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Godw. Pamph.  
1086.

Godwin pamphlets 1086.

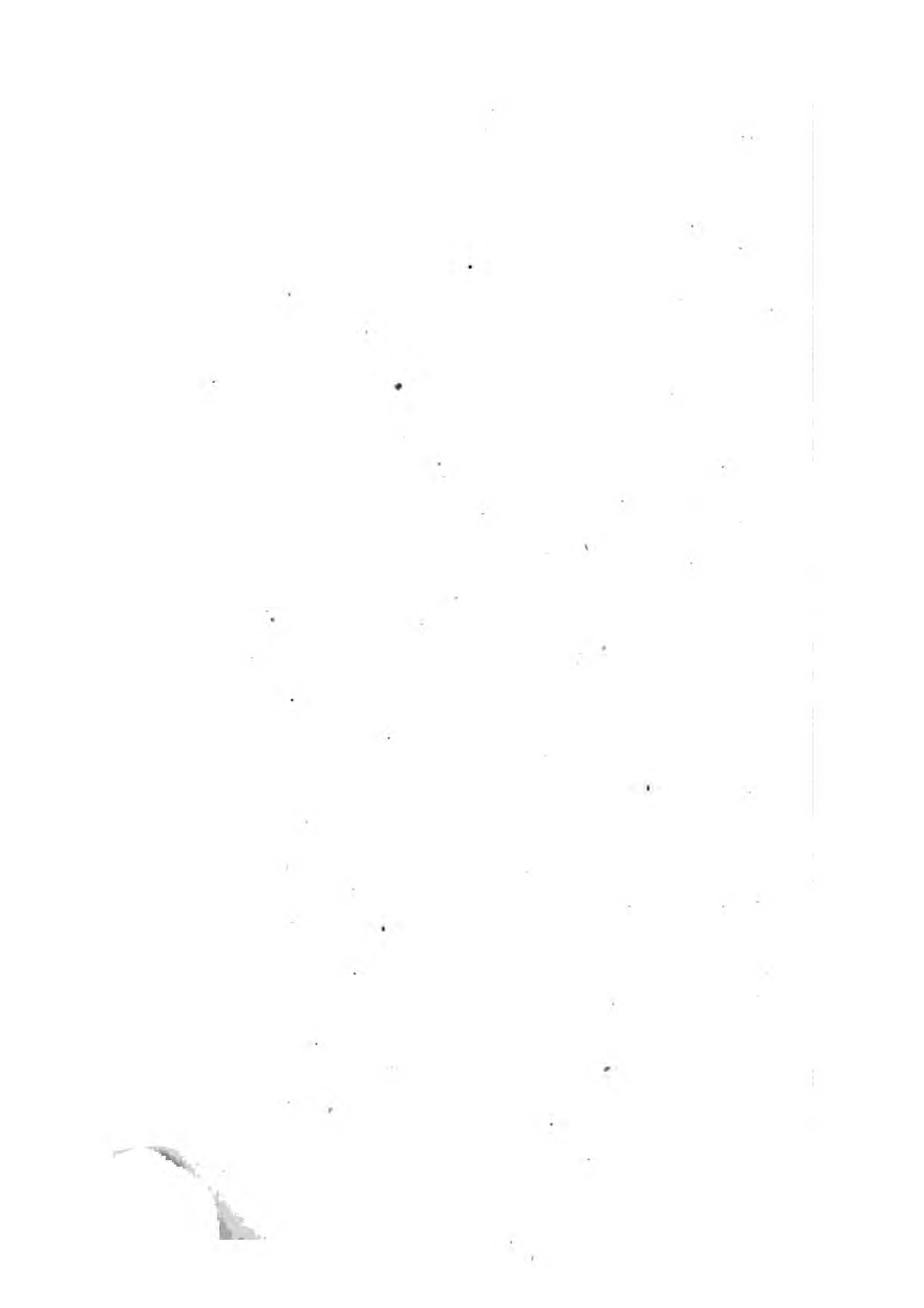
- 1 Harwood (E), Cheerful thoughts. 1765.
- 2 Philalethes, Attempt of a layman. 1767.
- 3 Rutherford (T), Defence of a charge. "
- 4 Letter from a minister. "
- 5 Letter to Harburta. "  
Animadversions on Harwood's Letter.
- 6 Wilson (S), Scripture manual. 1769.
- 7 Whitson (S), Pious meditation. "
- 8 Letter to Adams. 1770.
- 9 Letter to protestant-dissenters. "
- 10 Letter to Adams. 2nd. ed. "

J. R. G. B.  
Q2.V.78



1

1



# Chearful Thoughts

ON THE  
HAPPINESS

OF A  
RELIGIOUS LIFE.

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By E. HARWOOD.

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Nam cum animus, cognitis perceptisque virtutibus, a corporis obsequio indulgentiaque discesserit, voluptatemque, sicut labem aliquam decoris, oppresserit, omnemque mortis dolorisque timorem effugerit, societatemque caritatis cœierit cum suis, omnesque naturâ conjunctos, suos duxerit, cultumque Deorum et puram Religionem susceperit, et exacerit illam, ut oculorum, sic ingenii aciem, ad bona eligenda et rejicienda contraria, quid eo dici aut cogitari poterit beatius!

CICERO *de Legibus*, p. 69, 70. edit. Davis, 1727.

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MDCCLXV.





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TO THE  
YOUNG PERSONS  
OF THE  
SOCIETY of Protestant Dissenters in  
*Tucker Street, Bristol.*

**T**HIS Mantal I present to you,  
the fruit of the little leisure  
I could redeem from my  
stated ministerial offices. Solely to serve  
your best interests it was composed,  
during the happy intervals of a threat-  
ening indisposition, with which for many  
years I have been afflicted. If God  
should see fit to dismiss me from my  
pastoral services among you, I beg  
this little treatise may be ever regarded  
as a monument of the sincerest love it  
was in my power to express for you.

The happiness of a religious life was ever my favourite and darling theme. The consolations of Religion have been my own support and comfort in all the trials, sorrows, and sufferings with which I have conflicted. A good heart, and a good conscience, will enable us to pass through life with great satisfaction. Religion is that heavenly science that will teach you and me to live happily and die comfortably. Religion is the parent of joy, an unabating source of the divinest mental happiness in every scene and circumstance of this vain and fugitive life. There is not an happier being on the globe, I speak experimentally, than a sincere Christian. Communion with God, by a devout heart and holy affections, yields the noblest pleasures that can be tasted on this side heaven. Indeed the felicity a religious life inspires is the *beginning* of  
our

our heaven. Hath any one such pretensions to joy and chearfulness, as he who has a vital practical persuasion of the truth of the Gospel, who makes conscience of sincerely living up to the dignity of the Christian character, and animates his spirit by warm anticipations of that immortality it promiseth! When I am recommending a religious life to you as the happiest path you can pursue, I am asserting nothing but what all the wise and good, that ever lived, have unanimously approved, as man's supreme good and sole felicity. You have signalized yourselves as the friends of rational Religion and Christian Liberty; but for God's sake, and for your own sake, be *more* solicitous to distinguish yourselves for an inviolable attachment to the sacred interests of *personal* holiness. May the Almighty guide your feet into the delectable  
paths

paths of his commandments! May God direct you to such friendships and connections in life, as shall, through his blessing, be productive of your virtue and happiness! May Heaven preserve you from the fatal snares of the harlot, from the blandishments of forbidden pleasure, from the seductions of bad company, and from that voluptuousness, that dissoluteness, that debauchery and profligacy, which you have seen, in so many deplorable instances, have rendered this frail momentary life, a scene of horror and wretchedness unutterable. If you would not be so miserable for ten thousand worlds, as you have *known* and *seen* some abandoned persons have made themselves, you must not pursue the courses *they* did. Frustrate not the expectations of your fond parents and affectionate friends. They hope every thing from your sobriety  
and

and virtue. Bring not your parents' grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Deprive them not of consolation at a time of life when most they need consolation. The friendship and respect you have ever shown me call forth my grateful acknowledgments, but permit me to say, that the *greatest* respect you can shew me, is a good life. My comfort and happiness as your pastor, are dependent on your virtuous, amiable conduct. Deny me not this satisfaction. Your conscientious uniform compliance with the great duties of practical Religion will not *only* be my *joy and crown of rejoicing*, but prove an indefectible fountain of pure and permanent happiness to *yourselves* in every stage of this life's short pilgrimage. Need I use any other argument to induce you to embrace a religious life, than what inspiration addresses to us all, That

RELIGION

[ viii ]

RELIGION HAS THE PROMISE OF THIS LIFE, AND OF THE LIFE WHICH IS TO COME. Deliberately resolve then to make this wise choice, from which you will assuredly derive the most pure, elegant, sacred, substantial happiness, both through the transitory moments of this world, and through the revolving ages of a blessed and boundless immortality! I am, with the sincerest regard for your temporal and eternal felicity,

Your affectionate pastor,

And most obliged friend

And servant,

*Bristol,*  
*July 23, 1765.*

E. HARWOOD.

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CHEARFUL THOUGHTS  
ON THE  
HAPPINESS  
OF A  
RELIGIOUS LIFE.

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CHAP. I.

**A** WICKEDER calumny was never fixed upon Religion, than that of its being a gloomy, morose, and melancholy thing. The father of lies never invented and propagated a greater falsehood, than that Religion is a stranger to chearfulness; and that he, who once entertains this mournful guest, must, from that moment, bid an everlasting adieu to all the joys of human life. Strange!

