Graces more confummate and entire? Who could fay with Truth, 'Tis not I who live, but Christ who lives in me. What would you have added to that Faith, and Love, which made him ready, not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem, which made him long to be dissolved and to be with Christ? As to those Words of his, Phil. 3. 13. forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forwards, &c. they relate to his Tryals and Performances, to his Perils and Conflicts; not to his Attainments: He does not here deny himself to be Perfect, though that might well enough have become his Modesty and Humility; but only, that he was not to look upon himself as already at his Goal, a Conqueror and Crown'd;

there being much yet behind to do and fuffer, notwithstanding all that he had passed through. This is the Sense of his έχ ότι ήδη τέλεμωμα, which we render, not as though I were already perfect. As to St. Austin, I am wholly of his Mind; for he speaks comparatively, and does in effect no more than affirm, That no Man living is as Perfect in this World, as he will be in another, which no Man sure can ever doubt—— If we confult Reafon will it not be apt to tell us, That as every Reing has its Bounds set it, so has every Perfection too? That there is a Stature, as of the Natural, so of the Spiritual Man, beyond which it cannot grow? That as to Grace, no more can be infused, than our Natures are capable of? Otherwife, like too rich a Cordial, it will not strengthen, but fire our Natures; or like too dazling a Light, it will not affift, but oppress our Faculties. And does not the Parable of our Master countenance this, Matth. 25. 2. wherein he tells us, That God gave to one Five Talents, to another Two, to another One, to every Man according to his Ability. By which one would think our Lord infinuates, That the Meafures of Grace are usually distributed in Proportion to the Capacities of Nature; and that he who improved his Two Talents into Four, arrived at his proper Perfection, as

well as he, who improved his Five into Ten; it being as abfurd to expect, That the Perfection of every Man should be the same, as to expect, that all Mens Bodies should be of the same Height, or their

Minds of the same Capacity.

Reflecting on all this together, I cannot but be of Opinion, That some have actually arriv'd at that Strength of Faith, at that Ardour of Love, that they seemed to have been incapable of any considerable Accessions in this Life. But yet, new Occafions may still demand new Vertues; which were indeed before contain'd and included in Faith and Love; but no otherwise, than as Fruits and Trees are in their Seeds. And some Degree of Original Corruption may still be lurking in the most sanctified Nature; and some Venial Defects and Imperfections or other, may still leave room for the greatest of Saints to extend his Conquest. Besides, 'tis hard to determine or fix the Bounds of Knowledge; and every new Degree of Light seems to make way for more. So that after all, nothing hinders, but that the Path of the Perfect Man, may, as well with respect to his Righteousness as his Fortunes, be like the shining Light, which shineth more and more unto the Perfect day; I mean, the Day of a blessed Eternity.

The Motives to Perfection, the Fruit of it, the Means and Methods of attaining it, laid down in the First Section, will all serve here: Therefore I have nothing to offer of this Sort; only, if I forgot to pay that Deference to the Institutions of our Church, which they justly deserve, I do it now: And do earnestly perswade my Reader to a strict Observance of them. I do not only think this necessary to maintain a Face of Religion amongst us, but also highly conducive to true Perfection. I am fully fatisfied, That there is a peculiar Presence of God in his publick Ordinances; That the Devotion of good Men does mutually enflame and enkindle one another; That there is an holy Awe and Reverence feizes the Minds of good Men, when they draw near to God in publick Worship; and finally, That if the Offices of our Liturgy do not affect our Hearts, 'tis because they are very much indsposed, and very poorly qualified for the true and spiritual Worship of God.

E e CHAP.

CHAP. X.

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

ND now, let not any one think, A that I have taken Pains to advance the Illumination of a Sinner, to knock off his Chains and Fetters, to raise him as far as might be above the Corruption of Nature, and the Defects and Infirmities of Life; to scatter those lazy Fogs and Mists which hung upon his Spirits, and to enrich him with Heroick Vertues; let no Man, I fay, fancy that I have laboured to do all this, that after all, my Perfect Man might sit down like an Epicurean God, and enjoy himself; might talk finely of Solitary Shades and Gardens, and spend a precious Life, fitted for the noblest Defigns, in a fluggish Retirement. No, no; as Vertue is the Perfection of Human Life, so is Action the Perfection of Vertue: And Zeal is that Principle of Action, which I require in a Saint of God. Accordingly, the Scriptures describe this great, this happy Man, as full of the Holy Ghost, fervent in Spirit, zealous of good Works. Such a one

one was Moses, mighty in Word and Deed, as well as learned in all the Knowledge of the Egyptians: Such an one was St. Stephen, as full of a Divine Ardour and irresistible Fervency of Spirit, as of an irresistible Wisdom; and such an one was the excellent Cornelius, a devout Man, one that had transfus'd and deriv'd the Fear of God from his own Bosom, throughout his Family, and Relations, and Friends too; one that gave much Alms, and prayed to God always. What need I multiply Instances? This is that which distinguishes the Perfect Man from all others; the Victories of Faith, the Labours of Charity, the Constancy and Patience of Hope, and the Ardors of Devotion.

