
Miscellaneous Pieces.

Now first printed.

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Numb. I.

Letter of advice to her Son.

MY DEAR SON,

THERE are so many snares in the public way of life, to which your sex are generally obliged, and so many pernicious practices, which would give horror in the other sex, that are scarce looked on as faults in yours, that a tender parent, anxious for the real good of all her children, cannot but have some concerns peculiar for those of that sort, and be desirous to offer some particular cautions to an only son, before he enters on the stage of the world. And as the first regards of all rational beings must be evidently due to him, who is the author of that being, I begin with

RELIGION.

It is no small satisfaction to me, to find, that you have so early shaken off that dislike to, or negligence of, serious things, which young persons are apt to give into, and which the greatest care in their education often fails of removing. That sense, which you now have, of the worship and obedience due to the supreme being, is the best foundation for virtue, that can be laid, since it will lead you to such a habit of regular devotion and reflection on your actions, as will not let you be easy under any continued deviation from your duty.

But

But to fortify that excellent principle against the contagion of ill example, (which you must every where meet with) or the attacks of those scoffers at all the restraints of natural or revealed religion, (which it is more than probable you may encounter) who will tell you, that all your fine notions are only the inventions of politicians, to keep the world in order; that there can be no hurt in indulging our natural appetites; and that all fears or hopes of future retributions spring only from the prejudice of education: to arm you against these false reasoners, and that your belief may not be indeed mere prejudice of education, you will do well to read such authors, as have given the most solid and rational proofs, both of natural and revealed religion. *Grotius* you have run over perhaps superficially at your schools, and *Dr. Clarke's* sermons at *Boyle's* lecture, (which I particularly recommend) you have sometimes dipped in; but read them so as to be master of their arguments, I mean so far as is necessary for your own conviction and security. As for engaging to dispute, I would not advise it. Gentlemen, who deal only in ridicule, are not to be reasoned with: they may only be told, that it is at least as ill manners to scoff at what you have a reverence for, as it would be in you, to make a jest of their parents, or the friends they most value.

Be careful, however, that whilst you profess a religion, which deserves the most serious veneration, there be nothing in your particular manner of exercising it, that may give just cause of ridicule. Avoid therefore all singularity, preciseness, or sowness. Be not apt to censure such, as do not observe the rules you may have prescribed yourself; and freely join in a moderate use of the diversions practised among those you converse with, if they are not unlawful in themselves, or directly lead to what is so. The easier your religion sits upon you, the

the securer it will be from the banter of the profane, and the more recommend itself to the imitation of your young companions; for nothing alienates the mind from religion in that gay time of life, or rather gives a disgust to it so much, as too great austerity of manners in those, who profess it.

But let no complaisance engage you in actions, which your own conscience condemns, or induce you to be ashamed of virtue, or truth; much less to join in the laugh against them, or when any thing sacred is made the subject of mirth. Be assured, that however a debauchée may affect to ridicule a man, who will not run into the fashionable excesses, one may always venture to affirm, that he does not really think temperance, sobriety, &c. to be ridiculous things; and that the raillery, or rather pity, may be returned upon him on much better grounds.

EMPLOYMENT.

There is no kind of profession, in which a gentleman can propose to engage himself, that learning and knowledge in general will not make him the fitter for; or, if it is not immediately useful to his business, (though that can scarce happen) it will be at least of great advantage to his hours of leisure from it; nothing being more unhappy, than for a man to be forced to run away from himself, for want of materials to entertain his own mind; which a competent skill in the languages and sciences will always supply him with. You will do well, therefore, to neglect no opportunity, which your education affords, of improving yourself in both, that you may acquire a habit of application and study, without much considering to what particular views it may hereafter be applied.

You are yet too young to make any judgment what profession you will be best qualified for, or even to which your inclinations would most dispose

pose you; for whatever they may at present be, a little more knowledge of the world, and of yourself, may entirely change them. And it is of great moment, before any particular course of life is resolved upon, to consider well in a more advanced age, what your peculiar disposition, qualifications, and circumstances may render you the fittest for; since a man will acquit himself but ill in any employment, which is not adapted to him in all these respects.

Divinity is the profession you have been designed for from your birth: but let no views determine your choice to that sacred calling, but a sincere desire of promoting the glory of God, and the salvation of men. If you have not a real zeal for those ends to engage you to the service of the church, be not tempted by the prospect of any advantage or promotion in it. However, the securing a decent competency ought to have the second place in your regard; for, as the notions of the world are now corrupted, piety and virtue alone will not secure a clergyman from that contempt, with which the generality look on persons in mean and narrow circumstances: at least they will scarce, in so disadvantageous a light, draw that respect, which is necessary to make his doctrine, and example, attended to.

If upon mature consideration, you judge it best for you to take holy orders, be careful, that your life be regular and unblameable; your conversation cheerful without lightness, useful and edifying without being rigid or censorious; your actions strict and resolute in matters of real vice or virtue, but conformed to the customs and opinions of those you live among in matters of indifference; for in such things there are greater and less restraints expected from, or liberties indulged the clergy, in different parts even of our own country, to which a prudent man will always have regard. But no
kind

kind of vice is, I think, any where thought allowable in them; even by the most profligate. Those, who would laugh all other sort of men out of every thing that is serious, or regular, would be the first to expose and deride the least libertine, or disorderly action of one in holy orders. And as all men expect and reverence in them a conduct suitable to their character, it is none of the least advantages towards maintaining it, which is peculiar to their profession, that they are exempted from one of the greatest temptations and difficulties, which piety and virtue has to struggle with in most other stations, the importunities or scoffs of the gay part of the world; a consideration, which has determined some persons to the sacred function, as the best security for those, who may not have fortitude enough to withstand such attacks from without, conscious of too weak a complaisance, or easiness of nature, which has often helped to undermine the firmest resolutions: and this perhaps may hereafter be some motive to you.

Your present fancy (for I can call it nothing else yet) seems most towards the army; though I believe with little prospect of its ever being your lot. There is something indeed in the bright side of the profession of a soldier, that is apt to strike the imagination of young persons. Honour, which they particularly claim, glory, fatigue, and dangers in a noble cause, opportunities of seeing the world, warlike music, and even their garb, all contribute to raise ideas, which warm and animate a youthful active spirit; and those, who have interest enough to be called to that profession, with advantage, and a hopeful prospect, may find their account in it.