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that

that *That*, which our merciful Creator designed should be the law and felicity of our beings, whose signatures he hath, in our original formation, so deeply and indelibly impressed on the tablet of the human heart, whose rules his wisdom and goodness intended should constitute the measure and standard of our actions; that *That* which all our moral and intellectual powers approve as the sole genuine fountain of happiness, should ever be represented as something far from being amiable and delectable in its nature, whatever it may be in its consequences, and necessarily productive of melancholy dejection, and a certain rough, stern, rigid, forbidding austerity. Strange! that ever men should believe, and teach others to believe, that Religion, which God designed should be the noblest source of the noblest joy, consists in a certain fallen mortification, in a rigorous maceration of the body and spirit, in a devoted monkish abstraction  
from



from the world, and in a chearless, affected abnegation of every thing that hath the least tendency to promote alacrity and joy. What principles could induce men thus to frustrate the intentions of their benevolent Creator, thus to pervert the very end and primary design of their formation! What malice of infernal dæmons, or malignity of mortals with minds as dark and gloomy as theirs, first shed this baneful poison into the divine fountain, and infected that sacred spring, which God designed should ever send forth the most pure, lucid, and salutary streams! — But it is no unusual thing with men to oppose their Creator's will, to counteract his merciful purpose by the most *unnatural* perversion, and to make those very things, which our great and good Parent intended to be the unabating sources of chearfulness and joy, the fertile causes of gloomy dejection, and every thing inauspicious to human felicity. I know not what melancholy plea-

sure it is some Divines cherish, in continually exhibiting Religion in a form, in which God, and Jesus, and Nature, never intended it should be exhibited before men. Sketching this celestial Inhabitant in a fordid rueful garb, in a melancholy desponding attitude, with a countenance pale and haggard, with tresses wild and dishevelled, her eyes incessantly raining torrents of briny tears, her pensive bosom heaving with profound sighs and dismal groans, and her whole mien, and air, and form, charged with every thing that can excite horror, disgust, and aversion. I am sure such exhibitions, as *these*, of Religion, which entranced devotees and visionaries, in all ages, have been always so fond of pourtraying, have done inconceivable mischief to the minds and morals of young persons. If I would effectually deter a young person from a religious life, I would hold up to him a mirror, in which he should see religion exhibited in the form and features, in which  
she

It is but too commonly painted. Religion is described to youth, as incompatible with all pleasure how innocent soever; as laying a cruel embargo upon all amusements, recreations, diversions, how harmless and inoffensive soever; as totally inconsistent with all juvenile delights; as frowning with a menacing dismal aspect upon the world, and all its joys.—What is the consequence?—Why, the most pernicious destructive consequence ensues that can ever happen to an immortal being. Such a description of Religion creates in young minds an aversion to it—an insuperable aversion to admit to their bosoms so fullen and so mournful a companion. No wonder that youth, at a season of life, when the heart is susceptible of such strong and such tender sensibilities, when all the warm emotions and affections of the soul disclose in all their native energy and force, and human life appears to them one vast various scene, replete with so many fond attractions, fur-

nished with such a large and most magnificent apparatus of happiness, no wonder, in *such* a season, with *such* sensibilities, when friendly Nature, and the God of Nature, offer their bounties with such a liberal and indulgent hand, that any deformed, melancholy, malignant intruder, that would sternly interdict the innocent fruition of these enjoyments, repulse the hand that held them forth, seclude every form of festivity and joy, and instantly wrap the sprightly scene in the horrors of gloomy darkness—no wonder, such a morose ungracious intruder should be rejected with contempt, and treated with the last aversion. Thousands and millions of immortal souls, I am afraid, have been ruined and lost for ever, merely through this one most false and fatal notion they have imbibed, that Religion is a *gloomy* thing, an irreconcilable foe to pleasure, essentially repugnant to the gaiety of youth—consequently, it is repulsed with horror, deferred to some future

ture season more favourable to *melancholy*, and fitter to entertain so morose and mortified an associate. How is Religion injured, when it is viewed through a false medium, and its divine person, its engaging form, and all its attractive grace, elegance, and sweetness, are, by the illusion of systematic glasses, made to appear coarse, rude, inelegant, and distorted, and exhibited to the contemplating eye in all that deformity and horror, with which such elaborate improvements in the profound science of gloomy Divinity can so artfully disguise it! How is Religion misrepresented and traduced, when men are taught to form unhappy ideas of it, as something unnatural, as something repugnant to the laws of their being, as something destructive to the *true* enjoyment of life, and a violence offered to all the native dispositions, propensities, and affections of the human heart! Religion is the parent of joy. Religion is the sole parent of the most pure, rational,

facred, heart-enobling joy. It is the grand, primary, fundamental law of our natures: our being's great end and aim: our being's supreme felicity and perfection: the sole good and unrivalled happiness of mortals. Religion connects us to God, allies us to happy angels and blessed spirits in the realms of immortality, and constitutes the sole dignity and proper glory of our natures.

## C H A P. II.

**I**NTENDING to represent Religion as most lovely and amiable in its nature, as introducing us into a path the most pleasant and delectable into which our feet can be directed, and as productive of peace, tranquillity, joy, and the noblest mental satisfaction, suffer me to observe, That Religion is congenial to the human mind, and to all our intellectual and moral powers. The least reflection will convince us, that we did not  
form

form ourselves, any more than a magnificent palace was formed by chance, any more than the sun, moon, and stars were fixed in their respective orbits by fate, or the regular and beautiful system of the world combined by the fortuitous jumble of atoms. We cannot think of our formation, the amazing structure of our bodies, and the more amazing fabric of our minds, without the idea of the supreme First Cause and Universal Parent necessarily obtruding itself upon our reflections. Whenever we seriously contemplate our frame, we naturally look to GOD, from whom our existence, and all the happiness of our existence is originally and ultimately derived. *Abba, Father!* is the natural dictate of the human heart—is the natural invocation and address, which an intelligent creature prefers to its wise and good Creator. Our dependence is suggested by every thing in us and around us. It is the constant unremitting energy of *the Deity*, that maintains our animal powers  
in

in their regular functions, and our intellectual faculties in their continual operations. In the Deity we live, move, and enjoy natural and moral existence. His influence conserves those powers in their uniform exercise which he originally imparted; his benevolent agency perpetuates to us the fruition of our understanding, reason, and affections; and there is no enjoyment, natural or moral, with which we are blessed, of which he is not the primary and most merciful Donor. All the streams of all our felicity flow from him as their original Fountain\*. All our

\* The following passage of *Boetius* is truly sublime and devotional.

O qui perpetuâ mundum ratione gubernas,  
 Terrarum cœlique Sator! Qui tempus ab ævo  
 Ire jubes; stabilisque manens das cuncta moveri,  
 Da, Pater, augustam menti conscendere sedem,  
 Da fontem lustrare boni, da luce repertâ  
 In te conspicuos animæ desigere visus.  
 Disjice terrenæ nebulas et pondera molis,  
 Atque tuo splendore mica. Tu namque serenum  
 Tu requies tranquilla piis, te cernere, finis,  
 Principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus, idem.

*Boeth. Lib. iii, Met. 9.*

perfo-



personal, domestic, and social happiness, all our improvements in knowledge and in holiness, are justly and thankfully to be ascribed to him, who furnished us with perceptions for tasting the *one*, and with powers for attaining the *other*.—In this view how reasonable a service doth Religion appear ! How *natural* an expression is it of our gratitude for such immense obligations bestowed ! How essential, how ingenuous a return is it to the greatest and best of Beings, who endowed us with such capacities, enabled us to relish such exalted enjoyments, adorned our natures with such an apparatus of elegant sensibilities, inspired us with such dignity and elevation of mind, and most munificently poured around us such a liberal profusion and most immense variety of happiness ! How infinitely are we indebted to our most merciful Creator for furnishing us with such perceptions, for lavishing upon us such a multiplicity of intellectual blessings, and making  
us

us capable of enjoying such sublime, refined, and exalted pleasures, as result from the contemplation of himself, from the exercise of our best affections, from a devout conscious sense of our dependence on so good a Being, and from a survey of that astonishing wisdom, contrivance, and goodness, which universal Nature, in all its parts, exhibits before us! The assiduous culture of such exalted faculties, and worthy dispositions as these, is the most delightful exercise; an employment of them, which Nature generously dictates, which the heart suggests, as the incumbent duty of dependent beings, and which all our powers approve as the sole worthy return of beneficiaries for benefactions so immense.

The Being, who implanted in the human heart this illustrious train of intellectual abilities, perceptions, and dispositions, gave, at the same time, a tendency to these affections.—But to what do these moral endowments and dispositions naturally tend?—They *naturally*

*turally* tend to God. They all ultimately concenter in him, from whom they were derived. They acknowledge their Parent, in all their generous efforts they indicate, they fix the contemplating mind upon him, aspire after him, acquiesce in him, as the sole object that can, from the infinite plenitude of his benignity, satisfy their enlarged and boundless desires. The heart and all its powers approve his service, as perfect liberty, and perfect happiness, feel a kindred, a congenial satisfaction in the delightful exercise of devout and grateful affections towards him, feel a sacred and holy transport in the religious and virtuous cultivation of such principles and dispositions as are pleasing to him, and taste the most exquisite pleasure, that can be tasted in this world, in maintaining a communion and intercourse with the great *Father* of their immortal *spirits*. What is Religion, but an assimilation to the blessed God, in his purity, holiness, rectitude, and  
moral

moral perfection. A study, a virtuous ambition, to be as like the God we serve as possible in the temper and disposition of our minds, constitutes the very essence of religion. And O what a pleasing and delectable exercise is this ! To be employed in the imitation of God, exercising, like him, the dispositions and affections he hath given us in the diffusion of happiness, and making those principles, which are the foundation of *his* immutable and consummate happiness, the basis on which we are determined to erect all *our* happiness ! How naturally does the human heart prompt such truths and practical principles as these ! And what exalted felicity results from carrying these into execution ! They really reward themselves in their performance. By our cherishing such dispositions the intention of nature, and of the Author of nature, is answered, and the applause of our faithful consciences tells us it is answered.— Our *understanding* gives its suffrage to Religion,

gion, as the great law of our Creator, and the supreme happiness of our natures. It represents such a service as infinitely natural and infinitely reasonable, as the just dictate of dependence, the equitable tribute of gratitude, and an indispensable obligation upon frail and indigent creatures for the various blessings of their all-sufficient Benefactor. Our *will, judgment, moral taste, and discernment*, unite in giving their sanction to Religion, as what solely constitutes the moral union and harmony of all the mental powers; *they* recommend it, choose it, and conjoin in approving it, as the source of the most substantial and permanent happiness, and as perfective of the true dignity and glory of our rational and immortal natures. Our *conscience* seals and stamps with its solemn sanction the intrinsic worth and native excellence of Religion, strongly, painfully remonstrating against every wilful violation of its laws, and applauding every virtuous compliance

pliance with its great injunctions. So that you see all our intellectual and moral powers *harmoniously* concur in giving their attestation to the unrivalled amiableness and importance of Religion, in representing it as the noblest attainment, the most *natural*, and consequently the *best* exercise of our rational faculties, as the primary cardinal law impressed upon us in our formation, as the first and ultimate design of our Creator, as the consummate felicity of our natures, as the best moral *copy* of the great divine *Original*, as the fairest imitation of the Deity, the great first Standard and supreme Exemplar of all moral beauty and perfection.

