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THE  
BEAUTY  
OF  
HOLINESS.

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PROV. III. 17.

*Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness,  
and all her Paths are Peace.*

Whoever would effectually plead the Cause of Piety and Religion, must not only recommend the Principles of it to the Understanding, as most true and certain ; but the Practice of it to the Will and Affections, as desirable and delightful. For we find it verified by daily Experience, that it is much easier to conquer the Arguments of Atheism, than the Prejudices of Profaneness ; and when we have master'd the Judgment, to yield to the

the Reasonableness of the Christian Doctrine, and the infinite Advantages of its Rewards, yet still we must encounter with a strong Reserve of Prejudices and Mistakes, ghastly Spectres, and hideous Apparitions, that fright the Will from embracing a Religion that is represented so dismal and unpleasant. Pleasure is so sweet, and potent a Charm, that neither Reason, nor Rewards, can prevail against the Insinuations of it. And therefore nothing would tend more to the Advancement of true Godliness, than if we could clearly demonstrate, that it hath not only the Advantage above Sin and Vice in respect of future and eternal Joys, but in respect of present Pleasure and Satisfaction; and thereby convert Temptation into Motive, the Snare of the Devil into a Cord of Love, and turn the most destructive Engine of Hell against its own Gates. For whilst Mens Minds are possess'd with a false Opinion, that the Ways of Virtue are all strewed with Thorns and Galthrops, that Piety is a sowre ill-natured, fetrical Thing, a sullen Matron that entertains her Followers only upon Sighs and Tears, sad Reflexions, and doleful Regrets: That to obtain the Joys of the next Life, we must bid an everlasting Adieu to the Contents of this, and never  
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more expect a chearful Hour, a clear Day, or a bright Thought to shine upon us; it will be utterly in vain to bring them Tidings of the heavenly *Canaan*, that *Land which flows with Milk and Honey*; for the Dread of these *Anakims*, and fenced Cities, will make them murmur against their Guide, and resolve rather to die in *Egypt*.

I thought therefore, that the best Service I could do for Religion, would be to pluck off this deformed Visor, and to represent true Piety and Holiness in its genuine Beauty and Sweetness; and to convince the voluptuous World, that they are wofully mistaken in their Estimate and Pursuit of Pleasure; that they seek the Living among the Dead, that they neglect the Fountain of living Waters, and seek for Refreshment at those Cisterns that hold no other but the tainted Waters of *Marah* and *Meribah*, Bitterness and Strife. To this End, I have chosen these Words of the wise Man, *Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace*.

That Relative Particle, *Her Ways*, leads us back to the 13th Verse, *Happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the Man that getteth Understanding*: From whence he proceeds to demonstrate the Happiness of this Man in the following Verses, by the Ex-

cellency of Wisdom, *Verses 14, 15. She is more precious than Rubies; and all the Things thou canst desire, are not to be compared to her: Then by the Rewards of it in three of the choicest Blessings humane Nature doth most covet, Long Life, Riches, and Honour: Length of Days is in her Right Hand, and in her Left Hand Riches and Honour. And lastly, By the Pleasantness of it in the Words of my Text, Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness: So that if Life, if Riches, if Honour, if Pleasure, if the Confluence of all Good can make a Man happy, he might well pronounce, Happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom.*

Well, but what is this Wisdom that is thus profitable, thus pleasant? Is it a subtle Management of our own Concerns, or a politick Negotiating the mighty Affairs of States and Kingdoms? Alas! the Cares, Perplexities, and Disquiets that attend these Things, do evidently prove, that they are not *Ways of Pleasantness*; but sometimes unsafe, always intricate and intangled. In a Word therefore, that Wisdom whose *Ways are Pleasantness and Peace*, is nothing else but true Religion, solid Piety and Holiness; *The Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom; and to depart from Evil, that is Understanding, Job 28. 28.* And therefore we find, that throughout this

this whole Book of the *Proverbs*, wherein *Solomon* doth so often chastise the Fool, he means no other Person but the wicked Man. Wisdom and Folly are synonymous Terms with Holiness and Impiety ; and do very well express them both in their Causes, and their Consequents : For as Folly is the Cause of Sin, and the Consequents of Sinning do very evidently prove them Fools who commit it ; so Wisdom is the Origine of Piety, and the Consequents of Piety do clearly prove them wise who follow it. So then you see that these Ways of Wisdom, which are recommended to us as pleasant, are the Fear of God, Holiness, and true Piety.

I know that this will seem a grievous Paradox to as many as have not seen the Beauty, nor tasted the Sweetness of an holy Life ; but have degraded themselves to a brutish State, and have nothing left to relish Pleasures but their Senses : And yet even to such, (if their Sensuality hath not quite extinguish'd their Reason, and they have but Understanding enough to name them Men) I doubt not to prove, that the Pleasures of an holy Life are far more considerable than the Pleasures of Sin, and that the Rigours and Severities  
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of it are less grievous, than the Trouble and Uneasiness of being wicked.

To this End I must first premise, that all Pleasure ariseth from an attempted Suitableness and Harmony that there is between the Faculty, and the Object. For where there is any Disagreement either in Contrariety, or Excess, the Result is not Pleasure, but Torment. Light, when it is just proportioned to the Strength of the Eye, is the Pleasure and Beauty of the whole Creation : *It is a pleasant Thing, saith Solomon, to behold the Light.* And Sounds, when they are modelled to the Capacity of the Ear, cause a sweet Melody and Consent. And so it is likewise with all other Objects ; when they are adapted to the Powers which are to receive them, Pleasure and Sweetness is the Offspring. Now Man is *ὀργανὸν διχορδον*, a *two-stringed Instrument* ; his Soul is one, and his Body the other. And as he receives smooth Touches upon either, according to the various Objects that are fitted to them, so springs up Suavity and Delight. Now here,

*First*, The Pleasures that Religion brings, are not such as do immediately affect the Body, the drossy and earthy Part of Man.