But there is another side of the perspective dark and discouraging. The jealousy which this nation has of a standing army, makes very little regard be paid to those gentlemen, who are of it in time of peace: at least, it seems to me to be from that
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spirit, that one may observe them to be every where looked on, as if they were a distinct people from the body of the nation, and a great shiness of conversing, or being intimate with them, except in some few, who look on that as an unreasonable prejudice. When there is no war to carry them abroad, they are moved about from place to place, often into obscure and remote corners, where they suffer inconvenience, fatigue, and expence, without the recompence of glory, or improvement, having little occasions of acquainting themselves with the world in those stationary domestic travels; nor have they much prospect of advancing their fortune in them. Whatever post they set out in, it is great odds, if they ever get a step higher, and they may often have the mortification of seeing others put over their heads, upon no greater merit but that of a better interest to recommend them. As the duties of their station generally carry them from all their former friendships and habitudes, and leave them many leisure hours, they have some peculiar temptations to supply the more elegant entertainments they may have left, and to fill up their vacant time, with companions of the bottle, or other excesses, which are to be met with in most places: And swearing seems, I know not how, a vice almost privileged in a soldier. However, there are many among them, who conscientiously forbear to make use of it, and do not think the profession of a soldier allows them to war against heaven; many, who having had the advantage of a liberal education, and come into the army with a taste for *les belles lettres*, know how to carry an entertainment with them into the most unpolite or desert regions, and can every where find ways of employing their time, without having recourse to those pernicious irregularities, which, under the pretence of passing away the time, destroy the very end, for which it was given us.

If, by some apparent disposition of providence, you should, on prudent motives, be determined for the army (which, otherwise, it would not be advisable in you to seek) endeavour to associate with officers of the character last mentioned, who delight in an ingenious and useful conversation, allowing themselves only a cheerful glass so far, as may promote it, or such kind of diversions, as may serve to unbend the mind, without inflaming the passions. But if you have not the good fortune to meet with such valuable companions, you will need the greater guard upon your own actions. A man, who is steady and open in declaring at first, a resolution against intemperance, and any kind of vice, may, without being unsociable, by a frank and easy manner, abstain from all excesses or disorders; and yet acquit himself acceptably enough, even with company, that are not themselves so reserved. Instances of this sort of conduct are not wanting, which you would do well to imitate: But in this you must be constant and resolute: the least yielding, tho' but once, will betray a weakness, that will lay you open to the importunities or insults of your companions, which will be a perpetual snare to your virtue.

There is no station, in which a habit of study, and a delight in books, will be of more advantage to you than in this, since you may often be reduced to have no other suitable society, nor does it less adorn the profession of a soldier.

WOMEN.

There is so great a propensity in both sexes to delight in each other, that it cannot be left out of consideration, in directing the conduct of either. The libertine part of the world imagine, that this strong bent of nature is a sufficient excuse for all the irregularities it occasions; not considering, that thus they rank themselves with those animals, who have no other principle of action, but natural instinct; and that one great use of reason, by which we are chiefly

chiefly distinguished from them, is to examine, for what ends our passions, inclinations, and appetites, were given us, and so regulate them as may best conduce to those ends; which in general are, the preservation and perfection of our own being, and the benefit of society: And those, who suffer their natural inclinations to run loose and unbridled, without the direction of that guide, which their being made rational animals obliges them to follow, will be accountable to the author of their nature, for the neglect or misapplication of the faculties and propensions he has given them, and for all the consequences of such an abuse, whether to the prejudice of themselves, by disordering the frame of body and mind; or to that of their fellow creatures, in any respect whatsoever: So that the bent of nature, which men are so apt to plead, will be far from excusing a misuse of that bent, deordinate from the ends, for which it was intended.

There are no transactions in life, in which reflections on this kind will be more necessary, than in what regards your conduct with women. That pleasure, which the generality of your sex naturally find in conversing with them, has its use and advantages; but it has its snares and temptations too, and you had need to provide yourself with maxims entirely contrary to the notions and common practice of the men of the world, before you venture on a commerce, at once so agreeable, and so dangerous.

I speak not of that infamous part of the sex, who abandon themselves to prostitution. A man must have a taste very little refined, and have but ill fortified his virtue, who can find any temptation in such: they are wretches as corrupt in their principles, as in their practice; as destructive to the morals, as to the health and reputation of those, who have any intimacy with them. Let no pretence of diversion, in jollity of wine, or humour, draw you so much as to go near them: they are to be shunned

as one would do the plague; their snares are not more elegantly than justly described by the wise son of Sirach, to whom on this subject I remit you.

The dangers, that are to be apprehended in conversing with those of another character, as they are less gross, are by far the more insinuating. In the society of well-bred women, who have good sense, and a virtuous education, there are many real advantages to be met with. It restrains the unbounded licence of discourse, which men are apt to run into with one another; polishes their manners, and softens the rigid precepts of religion and virtue, by an agreeable way of recommending them. And diversions among them, whilst they are general and open, such as dancings, public walks, music, and the like, serve to cheer the spirits, unbend the mind, and are much safer than many others, with which the men, who have no taste for these, often supply their want.

But do not imagine, that women are to be considered only as objects of your pleasure, as the fine gentlemen of the world seem, by their conduct, to do. There is nothing more unjust, more base, and barbarous, than is often practised towards them, under the specious names of love and gallantry; as if they had not an equal right, with those of the other sex, to be treated with justice and honour. What would be thought of a man, who should take advantage of the weakness, credulity, complaisance, or affection of his friend, to ruin at once his innocence, his reputation, his fortune, and peace of mind for ever? Would not every one readily allow, that this was a great piece of villainy? And yet this very practice towards women passes for a trifle, the amusement of a man of gallantry; and is often made the subject of boast and triumph. This seems to proceed from that false notion, mentioned above, that every thing is allowable, for which natural inclination can be pleaded. But do not delude yourself by so irrational and pernicious a maxim, how plausibly so-

ever it may be maintained. A little reflection and observation of the many ill consequences of such loose principles, may satisfy you, that, tho' our inclinations are not in themselves evil, but have their proper ends and uses, they are only to be indulged so far, and in such circumstances, as reason, prudence, and the laws of the society, to which we belong, do allow. And be assured, that when those bounds are transgressed, by whatever partial judgment of the world your sex escape their share of the suffering and reproach, which falls heavily on the frail female side; they have generally a much deeper, and blacker, in that of the guilt.