Need I here distinguish a Zeal of God, from the Fierceness of Faction, the Cruelty of Superstition, from the wakeful and indefatigable Activity of Avarice and Ambition, from the unruly Heats of Pride and Passion, and from the implacable Fury of Revenge? It needs not; no foolish, no false, fantastick, earthly, or devilish Principle can counterfeit a Divine Zeal. 'Tis a Perfection that shines with such a peculiar Lustre, with such an Heavenly Majesty and Sweetness, that nothing else can imitate it; 'tis always pursuing Good, the Honour of God, and the Happiness of Man: It contends earnestly for the Faith once E e 2

delivered to the Saints; but it contends as earnestly too, to root out Wickedness, and implant the Righteousness of the Gospel in the World. It is not eager for the Articles of a Sett or Party, and unconcern'd for Catholick ones. When it presses for Reformation it begins at home, and fets a bright Example of what it would recommend to others. 'Tis meek and gentle under its own Affronts, but warm and bold against those which are offer'd to God. In a Word, though Love fill its Sails, Divine Wisdom and Prudence give it Ballast; and it has no Heat, but what is tempered and refracted

by Charity and Humility.
Need I, in the next Place, fix or state the various Degrees of Zeal? Alas! it is not requisite; Zeal being nothing else but an ardent Thirst of promoting the Divine Glory by the best Works. 'Tis plain, the more excellent the Work, and the more it cost, the more Perfect, the more exalted the Zeal that performs it. When, like Mary, we quit the Cumber and Distraction of this World, and chuse Religion for our Portion, then do we love it in good earnest. When with the Disciples we can fay, Lord, we have for saken all and followed thee, or are ready to do so; when we are continually bleffing and praifing God; when, if the Necessities of Christ's Church require it, we are ready to call nothing our

own; when we are prepared, if the Will of God be so, to resist even unto Blood; when nothing is dear, nothing delightful to us but God and Holiness; then have we reached the Height of Zeal. In a Word, Zeal is nothing else but the Love of God made Perset in us. And if we would see it drawn to the Life, we must contemplate it in the Blessed Jesus, who is the Perfect Pattern of Heroick Love. How boundless was his Love, when the whole World, and how transcendent when a World of Enemies, was the Object of it! How indefatigable was his Zeal! How Wakeful! How Meek! How Humble! How Firm and Resolv'd! His Labours and Travels, his Self-denial, Prayers and Tears, his Silence and Patience, his Agony and Blood, and charitable Prayers poured out with it for his Persecutors, instruct us fully, what Divine Love, what Divine Zeal is. And now, even at this time, Love reigns in him as he reigns in Heaven: Love is still the predominant, the darling Passion of his Soul. Worthy art thou, O Jesus! to receive Honour, and Glory, and Dominion! worthy art thou to fit down with thy Father on his Throne! worthy art thou to judge the World, because thou hast loved, because thou hast been zealous unto Death. because thou hast overcome! Some there are, indeed, who have followed thy bright Ee 3

Example, though at a great Distance. First, Martyrs and Confessors: Next, those beloved and admired Princes, who have governed their Kingdoms in Righteousness; to whom the Honour of God, and the Good of the World, has been far dearer, than Pleasure, than Empire, than Absolute Power, or that ominous Blaze that is now called Glory. And next follow,—
Hold! this is the Work of Angels, they
must Marshal the Field of Glory in the
End of all Things. O my God, may I
at least, be one, to fill the Train of this Triumphant Procession of that blessed Day, when thou shalt crown the Zeal and Patience of thy Saints! Thus have I given a short Account of Zeal. I will now endeayour to kindle it in every Breast by some few Considerations; which will at once evince the Necessity, and declare the Fruit of it.

1. Our own Security and Happiness demand of us a Zeal fruitful in good Works.

2. It is indispensable to the Welfare and

Good of our Neighbour.

3. It ministers most effectually to the Glory of God,

pend upon it. For without this, we reject, or at least frustrate the Counsels of God, against

against our own Souls; 'twas for this Christ died, that he might purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. This is the great End of our Election; God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, Ephes. 1. 4. which is to be explained by Ephes. 2. 10. where God is said to have before ordained that we should walk in good works. And the Beginning of the Verse minds us, that 'tis for this end God imparts the Light of his Word, and the Vigour of his Spirit; and for this end he sanctifies and renews our Nature; We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. St. Peter tells us, That this is that which all the great and precious Promises of God immediately aim at: First Godliness, then Life; First Vertue, then Glory. What shall I say more? Our Lord in his Narrative of the Last Judgment, and elsewhere; and his Apostles, in almost innumerable Places, have with great Power, and great Earnestness, inculcated this Doctrine, that we shall be judged atcording to our Works: That Immortality and Glory is the Portion, not of Knowledge, but Patience and Charity; not of an Orthodox Belief and Specious Pretension, but of Righteousness and Zeal; for the incorruptible, the never-fading Crown, is a Crown of Righteousness. Or if Men Ee 4

will be judg'd by their Faith, which is not the Language of the Gospel, this does not alter the Matter at all; since Faith it self will be judged by its Works. And as a happy Eternity depends upon our Zeal, so nothing else can give us any comfortable, any rational Assurance of it in this Life. The Reason is plain; because 'tis Zeal that is the only unquestionable Proof of our Integrity; and Good Works are the Fruit which alone can evidence the Life and Truth of our Faith and Love; Hereby we know, that we know him, if we keep his Commandments, 1 John 2. 3. Tea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works, Jam. 2. 18. Dost thou believe in God? Why art thou not holy as He is Holy? Dost thou believe in Jesus? Why dost thou not deny thy self, take up thy cross and follow him? Why dost thou not walk as he walked? Dost thou believe a Judgment to come? Why dost thou not work out thy salvation with fear and trembling? Why dost thou not prepare to meet thy God? Why art thou not rich in good Works, that thou mayelt lay up a good foundation against the time to come, and lay hold on Eternal Life? Nor are good Works less necessary to prove our Love than Faith. Certainly if we love Holiness, if we hunger and thirst after Righteousness, we shall never live in a direct Contradiction to the ftrongest Passions of our Soul; we shall never refuse to gratify an Inclination, which is not only fervent in us, but its Gratification will procure us Eternal Rewards too. Certainly, if we love God, we cannot but feek his Glory; we cannot but be desirous to maintain Communion with him. And if so, do we know any Sacrefice that is more acceptable to God than good Works? do we know any that he delights in more than Zeal? Do we love the Blessed Jesus? Are not good Works the very Test of this Love which himself has appointed? If a man love me, he will keep my commandments, John 14. 15. Te are my friends if ye do what-foever I command you, John 15. 14. The love of Christ, saith the Apostle, constrains us what to do, to live not to our selves, but to him that died for us, and rose again, 2 Cor. 5.15. What other Returns can we make to Jesus? What other way can we express our Gratitude to him? He sits on the Right Hand of God; All power is given him in heaven and in earth: He does not himself need our Ministry, nor want our Service and Charity; but hear what he fays, In as much as you did it to one of these my little ones, you have done it to me, Matt. 25. 40.