### C H A P. III.

**R**ELIGION is a most amiable and delightful exercise, as it leads to pleasing acts of love, gratitude, and confidence in the blessed God. It must supply the most grate-

grateful soothing reflections to an intelligent being to consider itself perpetually under the cognizance of a Creator the most merciful, of an Almighty Governor, who sways the most benevolent sceptre, of a Parent, who presides over the whole collective Family in heaven and earth with the most affectionate and indulgent tenderness, promoting the best interests of the creatures he hath formed and superintends, and conducting them to happiness, through ways and means frequently inscrutable to us. What animating consolation doth it inspire, to reflect; that we have irresistible power to protect us, infinite wisdom to illuminate and direct us, eternal justice and rectitude to befriend us, boundless mercy to compassionate us, and the most transcendent goodness to supply all our returning wants ! What conscious satisfactions, what cheering invigorating comforts result from these meditations ! How pleasing is gratitude in its exercise towards such a Benefactor !

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factor !

factor! With what cordial warmth and generous ardour do we pay such a good Being the tribute of our acknowledgments! How delightful is it to recognize our dependence on such a Being, to review and enumerate our obligations to him, and to affect our hearts with a fervent glowing sense of the numberless mercies his liberal hand hath showered upon us! How ravishing, how transporting is the exercise of love to such a Parent, and such a Friend! How infinitely amiable does such a Being appear to us, when viewed through the medium of his diffusive universal goodness! How do such transcendent excellencies, as unite in the Deity, engage our esteem, excite our admiration, attract our love! How infinitely amiable and lovely such a character! Every thing in us, and around us, conspires to endear it to us. How many ideas does that short sentence of St. John comprize! *God is Love!* How pleasing the thought, to be under the guardian



guardianship of infinite Love and infinite Goodness! What peace, and joy, and comfort ineffable doth it infuse into the mind, to revolve these great truths, to bring them home to the bosom, to range over them in idea, and to give free and liberal scope to the heart in devoutly contemplating them!

“ I am the care of God! All my interests  
“ for time and eternity are safe in the hands  
“ of my faithful Creator! I am the object  
“ of his complacential love! If virtuous,  
“ he will never desert me; I have every  
“ thing to hope from such an indulgent  
“ Parent and benevolent Friend! He is  
“ the spectator of my actions, but ever  
“ disposed to pity my infirmities, and to  
“ make all gracious allowances for my errors  
“ and imperfections! Nothing can invade my  
“ peace, poison the streams of my happi-  
“ nefs, and injure my temporal and everlast-  
“ ing interests, while I have such Good-  
“ nefs watching over me, and with all the

“ sollicitude of paternal tenderness and love,  
“ consulting and securing my happiness for  
“ both worlds.”

What consolation do these reflections administer! What mental satisfaction do they impart! Into what placid tranquillity do they footh all the powers of the soul! The mind feels a congenial happiness in expatiating over them, in revolving the immense benefits of its divine Benefactor, and contemplating its absolute dependence on so wise and good a Parent. Even an *Heathen*, when he reviewed his obligations to the Deity, and the blessings which flowed from his providential administration of the world, could break out into the following pathetic and affecting strains: “ What words can sufficiently celebrate, or adequately convey, the great Creator’s praise! Since we are endowed with intellectual powers, what ought *we* to do, both publickly and privately, but celebrate the Deity, chant his praises, and recount his  
“ favours!

“ favours! Amidst our employments in agri-  
“ culture, amidst the various bounties of a  
“ plenteous table, ought not we to utter de-  
“ vout ejaculations of praise to our beneficent  
“ Creator! Great is the Divinity, for he hath  
“ directed us to cultivate the ground, and  
“ spread fertility and plenty around us!  
“ Great is the Divinity, for he hath constructed  
“ the amazing system of our bodies, furnish-  
“ ed us with hands, with the power of mas-  
“ ticating and swallowing our food, the power  
“ of digesting it, the power of gradual and  
“ insensible growth, and the power of breath-  
“ ing while we sleep! Each of these mercies  
“ ought to excite our acknowledgments, and  
“ engage us to pour the most rapturous odes  
“ of praise to him for giving us faculties to  
“ attain the knowledge of these pleasing  
“ truths, and to apply them properly. What  
“ though the majority, says he, are blind to  
“ these obvious sentiments, ought not he,  
“ who knows and feels their moment, to sup-

“ply this general defect and hymn the Cré-  
 “ator? What can I do else, adds the Phi-  
 “losopher, who am now old and a cripple,  
 “but celebrate my God? Had I been a dumb  
 “irrational creature, I should have acted as  
 “such. But since I am formed a rational  
 “intelligent agent, it is my duty to chant  
 “the praises of God. This is my *proper*  
 “employment. In this I exercise myself.  
 “Nor will I desert this my station, as long  
 “as I live\*!” And in another place, the  
 same excellent person exclaims, in a flood of  
 pious transport and devout ecstasy; “For  
 “the future, O God, use me to whatever  
 “thou pleasest! I cheerfully assent to thy  
 “will, and serenely acquiesce in thine allot-  
 “ments! I reject nothing that seemeth best  
 “to thine infinite understanding! Lead me  
 “wherever thou wilt! Invest me with what  
 “garment thou pleasest! Wilt thou have me

\* Και τις εξαρκει λογος, &c. Arriani Epictetus, p. 90. Ἔπτοη.

“ to fill a station of dignity or of obscurity;  
“ to dwell in my native country, or go into  
“ exile; to suffer poverty, or enjoy riches;  
“ I will, in regard to all these things, vin-  
“ dicate thy dispensations before the whole  
“ world \*.”

Now what pleasure, what high, sublime, rapturous pleasure, is there in making such reflections as these! What grateful satisfaction in the exercise of such affections and sentiments towards the blessed God! Here is no gloom, no melancholy and dejection, but divine ecstasy, triumph, and exultation. Who has such reason to rejoice, as he who knows he is encircled by the divine Immensity, *filled with all the fulness of God*, supported, invigorated by the active all-comprehensive energy of the Divinity, and surrounded on every side by infinite Compassion, Goodness, and Love! Who has such cause for exultation and triumph as the Christian, who sees the

\* Χρω μοι λοιπον, &c. p. 263.

immense Benignity and Philanthropy of God shine, with such heavenly radiance, in the person of Jesus Christ! What a subject for sacred joy and rapture does the Gospel open to our view! *Behold! what manner of LOVE hath the Father bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation!* In what an amiable endearing light does the affecting History of the Mission and Ministry of our Lord, and all the evangelical blessings he communicated to the world, place the unexampled Goodness, and unutterable Love of God! Here is an inexhaustible theme for all the sacred passions and emotions of the human heart! No wonder that *Christians* are so frequently exhorted to *rejoice in the Lord, to rejoice evermore,* when there is such ample cause as this to inflame every affection, and to kindle all the tender emotions and ingenuous sensibilities of  
the

the human bosom. To view God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, to contemplate infinite Wisdom and infinite Goodness engaged in planning and executing the amazing scheme of Man's Redemption ; how does such a view affect the heart, penetrate the soul, and occupy all its powers with gratitude, love, and praise ! Fear, and gloom, and despondence, and every mean, abject, fervile, ignoble passion disperse and vanish for ever, while the heart is under the full power of these glorious truths, and resign the soul to the soothing exercise of filial piety, ardent gratitude, and pleasing devout astonishment. Fear, and terror, and fervility, may seize the souls of unenlightened *Heathens*, when they approach the shrines of their cruel and implacable *Deities*, but let such slavish passions for ever be exterminated from the Christian's breast, when he approaches the sacred presence of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let him draw near the  
throne

throne of the divine Clemency with liberal confidence, with grateful transports, and with all that generous warmth of affection which filial love can inspire.—Towards such a good being as the Christian's God, what a pleasing and delightful exercise is prayer! To maintain an intercourse with our Maker, to pour the language of a grateful heart before him, and to testify to him the profound sense we have of his supreme goodness, and of our own felicity in the consciousness of his protection and guardianship of us and of our's, how delightful is this homage, how pleasing are such devotional acts and exercises! To how much *pleasure* are they strangers, who are strangers to prayer! What unspeakable *delights* have those lost, who never tasted the divine joys of communion with God!



C H A P. IV.

**T**HE act of *resignation* to God is not a gloomy, but a most *delightful* performance. It must surely administer great comfort in an hour of pain and suffering to reflect, that these allotments are not the effect of chance and fatality, or the infliction of some cruel, sullen, and malignant Dæmon, but the dispensations of a merciful and compassionate Parent, the strokes of whose paternal rod are salutary, and whose friendly messengers all afflictions are. To what serene composure and *cheerful* acquiescence do these thoughts dispose the Christian! “ My faithful Creator knows what is best for me, better than I do for myself! No calamity can overwhelm me without his cognizance. No disease can invade me without his direction. That Being, before whom my heart lies disclosed, and who is perfectly

“fectly acquainted with the moral state and  
“condition of my soul, knows what to assign  
“me, and I am pleasingly convinced he will  
“assign me nothing, but what seemeth best  
“to his infinite Understanding. He afflicts  
“not willingly, nor grieves the children of  
“men. These distressing scenes are designed  
“to moderate my too intense passion for this  
“vain and fugitive life, to elevate my hea-  
“ven-born desires to the contemplation of  
“sublimier and nobler objects, to exercise my  
“faith and my affiance in my God, and to  
“put my mind in a proper frame and dispo-  
“sition for a more vigorous and lively per-  
“ception and fruition of spiritual and eternal  
“things. These afflictions I now suffer are  
“corrective, commissioned by my wife and  
“good Parent to subserve my best interests,  
“to represent, to me, in a strong and strik-  
“ing light, the odious nature and destruc-  
“tive consequences of sin; to convince me  
“of my frailty and dependence, and to direct  
“my