If you possess your mind with a just sense of these truths, you will not designedly seek, or run headlong into, unlawful amours. But trust not to your good principles alone: men are often drawn unawares into actions, which themselves condemn, by not adverting to the danger of a temptation at first, or giving too much way to it. It is no more than virtue and prudence require, to avoid all particularity where you can have no serious design of fixing, especially where you find any real symptoms of a distinguishing inclination; for there is always the greatest danger. The safest course, in such a case, is to break off the acquaintance instantly, without so much as endeavouring to know, whether any return would be made; for though persons of solid virtue may sometimes, with innocence, indulge a mutual affection, where it is not convenient to marry; yet they can hardly ever do it with prudence. And on the first approaches of any real tenderness, you should consider well the consequences of engaging the affections of one, whom you cannot marry yourself; and whose circumstances may probably be such, as make it not reasonable for her to resolve against marrying at all. To be obliged to enter into so close an union with one person, whilst the affections are pre-engaged

to another, is certainly the greatest of all misfortunes, and the source of many sins. But though this should not happen, it is very imprudent and unsafe, to indulge an inclination, when it cannot end in a happy union; for no one knows how far their passions may carry them, if they once give way to them. There are not a few instances of persons not viciously inclined, who have by degrees been drawn into *attempts* or *compliances*, which they imagined themselves incapable of, and which have ended in ruin, grief, and remorse. Yet there is nothing, which the men of the world do with less scruple, than using their utmost endeavours to gain the affections of any one they happen to like, without regarding at all what the consequences of it may be; though such a practice is as utterly inconsistent with the true principles of honour, as with religion.

The wisest and safest course, in the case I have been speaking of, is, (as I have before said) immediately to withdraw from the danger. But I do not extend this to little likings, which serve only to render the conversation more agreeable, and are of no consequence, whilst it is *general*, and *open*; for even in such you must avoid too great *particularity*, which is never without its dangers.

Sunday's Journal.

AMong the many mistakes and false notions concerning religion, I know none, that more generally prevails, than that of considering it as a thing so entirely distinct from the common actions and affairs of life, as to have nothing at all to do with them, and placing the whole of religion in one single branch of it. From this partial view and mistaken

mistaken notion, numbers, who have been convinced of the necessity of leading a religious life, have thought it as necessary to seclude themselves from the world, in order to it; and that there was no way to heaven, but a desert or a monastery. The appellation of *religious* being so peculiarly appropriated in all popish countries to such recluses, has, no doubt, very much contributed to keep up this pernicious notion, that religion consists in nothing but prayer and contemplation; and that those, who are incumbered with worldly affairs, have nothing to do with it. These devotees seem to have forgot, that their great master, (who surely best understood his own religion) both practised, and taught, and strongly enforced, justice, charity, meekness, forgiveness, and all the social virtues, which they withdraw themselves from the possibility of exercising. Upon the same mistaken principle it is, that many others, who continue to live in the world, do yet content themselves with that one branch of religion; who spend the greatest part of their time in public and private devotions; and, on that account, desire to be thought, and really think themselves, very religious persons; but notwithstanding are eminently defective in most other religious duties. They are peevish, passionate, censorious, uncharitable, and sometimes even unjust; which gives the libertine and profane, too plausible a pretence to reproach and deride religion. Another sort of men there are, who act upon the same principle, but in a very different manner: they think religion has nothing to do with the world, and therefore they can have nothing to do with it. They are unavoidably engaged in a hurry of affairs; the care of the public, the establishment of their fortune, or the support of their family, engrosses all their time: how then can they have any for religion? If these busy people will bestow upon me a little of that leisure,

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which Sunday generally affords to persons in all stations, I would ask them, whether they have time to forgive an injury, to check a passion, to be temperate, just, or charitable? If they have, (and I believe no one of them will venture to say he has not) let them but join to the practice of these virtues an intention of performing them, because they are enjoined by the author of their being: let them every morning as they rise, before the bustling world breaks in upon them, offer the actions of the day to him; and every night, when the busy scene is shut, even whilst they are undressing, if they really have no other leisure for it, humbly and earnestly ask pardon for what has been done amiss; and let them gladly embrace the opportunity, which one day in seven offers for a more solemn worship: Such a life as this, I dare assure them, may very properly be called religious, and no man certainly can plead want of leisure for so much as this. So far are our worldly concerns from being inconsistent with religion, that they may be ordered in such a manner, as even to become religion itself: *whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, all may be done to the glory of God.* Did men sufficiently attend to this truth, (of which they have the injunction of an Apostle to assure them) they would not, as many do, leave their religion behind them in their closets; or, as is more usual, defer thinking of it at all, till they have nothing else to do. They would carry it about them wherever they go, mingle it with all the common actions of life, and would then find it a most easy, familiar, delightful companion. And however men have happened so entirely to separate the notion of religion from that of the common employments of life, methinks it is but obvious to reflect, that since the author of our being exacts from us a return of religious homage, and has likewise made these employments necessary to the

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the support of that being, they can by no means be inconsistent with each other. He would certainly have created us more self-sufficient, less dependent on one another, and less disposed for the offices of social life, if these duties, however distinct in idea, were not designed to be united in practice, and mutually to promote each other.

There are indeed some few persons, in all the different callings and employments of human life, who, conscious of this truth, make the duties of their station become instances of religion, and intersperse the busy scene with short, but more immediate acts of solemn adoration.

Of this we have an example in the life of an eminent person*, who has passed through the several important employments, to which he has been called, with the esteem and admiration of all parties, and who now, with great sufficiency, fills one of the most honourable posts of this kingdom. And though a continual succession of weighty and intricate affairs, attended with indefatigable labour and application, scarce leave him time for the necessary refreshments of nature, he wants no leisure for this useful method of being religious. An habitual intention of faithfully employing the great talents he has received from, and must give an account of, to the author of his being, influences his whole conduct, and produces that uniform virtue, which could be the effect of no other principle. It is to his being thus religious, that we owe that unshaken probity, that clearness of integrity, that impartial justice, that candour, and universal benignity, which compose his unblemished character, and make all, whose affairs and fortunes are entangled in difficulties, or embroiled in con-

* Lord Chancellor King.