2. Our Zeal is indiffensably necessary to the Welfare and Happiness of Others.

Do we regard our Neighbours Eternal Interest? 'Tis Zeal represses Sin, and propagates Righteousness; 'tis Zeal defends the Faith and suppresses Heresy and Error; 'tis Zeal converts the Unbeliever, and builds up the Believer; 'tis Zeal that awakens the Drowfy, quickens the Lukewarm, ffrengthens the Weak, and enflames the Good with a holy Emulation; 'tis Zeal that baffles all Objections, refutes all Calumnies, and vanquishes all Oppositions raised against Religion, and oppresses its Enemies with Shame and Confusion. 'Tis, in a Word, Zeal and Zeal alone that can make Religion appear lovely and delightful, and reconcile the World to it: For this alone can adorn the Gospel; for it renders Vertue more conspicuous, more taking in Life and Example than it can be in the Precepts and Descriptions of Words. Nor is Zeal less serviceable to the Temporal, than Eternal Interest of Mankind. When God laid the Foundations of the World, he laid the Foundation of Vertue too; and when he formed Man, he wove the Necessity of good Works into his very Nature. How necessary is Justice to poor Creatures who lie fo open to Wrongs and Injuries? How indispensable is Charity, or Generosity, to these who are exposed to so many Accidents, to so many Wants, to such a Vicissitude of Fortune? And being all subject to so many Follies and Infirmities, to so many Mistakes and Fancies, how strong must be our Obligation to mutual Forbearance, Patience, and Gentleness? In a Word, Sin and Misery abounds in the World; and if there were not Vertues and good Works to ballance the one, and to relieve and support us under the other, Life would be intollerable. that Reveal'd and Natural Religion do necessarily terminate and center in a Zeal for good Works as their ultimate End, and utmost Perfection in this Life; and the Rule of our Saviour, What soever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them, is an Abstract, not only of the Law and the Prophets, but of the Code of Nature too; and this single Principle, if sincerely purfued, will ferment and work us up to the noblest Heights of Zeal. I might here, if it were necessary, easily shew that Zeal has as happy an Influence on the Publick as the Private; that this must animate that Justice and Mercy that supports the Throne; that it is the Soul of that Honour, Integrity, Generosity, and Religion, which support the States and Kingdoms of the World; and without which all Politick Systems must needs tend to a Disfolution. But I have faid enough; and from what I have faid, the Truth of my Third Consideration naturally appears,

3. Viz. That Zeal ministers most effe-Aually to the Glory of God. For if Zeal be in it felf thus lovely, thus necessary; if the Fruits and Effects of it be thus ferviceable to the Temporal and Eternal Interest of Man; What a lovely, what an agreeable Notion of God shall we form from this one Consideration of him, That he is the great Author of it? That he is the Origin and Fountain of that Light and Heat, of that Strength and Power of which 'tis compounded and constituted? He commands and exacts it; he excites and encourages to it by the Promise of an Eternal Crown, and the ravishing Fruition of Himself: He has planted the Seeds of it in our Nature, and he cherishes them by the bleffed and vigorous Influences of his Word and Spirit. How gracious is the Divine Nature! how gracious is the Divine Government! when the Substance of his Laws is, That we should love as Brethren, that we should cloath the Naked, feed the Hungry, deliver the Captive, instruct the Foolish, comfort the Afflicted, forgive one another, if need be, Seven times a Day; and fuch like. If to do all this be an Argument of being regenerate, and born of God; if this be a Proof of his Spirit ruling in us, his Nature communicated to us, and his Image stamp'd upon us, how amiable must

must God be when we discern so much Benefit, and so much Pleasure, and so much Beauty, and so much Loveliness in those Qualities which are but faint and imperfest Resemblances of Him! In a Word, the Holiness of his Children and Servants, is a Demonstration of the Holiness of God himfelf; and in this confifts the very Lustre of Divine Glory. Holiness is the Flower of all his Attributes; the most Perfect, because the most Comprehensive of all his Divine Persections; for Holiness includes Wisdom, Power, and Goodness. As to Goodness, the Case is so plain, that Holiness and Goodness are commonly used as Terms equivalent. As to Wisdom, 'tis evident, That no Action is commendable and lovely, whatever the Matter of it be, unless the Principle, the Motive of it be Wife and Rational; therefore Wisdom cannot be separated from the Notion of Holiness. Lastly, As to Power, this must needs be comprised in it too; for Beneficence, which is at least one great Branch of Holiness, must unavoidably imply Power in the Benefactor, and Impotence and Want in the Beneficiary. And this is the Notion wherein Holiness, when ascribed to God in Scripture, is generally taken. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts; Heaven and Earth are full of thy Glory, does express the Greatness and Majesty, as well as the Rectitude and Purity of the Divine Na-

Nature; and to sanctify the Lord God in our Hearts, is, in the Language of the Scripture, not only to love him for his Goodness, but revere and fear him for his Majesty and Greatness. Need I here add, that the Excellencies of the Creature, their Fitness and Subserviency to the great Ends of their Creation, is the Glory of the Creator, just as the Beauty, Strength, and Convenience of the Work, is the Honour of the Architect? If the Sun, Moon, and Stars, the irrational and inanimate Parts of the Creation, shew forth the Glory of God, how much more do spiritual and rational Beings? And Vertue is the Perfection of Reason, and Zeal of Vertue; for this is that which does directly and immediately advance those great Ends that are dearest to God, as I have, I think, abundantly made out.