“ my views to the great supreme Arbiter of  
“ life and death. Thy will, therefore, O  
“ God, be done : for thou hast permitted me  
“ to cherish this delightful assurance, that  
“ thou *wilt*, that thou *canst*, do nothing,  
“ but what is wisest and best for thy depen-  
“ dent creatures !” The following *cheerful*  
and devout reflections of a celebrated *Hea-*  
*then* upon this subject, shew a virtuous dig-  
nity and elevation of soul that cannot fail to  
attract our love to such a character, and to  
excite our pious astonishment. “ May I be  
“ found, says he, at death, occupied in these  
“ worthy employments, that I may be able  
“ with virtuous confidence to appeal to God.  
“ Have I violated thy precepts ? Have I per-  
“ verted those faculties thou gavest me ? Have  
“ I abused the moral powers and capacities  
“ with which I have been endowed ? Did I  
“ ever utter any querulous murmurs against  
“ thee, or censure the procedures of thy go-  
“ vernment ? I have been sick—it was *thine*  
“ appoint-

“ appointment—and so have others, but I  
 “ *willingly*. I have been poor—it was *thine*  
 “ *allotment*—but chearful and happy in my  
 “ poverty. I never filled a station of dig-  
 “ nity—it was *thy* will I should not—for  
 “ such an elevation I never breathed a single  
 “ wish. Didst thou ever see me gloomy and  
 “ fullen on this account? Did I not always  
 “ approach thee with a serene countenance,  
 “ prompt to execute thy command, and to  
 “ obey the least intimation of thy pleasure?  
 “ It is now thy will I should quit this ample  
 “ theatre.—I depart,—paying thee my ar-  
 “ dent gratitude, that thou hast graciously  
 “ deigned to admit me to these amazing  
 “ scenes, to behold thy works, and to attain  
 “ the knowledge of thine administration \*.”  
 What soothing delight do such acts of pious  
 resignation to God as these leave upon the  
 mind! How do they exhilarate our scat-

\* Ταυτα επιτηδεων θελω ευρεθηναι, &c. Arriani  
 Epist. 374. Upton.

tered spirits, cheer our languor, and fill us with serene tranquillity, with conscious heart-felt satisfactions: How does all gloomy anxiety and melancholy perturbation disperse in a moment, and calm serenity and peace occupy the bosom, when we consider that all the measures of the divine government are founded in unerring wisdom, perfect rectitude, and infinite goodness! What placid composure doth it infuse into the soul to reflect, that a divine hand instils into our cup this sharp but salutary medicine, to heal the moral disorders of our minds, to expel the noxious dispositions and irregular affections of our hearts, and to recover us to an happy state of moral health, liberty, and enjoyment! These acts of resignation and trust in God are inexpressibly delightful, dissipate all querulous complaints and gloomy terrors, and compose the soul into cheerful acquiescence. The very thought that God governs the world, is of itself abundantly sufficient

ficient to chase away all the inquietude that infests human life. A full, fixed, deliberate, sacred persuasion, that my Creator is as solicitous for my welfare and happiness for both worlds, as if there were no other being besides myself, in the whole universe, that was the object of his care, is a consideration that greatly dignifies and exalts the heart, elevates it infinitely above the reach of gloomy care and melancholy, and causes it to indulge the highest excesses of filial affection, love, and confidence, towards its munificent Parent, Benefactor, and Friend.

If this then is the character of the Deity, if this is the endearing relation that subsists between the blessed God and us, what must we think of the infernal doctrine of *Reprobation*; which represents God Almighty by an absolute act of his arbitrary, uncontrollable sovereignty, consigning, by an irreversible decree, millions and millions of his immortal creatures to the everlasting endless torments

ments of hell, selecting five or six to happiness out of five or six thousand, and leaving all the rest to perish irrecoverably, being predestinated to remediless destruction from all eternity, millions of years before they came into existence, independently of their own conduct, by a decree, which it is not in their power to elude or escape. When this most execrable doctrine was first propagated in the Christian Church, I know not. I imagine it was either invented by St. *Austin*, or forged in the *Vatican*. It is not a doctrine, however, of the present age. I am sure it is a doctrine held in great and just horror and contempt by every rational and benevolent Christian; and, I hope, is banished from the Creed of every creature under heaven, that addresses its Supreme Parent under the title of merciful and compassionate. Under what a character ~~that~~ represents the Father and Governor of mankind, I leave my reader to judge. I ~~do not see how~~ those, who believe it, if any

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such

such can be found, can really be *happy* in the belief of it, even supposing themselves the distinguished favourites of heaven, as is generally the case. For admitting we were of this happy number, what ideas must we entertain of the *Justice* and *Goodness* of God for such partial and invidious distinctions; and with what *horror* and *commiseration* must we view the irrevocably destined misery of millions of our wretched fellow-creatures! A *favourite* child of a *numerous family*, on whom a fond *injudicious* parent lavished all his kindness, at the expence and to the injury of all the rest, must think very disavourably of *such* a parent for *such* odious and partial distinctions, and the cruel neglect and treatment of its brothers, to a superior pre-eminence above whom it has no *natural* or *acquired* title, must fill it with cutting remorse and painful reflections.—But this is not the *Christian's* God. This is not the Being, whom in our prayers we invoke under the  
endearing



endearing appellation of merciful, gracious, and good. The God, whom we serve, would have *all men* to be saved, and is *unwilling* that *any* of his immortal creatures should perish. Such a thought is extremely *pleasing* and *delightful* to every benevolent rational Christian, and makes the service we pay such a Being, an infinitely *pleasant, agreeable, and delectable* exercise. Thus doth Religion evince its intrinsic excellence and native amiableness, by appearing to be congenial to all our powers, to be the felicity and perfection of our natures, to be a most pleasing and delightful exercise, when performed under a deep and penetrating sense of the clemency and goodness of our Parent and Governor, and to produce the most sublime *pleasure* and *sacred joy*, resulting from fervent acts of love, gratitude, and resignation to the Deity.

## C H A P. V.

**I**F we examine the effects which Religion produces upon the soul, we shall be convinced that it is the source of mental happiness. It composes all our powers into a placid tranquillity and conscious satisfaction, makes the mind pleased with itself, introduces a calm serene delight into the soul, harmonizes every affection, controuls every turbulent passion, and gives the happy votary the truest relish and enjoyment of his existence. What harmony, peace, joy, and self-complacence reign in that mind, over all whose powers Religion has shed her selectest influence! It is a stranger to the vehemence and fury of those wild exorbitant passions, which transport those who are under the cruel dominion and tyranny of them into such extravagancies, spread such uproar, perturbation, and anarchy in the soul, and lay  
the

the understanding, judgment, reflection, and conscience in such deplorable ruins. It is a stranger to those tumultuous appetites and raging lusts, which render those, whom they have enslaved, such miserable, abject, despicable vassals; which dethrone reason, transform a rational being into a brute, and efface all the marks of that glorious image, which God originally stamped upon the human soul. It is a stranger to those ominous fears and foreboding terrors, which haunt the minds of the depraved and abandoned, and harrow their souls with such keen remorse and distracting anguish. It is a stranger to discontentment, which is so unfriendly to our natures, and so destructive of all internal felicity and peace. It is a stranger to all those irregular desires, vicious propensities, and depraved pursuits, which are incompatible with all tranquillity and self-enjoyment, inconsistent with the *law* of our nature, and, consequently, inconsistent with the *happiness* of

our nature. That happy mind, in which Religion has fixed her residence, is a perfect stranger to such turbulent scenes of inward confusion, as these lawless passions are sure to create. All is peace, and harmony, and tranquillity: sacred peace, uninterrupted harmony, undisturbed tranquillity. All the lower passions and subordinate affections are in subjection to the nobler powers. Reason presides, conscience approves, and all the inferior faculties obey. The heart, the source of action, is pure, and all the streams, that flow from it through the *inferior* affections, are clear, lucid, unpolluted. The soul is devoted to God, aspires after him as its supreme good and happiness, maintains, by an holy heart and holy desires, an intimate communion with the great source of light, and love, and joy, and makes a solemn dedication and voluntary sacrifice of its affections at the divine altar. It leads all its passions and appetites captive to the throne of the supreme

preme Majesty, renounces subjection to them, and consecrates all its powers to the service of God. It makes the will of God the great standard and measure of its actions, and the enjoyment of his complacential favour its ultimate aim, and the consummation of all its desires. It represses every passion that would damp or extinguish in its bosom the sacred love of God and virtue, and retard its fervid pursuit of glory, honour, and immortality.

In an heart thus occupied, engaged in these pursuits, what divine ineffable peace and joy must reside ! Such an heart is indeed, as the Apostle speaks, the temple of the living God ; God dwelleth in it, illuminates it with the influence of his light and love, and sheds upon it the most sacred effulgence, the most mild and beatifying radiance. By means of such an intercourse with God, as Religion keeps up, the soul participates some of the scattered rays and emanations of the Divinity, which *fill it with joy and peace in*

*believing, which fill it with all the fullness of God, which give it some faint idea of the pure and perfect happiness the Father of this light possesseth, and infuses into all its perceptions and powers that peace of God which passeth all understanding. O happy, thrice happy man, whoever thou art, who knowest, by experience, the sacred joys of religion, and canst bear thy testimony to this truth, that its ways are, indeed, ways of pleasantness, and all its paths peace! Thou knowest the exalted happiness it imparts, too exalted for words adequately to describe, or imagination fully to represent! Happy, happy Christian! who hast chosen God for thy portion, Religion for thy guide, and Immortality for thy hope! How serene, how peaceful is thy mind, how delightful are thy reviews, how delectable thy prospects! What calm composure and self-satisfaction soothes thy spirit! Thou knowest not what the turbulence and outrage of conflicting raging passions means!*

means! Thou art an happy, happy stranger to those lusts that *war in the soul*, and spread such scenes of misery and wretchedness there! Thou art in happy ignorance of those dire furies that lash the guilty conscience, and of those tremendous terrors that seize and shake the sinner in his moments of reflection! O what happiness dost thou possess in the friendship of God, and the gratulations of a good heart! Nothing can rob thee of thy mental satisfactions, nothing can exhaust or diminish the great indefectible source of them, they will flow on in one vast, various, lucid current, and recreate thee with pure and permanent felicity in every stage of life's short journey!