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tests, pleased to have them submitted to his decision, and readily acquiesce in his unbiassed judgment.

On the usefulness of schools and universities, for the improvement of the mind, in right notions of God.

THE establishment of schools and universities for the instruction of youth in the most useful sciences, as it has been the practice of all civilized nations, so the advantages of it are too obvious to those, who have had the happiness of a liberal education in them, to need to be insisted on. I would only observe to you, that the greatest benefit we can receive from them, is by opening and enlarging our minds, to bring us to the knowledge of a supreme being, upon the most solid and rational grounds. This is the only immoveable foundation of moral virtue; and without this all our other studies are vain and empty, I had almost said, pernicious speculations.

How poor a logician must he be, who, whilst he reduces reasoning to an art, and considers the progress of his own understanding, does not see, that all this active thought cannot be the effect of heavy senseless matter; and is not from thence led to the necessary consequence of admitting an eternal, self-existent mind, from which all other thinking beings must be derived!

How idly would the astronomer be employed, who in calculating the motions of the heavenly bodies, and observing their order and regularity, should only divert himself with the agreeable amusement, without reflecting what that power must be, which can sustain such ponderous orbs, prevent

prevent their interfering with each other, and keep them in a constant course, so contrary to the known laws of bodies set in motion!

How vain, how minute a philosopher must he be, who considering the wonderful discoveries, that have been made in physical things, where causes and effects, means and ends are so admirably adapted to each other, should ascribe all to undesigned chance!

And even in the practical sciences, he, who makes ethics his study, who considers the laws of nature, and the duties of society, if he leaves out of the consideration a supreme being, of perfect goodness and rectitude, will find he builds on a very defective foundation. For though virtue is indeed lovely in itself, commands our approbation, and naturally tends to the happiness of mankind, if universally practised; yet, such is the general defection from it, that the good man will often meet with disappointments, both of that happiness he proposed to himself, and of that, which he endeavoured to procure to others by the practice of justice and benevolence. What then can serve to keep him steady in this course of virtue? He has nothing left but the approbation of his own mind; and even that will begin to fail him, when he sees the aim and purpose of virtue defeated.

But if, from his ideas of goodness, justice, and equity, he has raised his thoughts to the original of those ideas, the author of that nature of ours, which is so formed, that we cannot but approve the practice of virtue, nor attain to our perfection or happiness without it; he will then have a noble and rational support against all difficulties and discouragements: He will contemplate an universal mind, superintending all his works, distinguishing and approving such, as act suitably to the nature he has given them; and cannot doubt, that a being of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, will in conclu-

conclusion, rectify and restore all things to that order, which was at first designed; so that virtue shall attain its end, the perfection and happiness of all its followers.

Some late moralists, indeed, who have carried the natural disposition of man to virtue very high, have asserted, that the value of it is lessened by having any respect to a deity, or the prospect of a future reward, as too interested and selfish; tho' even upon their own scheme, the tendency, which virtue has to promote the happiness of mankind, and of every individual, as involved in that of the public, is made the only motive to the exercise of it, and with good reason; for the desire of happiness is so natural to man, that he cannot be divested of it. This is a selfishness, which has nothing amiss in it, if he does not place his good in wrong objects, nor pursue it by wrong means, that is such, as will really prove contrary to his true interest. And if man is allowed to seek his true good, by promoting that of the public, and the practice of all the moral virtues, certainly it can be no diminution of his worth, that he is willing to postpone his share of happiness, and trust the sovereign of the universe with the final issue of his actions. This is a selfishness, which, instead of contracting, must enlarge and heighten, as well as support his virtue: nay, may we not rather say, that the virtue of man cannot possibly be complete, whilst it has no respect to that relation, in which he stands to the author of his being?

On the credibility of the historical parts of Scripture.

THE credibility of the historical part of Scripture seems to me to be founded on a different, and much stronger ground, than that of any other history; for instance, *Cæsar's Commentaries*, as of best authority; which containing only a relation of things, that were in no wise to influence the future actions of men, there could be no visible effects of them remaining to posterity, by which to judge what credit he had in the age wherein he writ, with those, who might certainly be informed of the truth, or falshood, of what he relates. So that we have now no other assurance of the truth of that history, but the probability of *Cæsar's* sincerity and impartiality in his own cause.

Whereas, the holy Scriptures, being written with a design to establish a peculiar faith and doctrine, their success in that design seems to me an evidence, that those things, which they relate, were known to be true, by a considerable number of persons, who lived in that time, wherein they are said to be done. For otherwise I do not see how they could possibly have ever been believed, professing (as they all along do) that the wonderful things, which they mention, were done in the view of many hundreds of persons, and that great numbers were converted at the sight of those miracles; which was giving men so sure and obvious a means to know, whether they wrote the truth or not, as must certainly have overthrown their own design, if their pretences had been false.

So that we do not solely rely upon the credibility of the writers of the holy Scriptures for their truth, but upon the senses, and judgment of the

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first converts to Christianity; in a matter, which they were competent judges of, the miracles being sensible; and in a cause, which they were not likely to be partial for, being so opposite to all the prevailing vices of mankind, and so little for their secular interest.

On moral virtue, and its natural tendency to happiness.

THE practice of moral virtue does so naturally tend to the happiness of men, that some of the antient philosophers have placed their *summum bonum* in it; and certainly they came very near the truth, since heaven itself, the reward, which revelation has proposed to those, who endeavour to perfect themselves in virtue here, is described to be a city, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

But this natural tendency of moral virtue to the happiness of mankind has, on the other hand, tempted some perverse minds to decry it, as a mere invention of politicians, to keep the several societies of men in good order; though this, by which they intended to deny, does in reality evidence, the unalterable nature of moral good and evil; for no laws of politicians could make virtue serve to promote the public good, if it did not so of its own nature, that is, from its suitableness to the nature of mankind, and from the unalterable relations of things, established by the rectitude of the divine nature. And where can we find a foundation more solid, more sacred, more unchangeable! Let the most artful *Machiavilian* try, if he can make injustice, cruelty, treachery, and ingratitude, by any laws in their favour, serve to promote the good of society: and if he cannot (as I

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believe no one will suppose that he can) let then such perverse reasoners confess, that moral good is not made so by the laws of men; and that those laws only give their sanction to that, which in itself is unalterably good, and necessary to the happiness of mankind.