CHAP. XI.

Of Humility. How necessary it is to Persection.

UR Saviour has so often pronounced the humblest, the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven; he has so often promised the first Place and the greatest Exaltation to the lowest Condescensions: He was Himself so illustrious an Example of Low-liness

liness of Heart, of Poverty of Spirit; and the Apostle has so expresly afferted his Joy and Crown to be the Reward of his Humility, Phil. 2. that I can never think that Man can ever rise to a more eminent Height, than that to which the Imitation of this Vertue of Christ will advance him. The more Perfect therefore Man is, the more Humble must be too: The clearer View, and the more affured Hope he has of Heaven, the more unconcerned must he be for all those Things which the World pays a Respect and Honour to, the more he must de above them: The more fervent his Love of God and his Neighbour grows, the more confidently must be place all his Glory in this one Thing, the Conformity of his Affections and Life to that of the Blessed Jesus. Then is he Perfect, and the same mind is in him that was in Christ Tesus. Finally, The more he knows God, the nearer he is admitted into Communion with him; the more plainly will he discern at how infinite Distance he stands from the Divine Majesty and Purity, and will prostrate himself even into Dust and Ashes before him. The Perfect Man admires, adores, obeys, loves, relies, trufts, and refigns up himself and all that is dear to him to God. He is nothing in his own Eyes; he pretends to nothing, he lays Claim to nothing, or any other Title than that of the Goodness and Bounty of God: Whatever Vertues he has, he ascribes them to the Grace of God; and the Glory and Immortality he expects, he expects only as the Gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And whatever he be in himself, he compares not himself with others, but he proves his own Work, that he may have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Nothing but Zeal for God, or Charity for Man, can put him upon the asserting his own Merit or Service; but when he glories, it is like St. Paul, in his Instrmities, that the power of

Christ may rest upon him.

Need I here insist on the Fruit of Humility? Surely 'tis conspicuous to every one that thinks at all. Great is the Peace and Rest of the humble Soul here; and great will be his Glory hereafter. He who loves not the World nor the Things of it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, enjoys a perpetual Calm and Serenity of Mind. There is no Object that can raise any Storm in him; there is nothing that can breed in him uneasy Defires and Fears. He that loves the Father, is fixed on an immutable and perfect Good; and he that now quits all for God, shall one Day participate of the Fulness of God, and that for ever.

Need I invite and exhort Man to Humility? Need I guard him against spiritual Pride? One would think 'twere altogether useless to attempt it. Is it possible that the Creature should think himself so independent of his Creator, that he should be able to pay him more Service than were due to him? Is it possible that Man should set fuch a rate upon his own Righteousness, as to think it capable of deferving the utmost Rewards that an Infinite God can bestow upon him? Is it possible, in a Word, that Man, poor, frail, finful Man; Man, that can do nothing that is Good, but by the Affistance of Divine Grace; Man, depraved and corrupted in his Nature, and but a very ill Husband of Grace; is it possible, I say, that Man should be proud towards God, towards that Glorious and Incomprehensible Being, who is the Creator and Lord, the Monarch and Patron, the God and Father of Heaven and Earth? But as absurd as this is, universal Experience teaches us, that Humility, true Humility is a hard Lesson; and that very excellent Persons are not out of the Danger of falling into vicious Elations of Mind. In order therefore to promote the one, and fecure us against the other, I will propose these Two or Three Considerati-

Ff . 1. There

1. There never was meer Man yet that

did not fall short of his Duty.

2. Man is the Creature of God, depends upon him, and has received all from him; and therefore let him do the utmost he can, he does no more than his Duty.

3. God stands in no Need of our Service; and 'tis our own, not his Interest we

promote by it.

1. There never was meer Man yet, Ge. For Proof of this, I will not fly to Original Corruption, or Sins of Infirmity. Alas! I need not. The Apostle, Rom. 1. and 2. and 3. Ch. lays the Foundation of Justification by Faith, in the universal Desection and Depravation of Mankind. They are altogether gone out of the way, there is none that doth Good, no not one. And what Sins he there charges the World with, the Catalogue he gives us of them will inform us. But are we no better than they? I answer, The Light of the Gospel, and the preventing Grace of God has undoubt-edly given a great Check to the Progress of Sin in the World: But since no Man can be Justified but through Faith in the Blood of Jesus, 'tis plain that we too must be con-cluded under Sin. And though our Sins may not in the Number or Scandal equal

qual theirs; yet we ought to remember too, that every Sin is the more provoking, the more voluntary it is; and the greater the Grace is which it resists and despises. But what need I compare our Selves with the Jew or Gentile? What need I prove by Argument and Authority, that no Man ever yet liv'd, or will live without Sin? I mean Mortal Sin. Who ever yet look'd back diligently into his past Life, and did not meet with Stains and Deformities enough? When I consider what Legions of Sins are rang'd under those two Banners of the Devil, the Filthings of the Flesh, and of the Spirit; when I call to mind Envy, Discontent, Murmuring, Distrust, Pride, Coverousness, Ambition, Wilfulness, Contention, Frowardness, Passion, Dissimulation, Falshood, Flattery, and a Thousand other Sins; and when I reflect upon the Weaknesses and Propensions of Nature, and the almost innumerable Temptations to which we are exposed, I must confess I am not at all surprised to think, that no Flesh can be Justified in the Sight of God by a Covenant of Works: And when ever I find any upon a Death-Bed, as I do some, acquitting themselves from the Guilt of any deliberate Wickedness, I rather admire their Ignorance and Partiality, than their Innocence. And yet, after all, a good Man is not to examine himfelf only concerning the Evil that he has done, but also concerning the Good which he has omitted. He must enquire, how far he has fallen short of that Poverty of Spirit, and Purity of Heart, which he ought to have come up to: And how far he has been wanting in those Duties which a thorough Zeal would have push'd him on to. And when he has done this, let

him be proud if he can.