One of the greatest pleasures, I know, attending a religious life is, that it enables us to look up to God with a liberal virtuous confidence. Consider, for one moment, what it is to have the great God for our friend, and you will have a full conviction of the  
happi-

happiness they taste, who have a conscious well-grounded assurance of it! To have the cheering light of God's benign countenance diffused upon us, to be happy in the fruition of his approbation, *to have his love shed abroad in our hearts by his divine Spirit*, and, in consequence of the Christian covenant, to consider ourselves under the distinguishing title and character of *heirs of God*, and co-heirs with Jesus of an happy immortality, how exalted such a felicity! His favour is life, his approbation is better than life! The most raised enjoyments earthly objects yield, sink infinitely below this, are not worthy a comparison with this, so transcendent, so ineffable are the joys it inspires. O happy state, and happy soul, that can appeal to God for its sincerity, that can call to witness the great Spectator of its heart for the probity and integrity of it, and can attest before his throne, with humble filial confidence, its sincere, though imperfect obedience! *If our heart*



*heart condemn us not, says the Apostle, then have we confidence towards God.* And what exquisite joys, what transporting hopes, what divine consolations flow from such a confidence, those only know, who by a life of Religion have secured the divine friendship, and experienced the conscious happiness resulting from *such* a friendship!

C H A P. VI.

**W**HAT renders a religious life so pleasant and delectable is, the congratulating applause of our consciences. Conscience is the voice of God, heaven's great vicegerent, stamping the laws of our Creator with its sanction, and giving a solemn pleasing attestation to every instance of our conformity to the divine prescriptions. Such is the tranquillity, satisfaction, and peace that these principles throw upon the soul, that virtue is indeed its own reward, the very performance of a good action is its own sufficient

ficient retribution. "Whenever, says an excellent writer, an action is good and virtuous, it is not only natural, but carries with it a felicity flowing from, and essential to, the very nature of it. Paternal, conjugal, filial affection, are they not full of delight? Justice, friendship, beneficence, all the offices of humanity, and the whole train of virtues, does not the exercise of them administer the most sincere and lasting joy? The propensity there is in us towards them, and the satisfaction there is in doing them, does, in dispositions not depraved, lead almost irresistibly to the practice of them. We have, when we are about them, no boding, misgiving thoughts, no forbidding whispers, no secret reluctancy. Comfort, complacency, and a gratulating conscience always accompany such actions." He, that possesses *a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man*, is possessed of a treasure of infinitely greater value than all the opulence of the

*Indies.*

*Indies.* A good heart is the greatest of all blessings, and worth all the crowns, and sceptres, and kingdoms, and erudition in the world. The joys that spring from a good heart, from an approving conscience, are obnoxious to no internal decay, liable to no external injury, they are sure to bless their possessor with the most pure, sacred, exalted happiness that can be enjoyed on this side the grave. *The good man is satisfied from himself;* and a good conscience is the source of this self-satisfaction. If *this* does not upbraid us, if this faithful principle doth not reproach us, our mental happiness is secure beyond all the possibility of time and change. What are the calumnies and censures of a cruel, hard-judging world to him, who enjoys the approbation of his heart and the applause of his conscience? What are the most opprobrious aspersions, the most inhuman indignities, the blood-thirsty fury of tyrants and persecutors, the most ingenious torture that malice ever invented;

invented, or virtue ever endured, to him, who is conscious of his virtue and innocence, to him who is conscious he is embarked in a good cause, and has the God of truth to support him, who knows in whom he hath believed and trusted, and is animated by a transporting persuasion, that the cause, in which he suffers, is the cause of God, and the cause of Religion. A good conscience hath met every human evil with firmness and intrepidity, and hath even caused its happy possessor to exult and triumph in the racks and wheels and engines and flames of bigotted rage and sanguinary zeal. A good conscience, such is the sacred fortitude it inspires, hath impressed joy on the dying countenance of the holy martyr, hath mitigated, alleviated, almost suspended, the torments they sustained, and even stripped *such* a death of above half its horrors. It is a good conscience, which is the unabating source of *joy unspeakable and full of glory*. Such delightful reflections,  
such

such soothing satisfactions, such scenes of mental tranquillity and happiness Religion yields. When it is once cordially embraced, is once interwoven, so to speak, into the intimate essence and complection of the soul, it exalts and dignifies all its faculties, gives them a noble, generous elevation, dilates and expands its capacious powers with all the immense plenitude of mental joys, and diffuses a happiness that bears the nearest resemblance to what the blessed spirits themselves taste in the regions of immortality.

C H A P. VII.

**T**HE pleasures which Religion yields, are not like the pleasures of sense, short, fugitive, and transitory. Animal pleasures soon pall upon the sense, are succeeded by satiety and disgust, and often leave dire remorse and cruel regret behind them. Not so the joys of Religion. They are pure and  
tasting,

lasting, will bear *reflecting upon*, which the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, will not. The joys of Religion leave no sting behind them \*, they are accompanied and followed by no inward reproaches, by no uneasy perturbation, by no cutting anguish, or tormenting inquietude. The joys it yields are not sullied by impure passions, interrupted by external disappointments, do not cloy and satiate with repetition, but flow on in a regular, uniform, full stream, refreshing the mind, recreating the spirit, and perpetually cheering, animating, and invigorating the heart with divine consolations.

Doth a sinful life supply such joys as these? No! far, far from it! The sinner is miserable wherever he goes, for a condemning conscience follows him wherever he goes: could he remove to the farthest verge of the creation, the furies of a guilty conscience would haunt and pursue him through every hour

\* *non sunt in secula dulces voluptates,*

*He.*

vening region. For the mind, the seat of misery, is not changed with every changing clime. The mind continues the *same*, his evil dispositions and depraved affections do not diversify his inward wretchedness. Amidst the brilliancy of a court, amidst the splendor of greatness, amidst the pomp and pageantry of magnificent cities, amidst the servile adulation of fawning sycophants, amidst the luxurious banquet, the gilded dome, all the scenes of voluptuousness, he is a mean miserable creature. All this exterior show and parade suspend not the torments of a bad heart, of a bad conscience. He may rove from one guilty scene to another, interchange and modify his amusements to infinity, traverse a circle of pleasure, and dissipation, and profligacy, and universal licentiousness, yet *think* he must—he must have his sober intervals—reflection will return—conscience will emerge from that abyss of lust and drunkenness in which it hath been plunged—and

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what are the sinner's sentiments, *then*, of the courses he hath been pursuing? What are his thoughts of his past actions in such a moment?—such a moment will come—what are the emotions and sensibilities of his heart, when all the past scenes of guilt crowd at once into his shuddering remembrance?—O horror! O distraction! He finds an hell in his bosom, for he finds God is his enemy. He finds he hath been degrading his nature, debasing himself below the brutes, ruining his constitution, destroying his health, filling his body with the seeds of many dreadful and loathsome distempers, extinguishing his reason, dethroning conscience, dishonouring God, disgracing the Gospel, and for a number of years been accumulating an immense fund of wretchedness for time and eternity. He startles at the recollection of his cruel disobedience to his affectionate parents, is shocked at the reflection of his flagrant abuse of the advantages he enjoyed in early life, and cannot,



not, dare not, look forward towards the dread tribunal of his Judge, where he must *shortly* appear to receive the things done in the body!

How eminently do the *pleasures* of Religion appear, when contrasted with such complicated *wretchedness*? What a faithful picture is here exhibited of the misery and final ruin of a sinful life! Such deformity and turpitude should serve as a *foil* to illustrate its beautiful and divine *opposite*. If we would not be in *such* a situation for ten thousand worlds, then Religion, Religion, if we have the wisdom to embrace it, will effectually preserve us from all this unutterable variety of wretchedness: Religion, Religion, is the only eligible course, the truest wisdom, man's highest, noblest happiness for both worlds! We see that a life of sin will not bear a review; that it is destructive of all our valuable interests, that *vice* and *misery* are inseparable. We see that no man can be *happy*,

who is enslaved to any one vice, and that the laws of God and nature forbid he should be so. So that Religion, in every view, approves itself as our supreme good, as perfective of human nature, and of all the raised felicities that human nature is capable of feeling.

#### C H A P. VIII.

**C**ONSIDER, also, that health, fame, reputation, character, are connected with the practice of Religion. The reason I mention health among the blessings that ordinarily result from the practice of Religion is, because temperance is one of the great lessons it teaches: and how friendly, how salutary this most excellent virtue is to our nature, I need not mention. What miseries do intemperance and debauchery entail upon their unhappy votaries! What cruel shocking diseases do they inflict! Diseases,  
which

which do not merely *terminate* in those, whose vicious excesses have occasioned them, but are transmitted down through a long series of successive innocent sufferers. How many human miseries doth a life of Religion prevent ! How many evils doth it preclude, which render life a scene of wretchedness, and far, very far, from being desirable ! Some of the antients speak of a *sound mind in a sound body* \*, as being the summit of human felicity. I am sure this *greatest of blessings* nothing but the practice of Religion can effect. For Religion curbs and restrains those appetites, the boundless gratification of which impairs the health, undermines the constitution, embitters life, accelerates old age, and brings on untimely death. So that the preservation and establishment of *health*, without which this world is a prison, and the present scene of being as gloomy as *Erebus*, the enjoyment of chearful days, and the fruition of a long and happy

\* *Mens sana in corpore sano.* J. v.

life, all these striking considerations should have irresistible charms with every considerate young person, deliberately to embrace Religion, the liberal donor of all these signal distinguished blessings.