But such is the ingenuity of depraved man to draw evil out of good, that because the practice of moral virtue does indeed generally advance the happiness of particular men, as well as of societies; therefore a late author has maintained, that man has no disposition to virtue, no motives to it, or sense of it, but from self-love and self-interest. If one, who argues thus, belies his own sentiments, to vilify or depreciate this greatest excellence of man, his capacity for the most generous heights of virtue, how ought he to be abhorred? If he speaks from what he feels in himself, if he is of that wretched frame of mind, never to have felt the pleasure of a benevolent disposition, the delight of doing good without any thought of advantage from it, how is he to be pitied? But were all mankind of the same sordid make, from whence could come that joy, that transport, which we find on the bare hearing of some noble beneficent action, done many ages ago, or at the greatest distance from us? If no man found in himself any other principle of action but self-interest, how could we have any notion of a generous benevolence? How could we expect any one to act from a public spirit? Whence could come that contempt, which we have even of beneficial actions, when we perceive them to be done on views of self-interest; and on the contrary, that high esteem, which we find for such, as are done solely for the good of others, without any prospect of advantage to the actors? And what rational account can we give of the conduct of those worthy *Romans* we so much admire, who sacrificed every private advantage, and

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despised their own lives for the good of their country? Could an action so heroically virtuous, as that of *Regulus*, be performed on motives of self-love, and self-interest, without any sense of, or satisfaction in the good he was doing? How inconsistent is this with the very nature of the action itself?

We may then conclude, that virtue or moral good has a real excellence in itself, and suitability to the very frame of our nature, which makes it lovely and eligible, even when we are sufferers by it. And though we cannot boast, as the *Stoics* did, of our wise man, that he is absolutely master of his own happiness, since the vices of others, and the evil of pain, from which he cannot exempt himself, will often disturb him in a state not intended for perfect happiness; yet this we may say, that virtue will make a man pass his time with the greatest tranquillity here, and give him the most certain prospect of complete felicity hereafter. Some indeed are so nice, as to think the rewards of heaven too mercenary an end for heroic virtue to propose: but this can be only from a mistake of the nature of those rewards, which, as an excellent divine has observed, are themselves the perfection of virtue.

Notes on Christianity as old as the Creation.

THE author takes no notice of that general corruption and degeneracy of manners, which the old philosophers were so much at a loss to account for; nor seems aware, how little the bulk of mankind are capable of discovering the obligations of nature, or of the want of authority in those, that

do, to enforce it on them: he asserts, that all men are capable of it, contrary to plain fact.

It is no just objection against revealed religion, that it has not been made known to all men, and in all ages; since neither has God given all men equal capacities or opportunities of knowing his will by the light of nature.

The abuses of church government, and positive duties, are no arguments, that they were not designed by God for the good of mankind; any more than tyranny, the evils, that factious and ambitious men have brought upon the world, and the grievous burdens, which the chicanery of lawyers has introduced, are arguments, that civil government and human laws are not for the good of mankind. Religious institutions being necessarily committed to the care of men, human passions and interests will of course mingle in them as with other things. A declaimer against all laws and government might find more ample matter in history from the abuses of them, than all the ill use of the power of the clergy, and the stress laid upon positive duties, will afford.

Positive duties not arbitrary, but adapted to change of circumstances; therefore variable, though at all times designed as helps to the performance of moral duties, and equally obligatory to all where enjoined, though some might possibly have attained the end without them.

No more tyranny in enjoining certain forms, postures, or habits in religious worship, though things in themselves indifferent, than in kings subjecting all, who come to their courts, to particular forms, ceremonies, and dress, otherwise indifferent; and distinguishing his principal officers by some peculiar mark. Why is not a white staff, and kneeling to kiss the king's hand, as much tyranny or superstition, as a white surplice, or kneeling in religious worship?

Our

Our views are too limited to judge of the government of the universe: we know little of that small system, of which we inhabit a part, and less of what relation it stands in to the whole of God's works; nor can determine what respects the punishment of wicked men in a future state may have to others of his creatures, in his eternal government of the universe. If misery is allowed to be the necessary consequence of vice in this life, why not in the other? Would it be just in God to treat the obstinate and incorrigibly wicked, with the same marks of favour and approbation, as the virtuous and good? If not, then an immortal being, absolutely incorrigible and impenitent, must be in a state of suffering proportionate to his demerit, though without any view of his amendment; misery being reasonably to be supposed as necessary a consequence of vice to all eternity, as in this short life. See *Characteristics*.

Though it be true, that nothing could be admitted for divine revelation, that contradicted our natural notions of good and evil, or inconsistent with the demonstrable attributes of God; yet it does not follow, that nothing can be matter of revelation, but what reason could antecedently discover. There are many truths, which may be very useful forms to know, which reason could by no means assure us of, though very consistent with it when revealed; for instance, God's acceptance of penitent sinners, and the resurrection of the dead.

There is nothing proposed to be believed in Scripture, which we do not understand, though there may be difficulties raised, about the manner of some things asserted, which we cannot solve. But then the manner, how those things are, is no more an object of our faith, than of our understanding. The propositions themselves may be very intelligible, though we know nothing of the manner of them, as there are many such in natural things;

things. To instance only in one, the soul and body mutually operate on each other, is a very intelligible proposition; yet how it is possible for thought to excite motion, and to be excited by it, is utterly inconceivable to us.

There is nothing in revelation, that represents God as arbitrary, tyrannical, or an object of terror to any, but the obstinately wicked. The whole tenor of the Gospel is a declaration of the exceeding love of God to mankind, and the strongest motives of love and gratitude to him; nor is there any thing superadded to natural religion in all the doctrines of it, but greater incitements or assistances to the performance of moral duties.

No one person, who sincerely believed the doctrine of satisfaction by *Jesus Christ*, as delivered in the Scriptures, ever imagined it a reasonable consequence from it; that since God was so ready to pardon sinners, and to sacrifice his innocent son, wickedness must be more acceptable to him than innocence; a thought, which perhaps never entered any head but the author's, as it must have done, had it been a natural inference.

Sacrifices, though not in themselves acceptable to God, yet may have proper influences on the minds of men, and on that account be worthy of God to appoint.