2. Man is the Creature of God, depends upon him, and has receiv'd all from Him. And therefore let him do the utmost he can, he does no more than his Duty: And, strictly speaking, cannot merit of him. He that will pretend to Merit, must be his own Master; he must have a right over his own Actions; he must be free to dispose of his Affections and Services as he pleases. For if he be antecedently bound, if he have no Liberty, no Freedom, no Right to dispose of himself, or any Thing he is possessed of, 'tis plain such an one cannot merit. And this is the direct Case between God and Man. God is the great Lord, the great Proprietor of Heaven and Earth. He that gives Alms, does but restore a part of what God lent him: He that takes patiently the Loss of Goods, or Health, or Friends, does but give back what he had no right to retain: He was but Tenant at Will, and had no Right to any

any Thing longer than God thought fit to continue it. And in all other Instances of Duty the Case will be still plainer. If he adore and worship God, there is infinite Reason that he should; for he depends upon him for his Being and Preservation. If he love God never so much, God has deferv'd much more than he can pay him: Not only the Enjoyments of Life, but even Life it self, being derived from him. From this Argument it will follow, that it is impossible for a Creature to merst of its Creator: Angels themselves never could. For might it not be faid with as much Truth concerning them, as concerning Man, Who made thee to differ? Or what hast thou which thou didst not receive? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou boast as if thou hadst not received it? I Cor. 4. 7. And the same may be concluded concerning Adam in Paradile. For I demand, Had he kept the Covenant of God, had he done this by Divine Grace, or by his own Strength? If by the Grace of God, as Divines generally hold, then may we apply the Expression of St. Austin to Adam, as well as to any one now under the Difpensation of the Gospel: That when God rewards the works of Man, he does only crown in him his own Gifts. But suppose he had done this by his own natural Strength: Were not the Endowments of Nature, as much the Ff ? Gifts

Gifts of God, as the Endowments of Grace? the one were Natural, the other Supernatural Gifts: Both Gifts still, though of a different kind. If it be here Objected, If this be fo, how comes St. Paul to affirm, To him that worketh is the reward due, not of Grace but of Debt? Rom. 4, 4. I Answer, First, God seems, when he enters into Covenant with Man, to suspend, or lay aside the na-tufal Right which he has over him as his Creature; and to transact with him as free, and Master of himself: But this is all infinite Condescension, Secondly, It seems tinsuitable to the infinite Goodness of God, to bereave Man of the Life and Happiness he has once conferr'd upon him, unless he forseits it by some Demerit: The gifts and calling of God are without Repentance; nor can I think how Death, which has fo much Evil in it, could have enter'd the World, if Sin had not enter'd it first. In this Sense, unsinning Obedience gives a kind of right to the Continuance of those good Things, which are at first the meer Effects of Divine Grace and Bounty. Laftly, A Covenant of Works being once establish'd, 'tis plain, that as Sin forfeits Life, To Obedience must give a Right to it: And as the Penitent could not be restored, but by an Act of Grace, fo he that commits no Sin, would need no Pardon. But then Life it felf, and an Ability to work Righteousness,

teousness, must be owing to Grace antecedent to the Covenant: And so such an one would have whereof to boast comparatively, with respect to others who sell; but not before God. The sum of all is, Man has nothing to render to God, but what he has received from him: And therefore can offer him nothing but his own: Which is no very good Foundation for Merit. But suppose him absolute Master of himself; suppose him holding all Things independent of God. Can the Service of a few Days merit Immortality and Glory, Angelical Persection, and a Crown? He must be made up of Vanity and Presumption, that dares affirm this.

3. God stands in no need of our Service; and 'tis our own, not his Interest we promote by it. The Foundation of Merit amongst Men is Impotence and Want: The Prince wants the Service and Tribute of the Subject; the Subject the Protection of the Prince: The Rich needs the Ministry and the Labour of the Poor; the Poor Support and Maintenance from the Rich. And it is thus in Imaginary, as well as real Wants. The Luxury and Pleasure of one, must be provided for and supported by the Care and Vigilance of others: And the Pomp and the Pride of one part of the World cannot subsist, but on the Ff4

Servitude of the other. In these Cases therefore, mutual Wants create mutual Rights, and mutual Merit. But this is not the Case between God and Man. God is not subject to any Wants or Necessities: Nor is his Glory or Happiness capable of Diminution or Increase. He is a Monarch, that needs no Tribute to support his Grandour, nor any Strength or Power besides his own, to guard his Throne. If we revolt, or rebel, we cannot injure Him: If we be loyal and obedient, we cannot profit Him. He has all Fulness, all Persection in himself: He is an Almighty and All-sufficient God. But on the quite contrary, though God have no Wants, we have many: And though his Majesty and Felicity be subject to no Vicissitude, we are subject to many. Our Service to God therefore is our own Interest; and our Obedience is design'd to pro-cure our own Advantage: We need, we daily need his Support and Protection; we depend intirely on his Favour and Patronage: In him we live, and move, and have our Being: And from Him, as from an inexhaustible Fountain, we derive all the Streams of Good, by which we are re-freshed and improved. To know, and love him is our Wisdom; to depend upon him, our Happiness and Security; to ferve and worship him, our Persection

and Liberty; to enjoy him will be our Heaven; and those Glimpses of his Prefence, which we are vouchsafed through the Spirit in this Life, are the Pledges and Foretaste of it. This is the constant Voice of Scripture: Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, Jam. 1. 17. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the World is mine, and the Fulness thereof. Will I eat the Flesh of Bulls, or drink the Blood of Goats? Offer unto God Thanksgiving, and pay thy Vows unto the most high: and call upon me in the Day of Trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me, Psal. 50. 12, 13, &c. If thou be Righteous, what givest thou unto him? Thy Wickedness may hurt a Man, as thou art, and thy Righteousness may profit the Son of Man, Job 35. 7, 8.