The certain acquisition of fame, character, and reputation, is an *end* great enough to recommend any *means* that will infallibly secure it. To be happy in the love and esteem of the world, to maintain such an universal character as endears us not only to the circle of our acquaintance and friends, or to those merely within the narrow sphere of our influence, but to persons of all parties and denominations; to have such a character established as makes us respected and caressed by the world, induces others to confide in our known integrity, to commit to our fidelity their most sacred interests, to repose in our conscientious probity the most secure assistance, and to acquiesce in our upright decision of any intricate and embarrassed circumstances,

stances, in the arbitration of which duty and moral obligation are requisite; to establish such an amiable character, and pass through life with such a fair unspotted reputation, is the most illustrious honour that *man* can enjoy, or the *world* can bestow. What can transcend the felicity of being caressed, loved, and honoured by the wise and good? What pleasure has this world in it equal to the exalted pleasure of a virtuous character? What a miserable despicable thing is it to incur the infamy and contempt of the world, as vice is sure to do? Can there be a more wretched circumstance happen to a thinking being, than to be studiously shunned and avoided by every friend to Religion and Virtue? To have parents recount their vices to their children to excite in them abhorrence, to be the pest of society, the bane of families, the execration of the parents of ruined innocence, monsters of drunkenness, debauchery, and sensuality, and to be held in de-

testation by every person of character and virtue, that is, by every person whose good word and friendship are worth valuing?—So that in this capital respect virtue has charms for youth, worthy to attract their admiration and love, worthy to excite in their breast the most sacred passion for a celestial inhabitant, who diffuses with a liberal hand such a profusion of blessings o'er human life. Religion will recompense all the pains we bestow in the most assiduous culture of it. Honour and renown are in her right hand, peace and tranquillity in her left. *These* she holds forth to us with engaging smiles, with celestial attractive sweetness, with every soft endearing blandishment, that can incite us to seize the glorious offered prize. Religion hath rewards, even in this world, supposing no hereafter, sufficient to stimulate all our generous efforts to obtain them, and which will infinitely more than compensate all our activity and anxiety in the acquisition of them,

them. It will make life *pleasant* and *delectable* from the reputation and honour that will accrue to us from the practice of it ; it will secure us a dignity, a distinction, an elevation, infinitely more illustrious and honourable than riches or ambition can ensure, and, in this signal respect, make life a scene of sublime *pleasure*, and the noblest *satisfactions*.

C H A P. IX.

**A**NOTHER happy circumstance, which renders a religious life *so pleasurable* is, that contentment and cheerfulness it infuses into the mind. What inquietude can distress his mind, who is convinced that infinite Goodness presides at the helm of universal government. What uneasy cares can oppress, what tormenting anxiety can corrode his spirit, who is pleasingly conscious, that his interests are deposited in the hands of supreme

preme Mercy, and that all the procedures of the divine administration are founded in the happiness of the universe. Who has equal pretensions to mental tranquillity and cheerfulness with the pious Christian! He, who knows that God has made with him an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. He, who knows that God, who spared not his only Son, but delivered him up for his everlasting benefit, will also, along with this unspeakable blessing, the gift of his Son, freely give him all things! What evil can invade the sacred peace of that breast, which is resigned to God, and all whose powers are composed into a perfect placid submission to the divine appointments! What true satisfaction and solid contentment doth it supply, to reflect that God *wills* nothing but what is best for us, assigns us no situation and circumstance, but what appear best to his infinite and unerring Understanding; and that we can secure his approbation in *any* state and condition



condition whatever, by a faithful and conscientious discharge of its respective duties. The noble and exalted fabric of that soul's tranquillity and happiness, which serenely acquiesces in the divine dispensations, is erected on a basis which all the storms and tempests of this world can never shake or subvert. He, whose desires and hopes center in God, who only needs to *discover* the divine will in order to *conform* to it, who cheerfully *follows* wherever Providence leads \*, and whose devout ejaculation in every varying scene of this chequered life is, Thy will, O God, be done! He, whose heart is thus fixed, trusting in God, hath his happiness fixed upon a rock, which the waves and billows of life's troubled ocean may, indeed, lash and assail, but all

\* Αγα δε μ', ω Ζευ, και συ γ' η πεπρωμενη,  
Οποι ποδ' υμιν εμι διατεταγμενος  
Ως εψομαι γ' ασπνος ην δε μη θελω,  
Κακος γενομενος, ουδεν ηττον εψομαι.

Arriani Epist. Ὑπτον, 737.

their

their rage is impotent\*. The frowns and censures of the world, the aspersions and calumnies of the envious and malevolent, make no impression on the serenity of that soul, which hath chosen God for its portion, Truth for its aim, the Scriptures for its study, and Heaven for its hope. Such a soul is not elated by prosperous, or dejected by adverse, fortune. Its happiness doth not veer and change with every fluctuation of human things. Its mental fruition is a calm, uniform flow of happiness, advancing in one beautiful, consistent tenor, instilling pure delight, sacred joy, refreshing consolation, in all the various emergencies and occurrences of this life. But what tranquillity can reside in that breast, which is distracted by passion, corroded by envy, tormented by the dæmon

\* Ille, velut rupes vastum quæ prodit in æquor,  
 Obvia ventorum furiis, expositaque ponto,  
 Vim cunctam atque minas perfert cælique marisque,  
 Ipsa immota manens, *Virgil. Æneid. X. 693.*

of lust, devoured with avarice, inflated with pride, deluged in sensuality, and torn by the adverse tendency of a thousand conflicting passions? In no soul can true, solid, mental happiness be found, but where Religion hath fixed her sacred abode. All *other* pursuits, every *other* course of life, that hath not Religion for its end and aim, are so many deviations from that great *line* which God Almighty, at our formation, marked out for the *path* of us all, are so many violations to the fundamental laws of our natures; and the further we advance in these devious walks, the farther we remove from the great center of our supreme good and supreme felicity. All the *united* experience of all the *united* ages of the world, has given its *united* attestation to this great truth, That vice is misery, destructive of all our valuable interests, subversive of all substantial peace, comfort, and tranquillity. And all the past ages of the world, the civilized and the uncivilized,

civilized, all orders and ranks of men in all ages, the sagacious philosopher and the illiterate barbarian, all, all unite in faithfully transmitting to every successive generation of short-lived mortals this cardinal truth, "VIRTUE ALONE IS HAPPINESS BELOW. Virtue is its own reward, the supreme good of human life, the sole parent of all true and permanent felicity. With regard therefore to the happy effects Religion produces upon the mind, which are calm composure, benign tranquillity, unabating cheerfulness, placid resignation, complacential self-satisfaction, it demonstrably evinces this fundamental truth, That Religion is the only path that conducts mortals to the temple of true happiness.

C H A P. X.

**T**HE exercise of the benevolent and social affections is another source of the purest mental pleasure. The *happiness* of God flows from his *goodness*. God is infinitely *happy* because infinitely *good*. The universal diffusion of happiness to numberless beings in numberless worlds, returns by a reflex act upon the great Original; and the happiness of his creatures is the happiness of the Creator. The vast all-comprehensive survey of all his dependent creatures, formed by his power, supported by his providence, and rejoicing in his beneficence, fills the Divinity with ineffable complacential delight. *Human happiness*, in this capital instance, is placed on the same basis with the *divine*. The exercise of benevolence communicates the most exquisite felicity the human heart can feel. *Benevolence* is eminently one of those virtues  
that

that reward themselves in the performance. If there were no *future* rewards annexed to it, the elegant pleasures and delicate sensibilities it yields, are sufficient motives to the culture and improvement of this most amiable virtue. How delightful is the review of benevolent actions! Of having relieved a real object of compassion, of having raised the drooping head of sorrowing virtue, of having rescued innocence from the jaws of destruction, of having made worthy necessitous families, who suffered in modest silence, the abode of grateful transport and the chearful scene of every felicity, of having poured the balm of consolation into the wounds of the afflicted mourner, of succouring merit in distress, patronizing genius and learning in penury and indigence, alleviating misery, soothing and softening the rigours of human infelicity, diminishing the evils and sufferings of those around us, mitigating and suspending their sorrows by friendly advice and seasonable charities,

charities, visiting the fatherless and widow in their afflictions, and rendering all worthy objects within the sphere of our influence as happy as possible! What a divine pleasure do these worthy principles and truly godlike dispositions yield! The consciousness of having dispelled the sorrows and sufferings of several worthy persons and worthy families, by a trifling charitable donation, of extricating them from their difficulties, enabling them, by seasonable assistance, to disembarass their affairs, prosecute their designs, and concert such measures as may furnish out a scene of happiness for *themselves*, and probably happiness for their *families*, through a long series of successive generations; the consciousness of being eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, the friend of suffering virtue, the patron of distress, the asylum of the widow and orphan, the first to promote any scheme and institution that has the relief of human wretchedness for its object; the consciousness of having

an heart actuated by such principles and dispositions as these, of having an heart that incircles in its ample benevolence the universal good of all mankind, supplies an happiness the greatest that the human bosom can enjoy, the greatest that the Deity himself, in the present scene of being, can communicate to mortals. Benevolence is the fairest copy of the divine Original, for God is Love! Benevolence is man's transcendent happiness, for it is God's transcendent happiness. He acquires the nearest resemblance to the Divinity, who is most assimilated to him in the temper and disposition of his mind; and he is blessed with the fruition of the most consummate felicity, who makes his happiness to flow from the same principles from which the happiness of God is deduced. "In nothing do mortals, says *Cicero*, approach *nearer* the immortal Gods than in doing good." What pleasure doth a person of opulence enjoy, when God hath given him a good heart to  
make



make a benevolent use of it! The world hath not an happier being in it than a rich man with benevolent dispositions. How is such a beneficent character loved, admired, caressed, honoured, and venerated by the world! Adored in life, and his memory held in everlasting honour. Riches joined with beneficence command universal respect; without it, universal contempt. How amiable an institution, therefore, is the Gospel! How much doth this scheme approve itself to be the offspring of the God of Love, and perfective of our truest happiness, by inculcating, in every page, upon its professors, this most amiable virtue as its grand cardinal principle, and the discriminating characteristic of a Christian. How much hath the Gospel consulted the *happiness* of human nature, by inspiring the heart with *benevolent* principles! The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ knew that our *highest* happiness resulted from the cultivation of charity and

love; a regard, therefore, to *our* happiness, most benevolently induced him, in this new dispensation, to stamp charity, the true fountain of the truest joy, with his authoritative seal and signet, by the most emphatical solemn sanction to render it peculiarly and indispensibly obligatory upon *Christians*; connecting, you see, our happiness with our duty, and annexing the *noblest* happiness to the *noblest* duty. One of the most elegant apothegms in all antiquity is that beautiful maxim of our Lord, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*. By the Apostle's manner of quoting it, it should seem that this was a common and favourite saying of our Lord, *Remembering the words of our Lord, how he said, It is more blessed, &c.* The intention of this elegant moral aphorism is to show, that the *pleasure* of the *benefactor* is *greater* than the pleasure of the *beneficiary*. That the *sensibilities* of the person relieved by a charitable benefaction, however grateful, however

however penetrated with the deepest sense of his obligations, are not so delicate and exquisite, as those sensations which the action, and the consciousness of it, impart to the benefactor. One might, *otherwise*, be at a loss, when present at the distribution of useful charities, which to congratulate, the *worthy* person dispensing, or the *worthy* objects receiving, did not this observation of our Lord evince, That the pleasure of the benevolent donor far transcends the pleasure of those he benefits. "Is it needful to shew, says a fine writer \*, that benevolence and charity yield more pleasure, more comfort and complacency, than a contrary disposition? Is any thing to be said, or imagined, in behalf of envy, hatred, malice, revenge? The very bitterness of life, and the bane of all enjoyment. Even an indifference, a mere want of concern for the welfare of our fellow-crea-