On the infallibility of the church of Rome.

S I R,

BY the position laid down in your letter, viz. "That there can be no constant obligation to unity, but on the supposition, that the church will not err in things necessary to salvation,"

you

On the infallibility of the church of Rome. 135

you seem to suppose such an absolute obligation to unity, that there can be no justifiable cause of a separation, if the church does not err in things necessary to salvation; which most certainly the whole church cannot do, for to err in such things is to cease to be a church; and *Christ* has promised, that the gates of hell shall not destroy it. But it is to be considered, whether the church, or a considerable part of it, though retaining all truths absolutely necessary to salvation, may not mingle with them some errors in doctrine, and corruptions in worship, and so impose them, that it will be impossible to continue in her communion, without joining in those errors and corruptions, nay, without professing them to be divine truths; which those, who perceive them to be errors, cannot do without great danger of their salvation: And whether in such a case, any part of the church being convinced of those errors, by comparing them with her rule, the written word of God, be not only allowed, but obliged to reform herself; the consequence of which will unavoidably be a separation from the external communion of that part, which imposes such errors and corruptions in worship, as the necessary conditions of her communion. This appears to have been the case at the Reformation, which was rather a separation of than from the church; since that, which reformed, was as much a part of the church, as that, which refused to reform; and could not separate from itself, or cease to be a part of the church, by freeing itself from such things, as were contrary to the plain word of God, and the practice of the primitive catholic church.

But here your other difficulty will occur, "How several churches, differing in faith, and denying communion to one another, can all be parts of the one catholic church?" To resolve which it must be enquired, what is meant by *differing in faith*?

faith? If by this is understood differing in things *necessary to salvation*, I grant that churches so differing cannot all be parts of the one catholic church; for as the holding of all things absolutely necessary to salvation is essential to the *being* of the church, an agreement in such necessary truths is that, which constitutes its *unity*. But this hinders not, that churches differing in matters *not essential*, though of importance, may be parts of the one catholic church; by virtue of their *agreement in essentials*; as the *Jewish* and *Gentile* converts no doubt were, whilst they differed in so important a point, as the obligation to observe the ceremonial law; and whilst the first thought it unlawful to admit the *Gentiles* into the communion of the church at all. And the high debates, which have been long kept up between several orders in the church of *Rome*, shew, that even they esteem a difference in matters, thought very weighty by the contending parties, not inconsistent with being members of the same church.

As to the other part of your question, "How several churches *denying communion* to one another, can all be parts of the one catholic church?" I believe it is allowed on all hands, that this may, and has several times been so, in the case of an unjust censure, either of particular men or churches. As in the famous instance of Pope *Victor's* excommunicating all the *Asian* churches, for so inconsiderable a matter, as differing from him about the time of keeping *Easter*.

And if the same spirit of over-valuing small things, and too little regarding the union of the church, has divided some Protestants in their external communion, though otherwise agreeing in *essentials*: or if the *Roman* church deny them her communion, for refusing to join in her corruptions, though agreeing with her in fundamentals; I see not why all these may not be parts of the

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one catholic church, by virtue of their holding the same catholic faith, the ancient creeds; as well as the Eastern and Western churches are allowed to have been, though, by *Victor's* rash censure, divided in their *external* communion.

Divisions of this kind are certainly very mischievous, as they break charity, give great scandal to the enemies of Christianity, and by many ways occasion the loss of mens salvation; so that those, by whose wilful fault they are caused, or promoted, are, no doubt, in a most heinous degree of guilt. And therefore the Fathers might well, out of a laudable zeal for the peace, and honour, and union of the church, say very severe things concerning the danger of separating from her; and in the particular cases, which under general expressions they commonly had in view, those severe sayings might be strictly true; though every separation is not a separation from the church, does not cut off those, who separate, from the *internal* communion of it, nor involve them in the guilt of schism. The Fathers had not all possible states and cases, that might happen in the church, under consideration. Had the *Trent* creed been introduced in their time, who were jealous of the least addition to the received creeds; or had they seen prayers to saints, worship of images, half communion, divine service in an unknown tongue, &c. made necessary terms of communion, they would no doubt have changed their language, and said with the prophet, *Come out of her, my people*.

However, it will not appear upon an impartial examination, that when the Fathers spoke of the danger of separating from the church, they meant any particular set of men, or *church of one denomination*, in whose external communion all were bound to unite. But whatever appearance their sayings may have, they are of no authority to direct our faith, further than they are supported by

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Scripture. If there were any such church, which must be known by certain notes or marks, no doubt the Scripture would have given us such plain directions to find her, as no sincere enquirer could have been mistaken in. But since all the texts, which those of the *Romish* church found her infallibility upon, fall very short of such a direction, I see not how we can be more secure of being in union with the catholic church, by an external communion with the church of *Rome*, than with the church of *England*, who is united with her in all those things, on account of which she is allowed to be a part of the church, and divided from her in such things only, as manifest her to be a corrupt part, such as she has introduced contrary to the plain word of God. This seems to me so justifiable a cause of separation, that it cannot possibly hinder those, who thus throw off the *wood, and hay, and stubble*, (as *St. Paul* speaks) which had been unwarrantably laid on the foundation, from remaining sound parts of the church, whilst the other, who retain those superinducements, may likewise continue a part, though an *unsound part* of it. I hope, Sir, what I have said, may suggest something to your own thoughts, which may give farther light to clear your difficulties, and heartily wish you that peace, which I enjoy in the communion of the church of *England*; to which if I can contribute in any degree, it will be a great satisfaction to

S I R,

Your most humble Servant.

Answer

Answer to a question in the Gentleman's Magazine.

In the Magazine for May 1737, is proposed the following question:

QUESTION.

IF self-preservation be the prime law of nature, and the sole end, for which men enter into society; and if the magistrate has no power but what is derived from the people; and if the people have no power over their own lives; whether the jurisdiction of the magistrate can lawfully, and consistently with these principles, extend to the life of the subject? And if it does, will not the same reasons justify suicide?

East-Lotbrian,
May 23.

Yours, &c.

CLEMENS.

The QUESTION answered.

Mr. URBAN,

Your Magazine for *May* last did not reach us at this distance till the middle of *July*; otherwise I should sooner have sent an answer to the question, proposed in it p. 260, dated from *East-Lotbrian*, and signed *Clemens*. Perhaps others may have been beforehand with me: however, as different solutions of important difficulties are of use, you may please to insert the following answer in your next.