SECT. III.

Of the Impediments of Perfection. Five Impediments reckon'd up, and insisted on. 19 Too loose a Notion of Religion. 2. An Opinion that Perfection is not attainable.

3. That Religion is an Enemy to Pleasure.

4. The Love of the World. 5. The Insirmity of the Flesh. The whole concluded with a Prayer.

Hough I have been all along carrying on the Design of this Section, that is, the Removing the Obstacles of Perfection; yet I easily foresaw there might be some which would not be reduc'd within the Compass of the foregoing Heads: For these therefore I reserv'd this Place, These are Five.

fuch a Notion of Religion, as if Moderation here, were as necessary as any where else. They look upon Zeal as an Excess of Righteousness; and can be well enough content to want Degrees of Glory, if they can but save their Souls. To which End they can see no Necessity of Perfection. Now I would be seech such seriously to lay to Heart, that Salvation and Damnation are Things of no common Importance: And there-

therefore it highly concerns them not to be mistaken in the Notion they form to themselves of Religion. For the Nature of Things will not be altered by their Fancies; nor will God be mocked or imposed on. If we will deal fincerely with our felves, as in this Case it certainly behoves us to do, we must frame our Idea of Religion, not from the Opinions, the Manhigion, not from the Opinions, the Manners or the Fashions of the World; but from the Scriptures. And we must not interpret these by our own Inclinations; but we must judge of the Duties they prescribe, by those Descriptions of them, by those Properties and Effects, which we find there. We must weigh the Design and End of Religion; which is to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of Man, and to raise us above the World, and the Body: And see how our Platform, or Model of Religion. Suits with form, or Model of Religion, fuits with it. And if after we have done this, we are not fully satisfied in the true Bounds and Limits which part Vice and Vertue, it cannot but be safest for us to err on the Right Hand. We ought always to remember too, That the repeated Exhortations in Scripture to Diligence, and that the most earnest and indefatigable ones, to Vigilance, to Fear and Trembling, to Patience, to Stedfastness, and such like, are utterly inconsistent with an easy, lazy, gentile Religion.

Religion. That the Life of Jesus is the fairest and fullest Comment on his Doctrine: And, That we never are to follow the Examples of a corrupt World, but of the best Men, and the best Ages. This, this one Thing alone, will convince us, what Endeavours, what Virtues are necessary to gain an incorruptible Crown. See with what Eagerness the Disciples of Jesus pressed towards the Mark! See with what Courage, nay Joy too, they took up their Cross and followed Him! How generous were their Alms! So that the Riches of their Liberality were conspicuous in the very Depth of their Poverty. What Plainness and Singleness of Heart; what Grace and Warmth, what Peace and Joy shew'd it self in their Conversation! what Modesty, what Humility in their Garb, Deportment, and the whole Train of Life! How frequent, how fervent, and how long too, were their Prayers and Retirements! In one word, The Spirit and Genius of a Disciple of Christ discover'd it self in all they said and did: And the Vertues of their Lives did as evidently distinguish a Christian from a Jew, or Pagan, as their Faith. How lovely was Religion then! how full its Joy, how strong its Confidence! Then did Christians truly overcome the World: Then did they live above the Body: Then was the Cross of Christ more delightful, than the Ease,

or Honour, the Pride, or Pleasure, of a sinful Life: Then did they truly, through the Spirit, wait for the Hope of Righte-ousness by Faith. Let us now compare our Lives with theirs, and then sit down content with poor and beggarly Attainments if we can. Let us put our Vertues in the Scales against theirs; and, if we have any Modesty, the Inequality will put us out of Countenance: We shall blush at our Vanity; and shall not have the Considence to expect the same Crown, the same Kingdom with them. But as too lax a Notion of Religion is apt to beget too much Indisference and Unconcernment; so will it be said, too exalted an one is apt to beget Despair: Which is a Second and no less Obstacle of Perfection.

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§. 2. Many there are, who forming their Judgment upon the Slips and Desects of Good Men, and the Corruption of Human Nature, conceive Perfection to be a meer imaginary Notion. They believe indeed, that, considering how apt Man is to fall short of his Duty, 'tis very sit that the Rule prescrib'd him should be exact; and that he should be frequently pressed, and exhorted to Perfection: But that the Thing it self is too difficult for Mortal Man to attain in this Life. But to this Objection I must oppose these sew Things which I believe will be sufficient to remove it.