\* Mr. Balguy.

tures, must be an *unnatural, insipid, joyless* state of mind ; as being indeed repugnant to the frame and first principles of human nature. But universal benevolence is a constant source of pure satisfaction, and sincere delight : most pleasing in the exercise, and no less grateful in the remembrance. This is an enjoyment not only worthy of men and angels, but of God himself, who is therefore infinitely blessed because infinitely good. By opening our hearts to the whole creation, we effectually consult our own blifs ; a blifs commencing that moment, and enduring for ever. Hereby we secure an interest in every good that befalls, and the *public* prosperity is *ours*. By rejoicing at the happiness of others, we are sure to partake with them, and the more we sympathize, the larger is our share." The exercise therefore of the benevolent and social affections, love, beneficence, and charity, renders a life of Religion peculiarly happy, as these worthy and amiable dispositions

tions are productive of the most pure, elegant, exquisite pleasures, of the sublimest, noblest, mental enjoyments.

C H A P. XI.

**T**HE happiest families in this world are religious families. What a happy scene Religion spreads around it, is best seen in a little harmonious society, the bond and cement of whose union is piety. What a delightful spectacle, a spectacle which Angels, and Jesus, and the blessed God, from the regions of immortality survey with pleasure; to see each individual, by the culture of the best dispositions, desirous to promote the general good, anticipating their parent's commands, striving to lessen, as much as possible, the pressure of their infirmities, exerting every generous effort to communicate happiness to a parent's bosom, instilling joy and tranquillity and satisfaction into their minds,

72 *The Happiness of*

at a time of life when most they need consolation, carefully avoiding every thing that would wound a parent's peace, studying, by all the tender expressions of filial piety, to alleviate their sorrows, by a generous affectionate condolance and sympathy, sharing their distresses, making their *parent's God their God*, proposing their example a model for their imitation, forming their conduct upon the same worthy principles and maxims with theirs, and, by every instance of duty and obedience, making the decline of life to them a calm, chearful, serene evening. The greatest satisfaction that parents can enjoy in the closing scenes of life, is to see in their children amiable virtuous dispositions. What transport doth a fond parent's bosom feel in seeing his children prefer such friendships, and choose such connexions, as will, through the blessing of the Almighty, lay the foundation of happiness here and hereafter! I do not think it possible for an higher happiness

to

to be tasted in this scene of being, than what a parent feels on such occasions. *The virtue of children is the crown of hoary hairs.* How are the pains and sufferings of old age suspended, and decrepitude, indisposition, loss of health, loss of appetite, and all its variety of misery, soothed and softened by the dutiful obedience and virtue of good children, by the pleasing consciousness of their steadily pursuing the paths of Religion, reverencing the holy Scriptures, delighting in religious ordinances, loving prayer and reading, and studying the improvement of their minds in useful knowledge. Of all this happiness in families, of all these delectable scenes in the decline of life, of all this comfort from virtuous dutiful children, Religion, Religion is the sole fountain. All this domestic happiness flows from Religion! O what a powerful incentive is this to parents to give their children a religious education, and to imbue their tender minds with the sacred odour of these  
divine

divine principles, as ever they are desirous to reap this fair and copious harvest of happiness in the close of life, as ever they are desirous to enjoy a calm, tranquil, chearful evening of life, as ever they are desirous to live happily and die comfortably. And what a cogent motive is this also to children, to infix indelibly in their minds the useful instructions of their parents, to make them the amiable directory of their conduct, to erect *their* happiness on the same basis on which their religious parents founded their happiness, and by the cultivation of the same principles they saw their parents cultivate, by implanting in themselves the habits they acquired, assiduously endeavour to attain that signal felicity, in the fruition of which they beheld their parents so long and so eminently happy.



## C H A P. XII.

**H**OW delectable and happy is a religious life, when it is considered with what distinguished privileges and signal blessings the noblest causes of the noblest joy, the Gospel hath invested us. What a subject, what an inexhaustible subject for joy, cheerfulness, exultation, and triumph doth the Gospel exhibit! At the auspicious incarnation of our blessed Lord the heavenly choirs in transported accents repeated, Peace! Peace! on earth, good-will towards men! I pity those, from my soul I pity them, whose gloomy minds and gloomy systems the transporting discoveries of the Gospel cannot wake into sacred cheerfulness and Christian ecstasy. God is Love. Jesus is Love. The Gospel is a system of Love; calculated to inspire us with exhilarating hopes and animating prospects. The Gospel is not a doctrine accord-  
ing

ing to melancholy. It was designed to chase all melancholy horrors both from the mind and from the grave. It inspires with *joy and peace in believing*. He, who has a blessed immortality before him, cannot be dispirited and sunk in the gloom of dejection and pusillanimous despondence. He, who sees a glorious wreath of unfading bliss hung up full in his view to fire him with generous emulation, and is conscious that, by the vigorous exertion of his virtuous endeavours, he can secure this glorious prize, cannot, with these prospects, with these assurances, court a sullen cheerless gloom, and wrap his mind in the pensive sable shades of inconsolable melancholy. It would be impious, ungenerous, unchristian to do this. The Gospel was calculated, from its sacred Fountain to distil o'er human life the purest streams of the divinest joy. To disperse every thing unfriendly to our natures, to dissipate our sorrows, to console us in an hour of distress,

to

to animate us with heavenly comfort, and to inspire us in this frail life's pilgrimage with the most rapturous strains of the most rapturous joy. Let not your heart be troubled, says our Lord, ye believe in God and ye believe in me. My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you : Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father. Rejoice in the Lord, says St. Paul, yea, I say unto you, rejoice. Who has such cause for exultation as the Christian ! O what sacred transports of sacred joy result from considering ourselves as the heirs of God, and the coheirs with Jesus of the same blessed immortality ! What vigour and animation are excited by the explicit promises of divine assistance in all our difficulties ! What comfort and peace of mind flow from the assured forgiveness of sins upon sincere repentance ! What excesses of holy joy do  
the

the grand discoveries of the Gospel inspire ! The clear revelation of ETERNAL LIFE, the proposed reward of persevering holiness, enforcing every duty, repeated in every page, is a doctrine sufficient to banish all our sorrows, alleviate all our pains, suspend all our sufferings, and to expand and enrapture our bosoms with ecstasies of love, gratitude, and triumph. O'er the New Testament *Justin Martyr* breaks out into this ecstatic exclamation : This have I found to be the only safe and useful philosophy \*. The design of Christianity is to inspire its professors with religious joy ; but the design of many systems, that have pretended to be founded upon it, is to inspire men with cheerless melancholy. He who expatiates o'er the vast and various blessings of the Covenant of Grace, and considers himself as *personally in-*

\* Ταυτην μονην ευρισκον φιλοσοφιαν ασφαλη τε και συμφορον. *Justin Mart. edit. Paris, p. 225.*

interested in them for time and eternity, will think it impossible that any intelligent being, however disposed to gloom and dejection, can really review and revolve this blessed religion with cold insensibility, with a mind dark and fombrous and fullen, incapable by nature, by habit, or by system, of feeling the divine force and energy of these *animating* truths and glorious *transporting* assurances.

C H A P. XIII.

**R**ELIGION is the wisest happiest art we can learn, for it will teach us not only to live happily, but to die comfortably. It will yield us the best supports at a time when we shall have most need of supports. This faithful companion travels with us through life, nor quits us when we die. It attends us when every thing else hath deserted us. In a dying hour its comforts and consolations are greatest. Amidst this gloom it  
shines

shines forth with redoubled lustre, infuses a chearful ray into the dark valley of the shadow of death, and enables us to enter it with songs of victory and triumph.—Dying is, abstractedly, an awful event. To exchange time for eternity, to close our eyes for ever upon this world, to bid a long, long farewell to all the objects of our fond affections, and to launch from the port of human life into an unknown world that will never, never have an end, is unutterably solemn.—But is there nothing that disarms death of its sting, and strips the grave of its gloomy horrors?—Yes, O transporting thought! Religion does this. O death! where is *now* thy sting! O grave! where is *now* thy victory! Thanks be to God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! O Religion! how sacred is thy power! How sovereign thy influence! Nor time, nor the events of time, nor the stroke of death, can solicit thy joys, fully thy divine lustre, or pollute those pure  
refreshing

refreshing streams which thou emitteſt to allay our thirſt, and exhilarate our languor! Religion enables the good Chriſtian to quit this world without a ſigh, to leave its illuſive viſionary joys without regret, and to bid an eternal adieu to it with chriſtian firmneſs, ſerenity, and triumph. O how delectable are the proſpects it ſpreads before the Chriſtian in his expiring moments! In the article of death, how delightful is the review of a good life! Within the full attraction of that transcendent ineffable happineſs that awaits him, with what decency, honour, and applauſe doth he make his exit from the ſtage of this life: even, amidſt the painful diſſolution of ſoul and body, feeling all the plenitude of the divineſt ſatiſfactions, all the exceſſes of a mental joy, *unſpeakable and full of glory!*