If self-preservation be the prime law of nature, (as is supposed in the question) it is plain no man can have a right to take away his own life, because this would be a right inconsistent with that prime law, and imply a contradiction, viz. a right to do a thing, which by the prime law of nature he is obliged

ligned not to do. But on the other hand, if self-preservation be the prime law of nature, it must follow, that every man has a right to *defend his own life* against any other, who attacks it, even at the expence of the life of that other, if he can no way else secure himself. This then is that right (the right of self-defence) which every man in society has given up to the magistrate, excepting cases of extreme exigence, where recourse cannot be had to public authority.

If the people had a right (for I chuse to use that word rather than power) over their own lives, and upon entering into society had resigned that right, it would follow, that the supreme magistrate might take away every man's life at pleasure. But as the people never could have any such right, all the right they can give, and all the magistrate can derive from them, is, a right of defending the innocent against the injurious; which can only extend to the life of the subject, so far as is necessary for the security of the society, a reason, which will in no case justify suicide.

I shall be glad to hear, that this gives satisfaction to your correspondent, and am,

Aberdeen, July
22, 1737.

S I R,

Your humble Servant,

C. C.

Mr. URBAN,

I find there are several answers to *Clemens*, in your Magazine for *July*, before I had so much as heard of his question; and I think your ingenious correspondents have said enough to shew the Gentleman, who in *June* p. 344 remarks upon it, that those, who derive the authority of the supreme magistrate from the people, need not be puzzled with *Clemens's* query, viz. "Whether the people have
" not as good a right to take away their own lives,

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" as to give the magistrate authority to do it." Yet I do not see, that any of their answers have superseded mine: the solution I have given may serve to enforce the truths they have asserted, and to obviate some objections, to which they may be liable for want of having explicitly shewn, as I have plainly done, how the whole body of the people can give the civil magistrate a right to take away life, though not one of them has a right to take away his own; since it is certain, as the Gentleman in p. 344 justly remarks, that no man can give more authority to another than he has himself, which objection my answer has intirely removed; and two of your correspondents, p. 421, 422, (especially the last) do indeed imply that, which I have more directly laid down to be the only solid foundation for the authority of the magistrate over the life of the subject, as derived from the people, viz. their having given up to him that right, which every man must have by the law of nature, to defend his life or property against any one who attacks it. But as this is not expressed in either of their answers, I am persuaded mine will not be thought useless to set that important matter in the clearest light. This is a foundation, which leaves not the least ground, upon which to justify the unnatural crime of suicide, and takes off all necessity of having recourse to the immediate appointment of God for the authority of the civil magistrate to punish with death. And I believe the gentleman, who asserts this to be the case, would be more puzzled on his side, to shew at what time, or in what manner, God has given any authority to supreme magistrates, distinct from that, which himself owns they receive from the people, who, he says, " have a power of chusing and assigning over this sovereign authority to one or many, according to the constitutions of the several states and kingdoms in the world." But how

how could they do this, if that authority was not first vested in themselves? Since, as was before observed, no man can give more authority to another than he has himself: and that the people have this authority, is plain from one of those very texts, which he brings to support the contrary doctrine, *Gen. ix. 6. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.* For this is not an authority given to magistrates, but a law given to *Noah* and his sons, and in them to all mankind. The people derive indeed the authority to punish with death, (as they do the right of self-defence and all other natural rights) from the immediate appointment of God; but he has left to them to institute government, and to assign over to their governors, whatever power is necessary for the safety of the society. The other texts, *Rom. xiii.* which the gentleman builds upon, must be understood in a sense consistent with *fact*; and it is very evident, that all the governments, that are, or have been in the world (excepting the particular case of the *Israelites*) were of human institution, whether established by force, or by compact, and must be maintained either by the express or tacit consent of the people. And yet government is very properly said to be the ordinance of God, as he is the God of order, and author of that rational and social nature, of which government is a necessary consequence.

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.

Remarks

Remarks on Mr. Seed's sermon, on moral virtue.

IT is surprizing to observe, how fashionable the interested scheme of morality is grown among our late writers; which I think can no way be accounted for, but from their zeal against the false insinuations of the *Characteristics*, and that strong bias in human nature, which inclines men in avoiding one extreme to run into the other. Of this we had a fatal instance at the Restoration, when to express their abhorrence of the former hypocrisy, the generality of the nation became ashamed of nothing so much, as having any appearance of religion. And now, because a celebrated author has represented any regard to future rewards as dangerous to virtue, tending to render it selfish or mercenary; those writers must needs have it, that without a certainty of future rewards, or without selfish regards, there could be no obligation to virtue, no duty at all. One of these, who has lately published two volumes of very judicious sermons, but in that upon the foundation of morality has adopted the interested scheme, may well be presumed to have been swayed by that strong bias, so prevalent in the heat of opposition. He seems to have just notions of virtue, and of human nature, and even a taste of that exquisite and delicate delight of communicating happiness to others: and yet having the errors in view, into which Lord Shaftsbury, and his followers, had by these fine sentiments been led; (for that those are the authors he opposes is plain, by his talking of "harangues on the abstract beauty, and intrinsic valuableness of virtue, and of attempts to build morality on

* Discourses upon several important subjects, by *Jeremiah Seed*, M. A. vol. i. Sermon 16. and 17. third edition.

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"the ruins of religion") he runs off from that just defence, which his own notions of virtue and nature might have suggested to him, and falls into the depth of the interested scheme, as if one extreme could only be counterbalanced by another. I do not know, whether this set of writers have borrowed their notions from one another; but if not, it is strange they should sympathize in such odd, and not very obvious ones, as many of them have urged on this subject. This author, among the rest, tells us^b, that what would be highly rational, and consequently virtue, upon the supposition of a future state, would be madness, and consequently not virtue, if that were left out of the account. When I first met with this notion, I thought it so singular and extravagant, that it needed only to be taken notice of as such; but I now find it is the common topic of those writers.

Remarks upon an Inquiry into the origin of human appetites and affections.