1. The Beginning of Virtue is the most difficult part of it: The nearer we approach to Perfection, the easier, as well as pleasanter, is Religion. And therefore, whoever startles at the Difficulties, which lie in the way to an exalted Virtue, has as much reason to be startled at those which will encounter him in his first Entrance upon Religion: And yet these must be conquered. 2. The avoiding the Difficulties of Religion, does but plunge us into worse. We are necessarily under this Dilemma: If we will attain the Peace and Tranquillity of the Mind, we must mortify and reduce the Appetites of the Body: If, on the other hand, we propose to gratify the Appetites of the Body, and enjoy the Pleasure of Sin, we cannot do so without offering much Violence to the Mind. And if this be fo; if such be the War and Opposition between the Soul and the Body, that there is no way to a true and well-settled Peace and Pleasure, but by the Reduction and Mortification of the one or the other; then it will be easy to resolve what we are to do. For those Appeals which Atheists themselves make to Reason, proclaim the Soul of Man to be the Ruling and Nobler Part of him. Besides, the Soul is the more vital, the more tender and sensible part of us: And consequently, the Affliction of this, must render us

far more miserable, than any Hardships or Difficulties Virtue can impose upon the Body. 3. Whatever be the Difficulties of Virtue, they will soon vanish if we often call to mind, That Peace and Joy are the Fruit of Virtue; but Shame and Remorse of Sin: That no Man ever yet repented of his refifting and conquering his Lusts; but no Man ever yet did not repent of following them; unless he died as much a Brute as he lived: That Heaven is a cheap Purchase, whatever it costs us; but the Pleafure of Sin a very dear one, how easily foever we come by it: And finally, That we are not our own Masters: There is a God to whom we stand accountable for our Actions: And consequently whether we will, or will not, we must either undergo the Hardship and Discipline of Virtue, or the Eternal Plagues and Punishments of Sin. Lastly, The Truth is, this Opinion of the Impossibility of Rerfestion, has both been begot and cherished by those wild Schemes of it, which have been drawn by the Hands of a flaming, indeed, but an indiscreet Zeal. But I have here recommended to the World, no fantallick, or Enthusiastick Perfection. I have advanced no Heights of Virtue, but what many do, I hope, at this Day actually feel and experiment in themselves: None, I am fure, but what the Followers of the Bleffed

Blessed Jesus actually attain'd and practis'd. Be ye followers of us, said the Apostle, as we are of Christ. Their Lives were as bright a Rule as their Doctrine: And by their own Actions they demonstrated the Power of the Faith they taught. They did not like the Scribes and Pharisees, bind heavy Burdens upon others, and not move them with their Finger; they did not, like Plato and Aristotle, magnify Temperance and Modesty at the Tabernacles and Carnavals of Princes; nor commend the Pleasure of Wisdom in the Gardens of Epicurus: But they lived as they taught, unspotted by the Pleasures, unbroken by the Troubles of the World; modest, serene, equal, and Heavenly minded, in Honour or Dishonour, Want or Abundance, Liberty or Prison, Life or Death. Let us then no longer Object or Dispute, but with Faith and Patience be Followers of those who have inherited the Promises: Being encompassed with a Cloud of Witnesses, let us lay aside every Weight, and the Sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith; who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the right Hand of the Throne of God. For consider him that endured such Contradistion of Sinners against himself; lest ye

be wearied and faint in your Mind, Heb. 12: 1, 2. I have done with those who endeayour to soften or shun the Difficulties of Religion, not to conquer them.

§. 3. There are others who will look upon this fetting up the Doctrine of Perfection, as a Design against the Pleasures of Mankind. What, says such a one; shall I let go my present Pleasures out of my Hands, to hunt after I know not what, and I know not where? Shall I quit Pleafures that are every where obvious, for fuch as have no Being, it may be, but in Speculation? Or at least, are never to be enjoyed by any, but some few rare and happy Creatures, the Favourites of God and Nature? Pleasures that have Matter and Substance in them, for such as I can no more grasp and relish than I can Dreams and Visions? But to this I answer, This pretty Talk is all but stupid Ignorance and gross Mistakes. For, 1. As to innocent and virtuous Pleasure, no Man needs part with it. I endeavour not to deprive Man of this; but to refine and purify it. And he that prefers either filly, or vicious Pleafure before Religion, is wretchedly mistaken. For, 2. Perfett Religion is full of Pleasure. Had we but once arrived at true Purity of Heart, what could be fo full of Pleasure as the Business of Religion? Gg

What can be more delightful than bleffing and praising God to a grateful Soul; Allelujahs, to a Soul fnatched from the Brink of Destruction, into the Bosom of its Master? What can be more transporting than the melting Tendernesses of a holy Contrition, made up, like Mary Magdalen's, of Tears and Kisses, Sorrow and Love, Humility and Glory, Confusion and Confidence, Shame and Joy? What can be more transporting than Love, the Love of a Christian, when he is all Love, as God is Love; when he desires nothing in Heaven nor on Earth, but God; when all things are dung and dross to him in Comparison of Jesus? 4. If the Pleasures of the World be more transporting than those of Religion, 'tis because our Faith is weak, our Love imperfect, and our Life unsteady. A constant and exalted *Pleasure* is, I grant it, the Fruit of *Perfection* alone. The *Peace and Joy* of the Holy Ghost reigns no where, but where that Zeal and Love, which is an Effect of the Fulness of the Spirit, reigns too. I had once proposed to have insisted on the Reasons of this here; but this La-bour is prevented, for they are very obvious to any one who hath read the Chapter of Zeal with Seriousness and Attention. Laftly, What is infinuated in the Objection, That the Pleasures of the World are more numerous, or obvious, than those of Religion.

ligion, is altogether a false and groundless Fancy. In every Place, and in every State, do the Pleasures of Vertue wait upon the Perfett Man. They depend not, like those of the Body, on a thousand Things that are not in our Power, but only on God, and our own Integrity. But this Part of the Objection I have, I think, for ever baffled, Sect. 1 Chap. 4. These Obstacles of Persection being thus removed, and the Mind of Man being fully convinced of the Happiness that results from a State of Perfection, and of his Obligation to furmount the Difficulties which obstruct his way to it, there seems to be nothing now left to disappoint the Success of this Discourse, but somewhat too much Fondness' for the World, or somewhat too much Indulgence to the Body; which I am next, though but very briefly, to confider.