## C H A P. XIV.

**I**NTO the next scene of being let us pursue Religion, and see what event awaits her there. In the human bosom our good Creator hath enkindled the ardent desire of immortality, and he will as certainly satisfy this desire as he first infused it. This divine principle will triumph over the ruins of the grave, and flourish in immortal existence. What glorious hopes hath the Gospel lighted up in the Christian's breast. Christians are more than merely the *expectants*, they are the *heirs*, of immortality! What transporting prospects hath our Lord exhibited before us. The objects, after which he hath taught us to aspire, are no less than glory, honour, and immortality! The curtain, which interposed between time and eternity, is *now* dropped, and the delectable scene extends in one vast, various, unbounded prospect, far, far beyond the veil which once intervened. How free  
from



from dubious error and cruel uncertainty are the discoveries of the Gospel! With what hesitation and diffidence do all the celebrated sages of antiquity, who had only the light of reason to direct their enquiries, discourse on this subject! What unhappy mixtures of fable and fiction chequer their beautiful disquisitions on this topic! Futurity to them was enveloped in the dire uncomfortable shades of impervious gloom; the philosophic eye, that laboured to pierce this gloom, was obscured and weakened by the poetic errors and absurdities of hoary and venerable antiquity. The Gospel is the only system, that hath exhibited life and immortality in a rational unclouded light. The revelation of this grand doctrine is its distinguishing excellence, its unrivalled glory, and discriminates it from every Religion the world ever saw. What an *additional* weight, therefore, hath this blessed institution thrown into the scale of virtue! What infinite attractions hath Re-



ligion *now* for her votaries ! The promise of the life that now is, and of the life which is to come ! The Christian's view is not circumscribed within the contracted bounds of this vain and visionary life. This world is not the sepulchre of all his hopes. He affects sublimer things, aspires after nobler objects, and gives a free and liberal scope to his immortal powers in expatiating over those boundless unutterable joys which God hath prepared for persevering virtue. It is in eternity Religion is crowned : it is in eternity her brows are encircled with a diadem of glory ineffable. O happy, happy world ! where blessed angels and glorified spirits shall hail the introduction of the good Christian, hail his approach with songs of victory and acclamations of triumph, and attend him with celestial ovations to his appointed mansion ! Think, how ecstatic and ravishing must be the beatific vision of the ever-blessed God, when he visibly displays his glory, before  
which

which the cherubim, seraphim, and all the infinite orders of the celestial inhabitants fall prostrate, and in the transports of adoring rapture cry out, Holy! holy! holy! Lord God Almighty. The happiness of heaven is comprized in one single expression. *They shall see God!* How many vast unutterable ideas doth this short sentence include! No man, says our Lord, has seen the Father. Such a flood of glory, poured upon frail mortality, would overwhelm all our powers. We shall have *new* faculties that will enable us to sustain this immensely glorious sight, and to imbibe all that inconceivable bliss which such a spectacle infuses. Think, what it is to reflect the emanations of the divine glory, *to behold as in a glass*, to use the Apostle's divine language, *the glory of the Lord, and to be changed into the same image from glory to glory.* Think what it is to have *immediate* communion with the Father of our spirits, to be pure in his purity, wise

in his wisdom, happy in his happiness, to feel at all our senses and perceptions the influx of his light and truth and love, and to be admitted into the perfect fruition of his sacred presence, where is fulness of joy, and pleasures infinitely surpassing all our most enlarged ideas and conceptions !

#### C H A P. XV.

**W**OULD you know the happiness that crowns a religious life, turn your thoughts to the auspicious morning of the resurrection. The resurrection of the dead is the grand catastrophe and consummation of all sublunary things. Here the scene of mortality closes. Here the great *drama* of human life winds up. At this great period time ends, eternity begins. At this glorious æra time is swallowed up in the boundless ocean of eternity. The resurrection is the commencement of all our happiness; the auspicious date of an happiness that will flow

on

on in a clear, full, lucid, spreading, endless stream through all the rolling ages of a boundless immortality! The blessed dawn of the morning of the resurrection will see us forever released from the prison of a frail mortal body, and vindicated into the perfect liberty and perfect happiness of the sons of God. This happy propitious morn will rise upon us, O how changed, how transformed! this corruptible vested with incorruption, this mortal clothed with immortality! Adorned with a resplendent heavenly robe of ineffable radiance, all our intellectual powers alert, active, vigorous, no longer oppressed with an incumbent load of earth and sense, clouded by the intervention of animal affections, and impeded in their operations by the inert accidents of flesh and blood. What light, and truth, and knowledge will then break upon us! How will all our former difficulties vanish, and the clouds and darkness, that now envelop our minds, in a moment disperse for

ever! O glorious hour! when we shall wake into new life, turn our eyes upon the vaulted heaven, and see a glorious triumphant scene, our blessed Lord descending with ten thousand of his saints, to adorn the temples of all his virtuous followers with a wreath of immortal amaranth. What sensibilities, what emotions, greater than tongue can express, greater than thought can form, must this glorious spectacle excite in the glowing bosom of the good Christian! This is the event which was the object of all his hopes. This is the day for which he passionately aspired. This, this is the glorious period, which amidst all the sorrows and sufferings of mortal life inspired him with animating consolation, and made him more than conqueror through him that had loved him. O how will the good Christian hail his descending Saviour! With what songs of triumph will he felicitate his illustrious advent! O how will he congratulate himself, and those who stand  
stand

stand round him, that he who declared *he would come*, is now arrived to usher them into complete salvation. What a mixture of tumultuous passions will then struggle in our bosoms, love, gratitude, admiration, ecstasy, when we behold this sight, when we awake from our long adamantine slumbers, start from the silent clay-cold grave, open our eyes into eternity, and see all this flood of glory bursting upon us! What tears of joy, if the blessed can weep, will gush from our eyes at seeing such a sight, in beholding such a vast, immensely glorious scene, at *seeing him as he is*, with ineffable sweetness, with complacental benignity and love in his countenance applauding his followers' victorious faith, their unshaken perseverance, stretching forth his hand, then pronouncing over them that transporting sentence, Well done! good and faithful servants! enter ye into the joy of your Lord! Upon hearing a sentence, which makes immortality his own, will not the  
Christian



Christian, in a flood of transport, like *Scipio*, embrace his natal soil, and hail the happy world his virtues won. Ecstatic thought! that we shall *now* through all eternity converse with the divine compassionate Jesus, be admitted into the intimacies of his love, compose a part of the brilliant, illustrious, ineffably magnificent train of happy spirits, accompany him wherever he goes, attend him to whatever places and regions he visits in the boundless expanse of God's heaven, and be deriving from him larger and larger measures of knowledge and happiness through all the revolving ages of an eternal world. Blessed abodes! where sin and sorrow never enter, where all human imperfection is for ever unknown, whose inhabitants are harassed with no evils, excruciated with no pain, haunted by no anxieties, seduced by no temptations, privileged from the shafts of death, where *God wipes all tears from their eyes*, and where harmony, peace, and love reign



reign for ever. Happy seats ! in which we shall mingle with the general assembly of all the wise and good that ever lived, be associated to the collective community of those virtuous happy spirits of whom we have read, in which we shall meet our worthy ancestors, pious parents, affectionate brothers, amiable children, all our virtuous relations, friends, and acquaintance, meet to part no more for ever, and mutually form a friendship and society that will last as long as immortality endures. Blessed mansions ! in which we shall have an eternity before us, in which we shall live, when perhaps it will be forgot that ever we animated such a body as the present, or lived in such a world as the present.

C H A P. XVI.

**T**HINK then, reader, for God's sake, for thy own sake, I beseech thee, think what it is to forfeit immortality, to disinherit thyself of what is thy proper, natural, assured possession,

possession, as the *heir of God*, to exclude thyself from an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that never fades away, lose such an inheritance as this—for what—for a few, mean abject gratifications, in a short and fugitive life, that will soon come to an end with the youngest of us; to barter such a glorious reversion for a few brutal short-lived pleasures, hardly worthy to be stiled pleasures. What folly and madness ever equalled this! To part with heaven for earth, a blessed immortality for a sinful mortality; to sacrifice all the blessedness of a never-ending eternity for a few transitory moments, for a vain and visionary life, for the vain and visionary *pleasures of sin*, which are, at longest, *but for a season*. Were all the philosophers, orators, and divines, that ever lived, assembled together, they could not sufficiently expose the folly and distraction of mortals in this great concern. Born as we are all to glory, honour, and immortality, and yet bury all our  
native

native hopes in the narrow putrid grave of this life, what a prostitution is this of our heaven-born powers, what an affront to the ever-blessed God, who kindled in our bosoms these desires, and would as certainly have satisfied them as he kindled them; to what a low, abject, despicable, groveling condition do we vilely and voluntarily degrade ourselves from the noblest summit of the noblest elevation. O ignominious disgraceful fall! Born to flourish in eternal existence, yet choosing to become the victims of eternal death! O thou once exalted creature, the son of God, and the heir of immortality, thou, in whom there once resided whatever can to thought or sense be formed great, glorious, honourable, dignified, illustrious, how art thou fallen! how art thou lost! Thou hast sold thy glorious birth-right for a painted cloud, a gilded trifle, a fleeting shadow, a gay, illusive, short-lived dream of pleasure that will soon be disturbed; thou  
hast



thou hast forgot, thou hast chosen to forget, thy celestial origin, thy Father, and thy Father's house, in which there are many mansions provided for the reception of his virtuous obedient children; and unmindful of what thou art, and of what thou wilt be, thou hast ingloriously acquiesced in the mean and miserable accommodations of an *inn*, burying in eternal oblivion all thoughts of thy native *country*, and thy native *home*. O that men were wise, that they would but regard this, that they would but consider their latter end. O that creatures, whose existence in this life is so extremely short, and so infinitely precarious, would consider what heaven is, what immortality means, what the title, *sons of God and heirs of God*, implies, what happiness awaits the righteous, be excited to cherish a laudable ambition, to think and live and conduct themselves worthy their high and heavenly birth, and ardently aspire after that glorious patrimony, which God will as  
affuredly



Who would not, therefore, that has any regard for his temporal and everlasting interests, embrace a Religious life, the parent of all this immense profusion of happiness? Who would not, that has any affecting thought of what he *now* is, by the noble privilege of his birth, what he is destined to be by the glorious dispensation of the Gospel covenant, who that has any penetrating influencing sense of the happiness that awaits him, if he persist in the practice of Religion for a little transitory pittance of time that will be soon swallowed up and lost in the great ocean of eternity, would not, from this moment, relinquish every beloved vice, dissolve every sinful connection, burst from all his wicked associates, avoid every place and every company, that would endanger his virtue, deprave his heart, provoke his God, and obscure his prospects, and with an heart, fired by a virtuous and Christian emulation, press forwards, with eager and impatient steps, to seize the glorious palm of immortality.

F I N I S.

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