THE author of a late *Inquiry into the origin of the human appetites and affections, &c.* has attacked some remarks in the *History of the works of the learned*, on the notes to Archbishop King's *Origin of Evil*, in so gentle a manner, that one would think his chief design in it, was to shew the young gentlemen, for whose use his book is intended, the art of evading, or of raising a mist about arguments, that will not bear answering. The first argument, on which he has displayed his art, is to this purpose: If there was no fitness or suitableness in reverence, from a creature to his creator, antecedent

^b Serm. xvi. p. 409.

to the will of God, and the happiness he has annexed to it; then God might *originally* have annexed the happiness of his creatures to their *irreverence* towards him, and so made that their duty. If this appears an absurd supposition to those, who deny any antecedent fitness or unfitness in things, it is a plain giving up their cause; for there can be no absurdity in that supposition, if the fitness or suitableness of reverence from the creature to the creator depends solely on the creator's will, and the happiness he has made consequent upon it; since in that case, his willing the direct contrary would make irreverence as fit, or as suitable to the nature of both.

Now what does our author say upon this? Why truly he says a great deal about several matters, that have just as much to do with the argument, as is necessary to make his readers lose sight of it; and then he comes to tell us, "That when a certain system is once resolved upon, to suppose the subjects of it might be under other and contrary obligations, than what do necessarily arise out of its establishment, is to suppose the author of it *unwilling, what he had before willed*." Irreverence therefore (says he) could never become a duty, even on our principle of deducing all duties from a consideration of the divine will." This may pass for an answer through a mist of words, but the argument urges, that upon their principles, who deny any antecedent fitness or unfitness in things, God might *originally*, that is, before he had willed reverence to be a duty, have willed, that irreverence should be so. And this sure is not supposing him to unwill what he had willed before; nor could this sense be easily mistaken; for the word *originally* is distinguished in this gentleman's quotation by a different character, as if it was thought to mean something;

and if it had any meaning at all, it could be no other than what I have here explained. The argument speaks of what God might have willed before this system was created, and he answers with what the present constitution of things requires. However, if God enjoins reverence, because it promotes his designs of creation, and forbids irreverence, because it has a contrary tendency, as this writer afterwards tells us; what is this, but that very antecedent fitness and unfitness we contend for? If there was no tendency in the nature of things to promote, or to hinder God's designs in the creation, every thing would be equally fit for him to command; which is the absurdity the argument was intended to expose; and there is no way to get clear of it, but by owning an antecedent fitness in the nature of things, as this writer has here done, even whilst he is denying it. For if God has enjoined reverence on account of its tendency or fitness to promote the designs of creation, it must have had that tendency antecedently to his willing it; nothing can be plainer than this.

The next passage our author attacks is this question, Whether reverence and gratitude to the creator would not be always the duty of a creature, though we should suppose him unalterably placed in a state of the utmost happiness he was capable of? a question put to some, who had asserted, that *nothing can be our duty, that is not our interest into the bargain*. In respect of this, our author makes a threefold observation. First, to suppose a creature unalterably placed in the same state is to suppose that creature in a state of independence on its creator, and, as such, is a self-destructive notion. Secondly, it is of the nature and condition of a rational dependent being, to be ever improving and advancing itself to greater degrees of perfection, by the exercise of those powers belonging

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to it. It is absurd and contradictory, therefore, to suppose a creature advanced to such a height, as to be incapable of rising higher, or to be happy to that degree, as not to have it ever in his power to become more so. Thirdly, which (says he) is the most material observation, but generally overlooked, the question is put, and the appeal made, to beings, known to be under the influence of this association, who being so, are prejudiced, and in that view incompetent judges to be applied to in determining an affair of this nature. For in a system of beings constituted dependent on each other, and absolutely so on the great author of it, gratitude is a proper duty of those beings: it will necessarily be formed, or will grow out of the circumstances of such beings: the supposition therefore is such, as destroys itself.

To the first of these observations I answer, that it is certainly possible for God, by his free bounty, in reward of tried obedience, to place a creature unalterably in a state of happiness. There is no contradiction in it; the case may therefore be supposed, and cannot be a self-destructive notion.

To the second I answer, that an eternal progression in degrees of perfection and happiness, how beautifully soever it may be imagined, is but an hypothesis: it has no foundation in Scripture, nor any strong enough from reason or analogy, to make a different supposition *absurd or contradictory*; especially since, on the contrary, it is the generally received opinion, that after the resurrection, good men will be fixed in the utmost happiness they are capable of, which is ground enough to form a supposition upon.

As to the third, which is said to be the most material observation, I do not well see the importance of it, nor is it very clearly express; but I think the meaning is, that mankind are prejudiced

diced in favour of gratitude; for in such a system of beings, benefits will be always received, and always expected; so that gratitude must be ever the duty of those beings, (he should have said, *and ever their interest too*, to make his sense complete, and his conclusions hold) therefore such beings are incompetent judges of what might be the case in other circumstances; and therefore the supposition is such, as destroys itself. But this is all mere *evasion*. Numberless instances may be given, where benefits have been received, and no more to be expected; and I see not why mankind may not be unprejudiced judges, whether gratitude would not be a duty in such cases, which was the design of the question. However, the gentlemen, to whom the appeal was made, are in no danger of being prejudiced *in favour* of any virtue, that is not *their interest into the bargain*. But here let me tell this author, that fair answerers, who sincerely seek truth, consider chiefly the *intention* of an argument, or a question, distinct from the particular manner of proposing it; and he cannot be insensible, that the question before us might have been put in lower instances, which may frequently occur in such a system as ours, that would have left no room for his cavils or evasions.

The third and last passage, which this gentleman takes notice of, is in these words: "The very notion of reward and punishment implies an antecedent duty or obligation, the conforming, or not conforming to which, is the only ground of reward and punishment." These therefore cannot be the foundation of the obligation; though the Translator supposes all obligation to arise solely from a prospect of them. And what does he say to this? Does he attempt to prove, that rewards and punishments may be established,

blished, where there is no antecedent duty or obligation? No such matter. He only says, that whenever I desire it, he is ready to demonstrate, that all obligation is founded on a view of obtaining pleasure, or of avoiding pain. And that to talk of obligation without a motive, or of a motive distinct from happiness, is quite ridiculous. But instead of desiring it, I should be very sorry to see a reasonable being attempting to demonstrate, that to promote the good of others, or to do what is fit and right to be done, are not proper motives of obligation to moral agents.