§. 4. There is a Love of the World, which though it be not, either for the Matter, or Degree of it, Criminal enough to destroy our Sincerity, and our Hopes of Salvation; yet is it strong enough to abate our Vigour, hinder our Perfection, and bereave us of many Degrees of Pleasure at present, and Glory hereafter. The Indications of this kind of Love of the World, are too much Concern for the Pomp and Shew of Life; too much Exactness in the Gg 2 Modes

Modes and Customs of it; too quick a Sense of Honour and Reputation, Pre-eminence and Praise; too much Haste, and too much Industry to grow rich, to add House to House, Land to Land, and to load our selves with thick and heavy Clay; too brisk a Relish of the Pleasures of the World: too great a Gaiety of Mind upon the Successes; too much Dejection upon the Disafters and Disappointments of it; too much Care, and too much Diligence; an encumbering and embroiling one's felf too far in worldly Affairs; too much Diversion, too much Ease. These, I say, are the Symptoms of a Mind tainted with a Love of the World, though not so far as to Sickness and Death. However, it will be enough to check the Vigour, and dilute the Relish of the Mind. Now the only Way to overcome this Defect, and to captivate the Mind entirely to the Love and Service of Religion and Vertue, is to consider frequently and seriously the Rewards of Perfection, the Pleafure that will attend it in another Life. Had the Young Man in the Gospel done this; had he had as lively a Notion, and as true an Estimate of the Riches of Eternity, as he had of Temporal ones, he would never have gone away forrowful, when he was advised to have exchanged the Treasures of Earth for those of Heaven. Had the Soul of Martha been as much taken up with the Thoughts

Thoughts of Eternity, as that of Mary, she would have made the same Choice as (he did. They who often think, how foon the Fashion, the Pomp and Grandour of this World passes away, and how much better their Heavenly Country is than their Earthly; how much more lasting, and how much more glorious the New Jerusalem, that City that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God, than this City of ours, which may be overthrown in a Moment; will neither weep, nor rejoyce, with too much Passion; neither buy, nor possess with too much Application of Mind. In one Word, he that so often and devoutly thinks of that Day, wherein Christ, who is our life, shall appear, and we also appear with him in glory, that he comes to love and long for it; fuch an one will have no great Taste of the Honours, or the Pleasures, or the Interests of Life; nor will he be slothful or remiss, but fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord: Whatever Degrees of Affection he had for any thing of that Nature, they will all vanish; he will have no Emulation, but for good Works; no Ambition, but for Glory; I mean, that which is Eternal. In the Pursuit of this will he lay out the Strength and Vigour of his Mind, for this he will retrench his Profit, for this he will deny his Pleasure, for this he will be content to be Obscure, Mean, and Laborious; for

for if the World be once crucified to him, he will the more easily bear the being crucified to it.

§. 5. After all, there is an Infirmity in the Flesh, against which if we do not guard our selves, if we do not struggle heartily, we shall miscarry. The Spirit is willing, said our Saviour, but the Flesh is weak. Without much Care, and much Watchfulness, the Vigour of our Minds will be relaxed; the Exultation of our Spirits will flag and droop; and we shall soon lose the Relish there is in Religion. The more effectual Remedies against this Frailty and Fickleness of our Nature, are Two. First, Godly Fear; and this, the Purity and Presence of God, the Strictness and the Impartiality of a Judgment to come, the Loss of an Eternal Crown, the Terrors of Eternal Punishment, the Number and Strength of Temptations, the deplorable Falls of the greatest Saints, and the Conscience of our own Weakness, will not fail to work in us. Let us then, not only begin, but also perfect Holiness in the fear of God. Bleffed is he that feareth always. Secondly, The Stedfastness of Hope; of Hope that waits and longs for the Coming of our Lord. This will invite us often to take a View of Canaan; this will fill the Mind often with the Beauties and the Glories of Eternity; this will often call to our Thoughts,

Thoughts, the Security, the Rest, the Transports of another World, the Love of God and of Jesus, incorruptible Crowns, the Hallelujahs of Angels, the Shouts of Victory, the Fruit of the Tree of Life, the Streams that water the Paradise of God. And every fuch Object will chide us out of our Weakness and Cowardise; every such Thought will upbraid us out of our Laziness and Negligence; we shall hear always founding in our Ears the Words of Jesus to his Disciples, What! can ye not watch with me one hour, and yet do you expect to reign with me for ever? Or those to the Church of Laodicea, To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me upon my Throne; as I have overcome, and am sate down with my Father on his Throne.

And now, Reader, if you find I have done you any Service, if you think your felf under any Obligation to me, the Return I beg from you is, that you will first offer Praise and Thanks unto God; and next, whenever you are in the Vigour of the Spirit, and the Ardors of Faith and Love, before God in Prayer, put up these, or the like Petitions for me, which I now offer up for my self.

O My God, and my Father, increase the Knowledge of thy Word, and the Grace of thy Spirit in me. Enable me to perfect Holiness in thy Fear, and to hold fast the Stedfast-ness of my Hope unto the End. Pardon all the Sins and Errors of my Life; and accept of my imperfect Services through Jesus Christ. And because, though, after all we can do, we are unprofitable Servants, thy Infinite Bounty will yet certainly recompence our sincere Endeavours to promote thy Glory; let me find my Reward from thee; or rather do thou thy self vouchsafe to be my Reward. I should have ever thought my self unworthy to have put up this Petition to thee, O thou glorious and incomprehensible Majesty, had not thine own Goodness, thine own Spirit kindled this Ambition in me. Behold! what manner of Love is this, that we should be salled the Sons of GOD! these are the Words of thy Servant St. John: And now therefore my Soul can never be at rest, till I awake at the last Day after thy Likeness; I can never be Satisfied till I behold thy Glory: Which vouchsafe me, I beseech thee, by thy Mercy and thy Faithfulness; by the Sufferings and Interces sion of thy Dearly Beloved Son.