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It never spread the Glutton's Table, nor fill'd the Drunkard's Cup, nor was Taster to either. These Offices are too mean, and sordid for it. And if thou canst relish no other Delights, go herd thy self among Beasts. The Dog, and the Swine are fit Company, as well as Comparisons, for thee ; and thou wert made a Man, a rational and intellectual Creature, to no Purpose, unless to be eternally punish'd ; since the Soul of a Brute can as well taste the Pleasures of Sense, as thy immortal One.

But yet, if any think these such considerable Delights, that they cannot easily forego them ; let me add,

*Secondly*, That Religion and Piety, as it doth allow, so it adds a Sweetness and Relish to the lawful Comforts of this present Life, which Debauchery and Intemperance corrupts and vitiates. Let me here boldly appeal to your Experience, whether Sobriety and Temperance be not more true Pleasure (I had almost said Voluptuousness) than Excess and Riot. And I dare say, that those who come to their natural Refreshments, and have Moderation both for their Carver, and their Skinker, find a much better Guest in their Entertainment, than those whose continued

nued Luxury, by seeking to please, only cloyes and stupifies their Senses.

Besides, a constant Fear of God, and a conscientious Obedience unto him, give such a Seasoning to all our earthly Enjoyments, that they are all received by us as Expressions of his Love, and Fatherly Care towards us; which is such a Pleasure, that Excess and Epicurism could never afford. A good Conscience is a continual Feast; and that poor Christian who hath his dry Morsel made savoury with the hidden Manna, fares more deliciously every Day than *Dives* himself; whose Guilt not only poisons his Dainties to his Soul, but sowres them to his Palate. God is the great Householder of the World: We are all entertained as Guests at his Table, and his Bounty provides for us: But as the wise Man saith, *Prov. 15. 17. Better is a Dinner of Herbs where Love is, than a stalled Ox, and Hatred therewith;* so truly where the Love of God is enjoyed, the slenderest Provision is far more sweet and comfortable, than the greatest Variety of Delicates, where the Hatred and Wrath of God mingles Gall and Wormwood with them. What Pleasure can there be in any Estate, where a Man is not well pleased with himself? Where Guilt gnaws, and Fears boad, and Conscience brawls,



as certainly they must do, more or less, in every wicked Man ? What more Pleasure can he take in his Possessions, than a wretched Malefactor can in that Prison-Provision which is allowed him to maintain his Life, till he be dragg'd forth to Execution ?

But though Godliness doth thus sweeten our outward State and Condition, and be profitable for this present Life ; yet,

*Thirdly*, The chiefest Joys that Religion and Piety give us, are internal and mental, and those are incomparably beyond the Delights of Sense. Even natural Speculations have entertained inquisitive Minds with such Raptures, that some have been, as it were, wholly abstracted from the Body, and have neither regarded Pain, nor Pleasure of Sense, whilst they have been employed about them. But certainly the Joys of Religion much needs be much more refined and spiritual, than those which proceed only from a Problem, or Demonstration of Science.

Now this pure and spiritual Pleasure, ariseth in the Mind from three Things :

*First*, The Conformity of pious Actions to the Rules and Principles of right Reason.

*Secondly*,

*Secondly*, The peaceable Reflections of a Man's own Conscience upon them.

*Thirdly*, The Hope and Expectation of an eternal Reward.

*First*, There is a Congruity and Suitableness in holy and religious Actions, to the Rules and Principles of right Reason. There are Three general Principles of natural Religion imprinted in the Mind of every Man, which are the Dictates of pure and untainted Reason.

The *First* is, That God is to be loved and feared above all, and the Revelations of his Will to be credited and obeyed.

The *Second* is, That we ought to govern our selves with all Temperance and Sobriety, in the Use of the Comforts of this Life.

The *Last* is, That we ought to demean our selves towards others, with the exactest Justice and Equity ; the true Measure of which is, *Whatsoever you would that Men should do unto you, do ye likewise unto them.* This indeed is the Sum of all Religion, *To live*, as the Apostle declares it, *soberly, righteously, and godly* : *Soberly*, in respect of our selves ; *righteously*, towards others ; and *godly*, in the Performance of those Duties which immediately concern the Divine

**Worship.** And these are the general and primary Dictates of right Reason. Now as it is impossible, but that where a suitable Object strikes and affects the Sense, there must arise sensual and corporal Delight and Pleasure; so is it alike impossible, but that where our Actions do correspond with these Principles of Reason, there must arise an intellectual Joy and Complacency. No Man ever took true Joy and Delight in doing that which is unnatural: And truly every Sin is in a Sense unnatural, as it contradicts those Principles of natural Light and Understanding which God hath so deeply implanted in us, that they can never be totally rooted out. And therefore there must needs be Jarring and Discord in the Mind of a wicked Man, whose Actions are contrary to those first Principles of his Reason, which he always opposeth, but can never overcome. And this of Necessity must make his Life very uneasy, and uncomfortable: Whereas an holy Man, who squares his Actions according to his Principles, finds such a just Proportion between them, that there is no Dissonance, no Contest; but the sweet Touches of them mutually, one upon the other, strikes a perpetual Harmony in his Soul;

Soul ; and the Result of this, must needs be Peace and Pleasure.

*Secondly*, Unspeakable Pleasure must needs spring up in the Soul, from the comfortable Reflections of our own Consciences upon holy and religious Actions. Be the Difficulty of performing them never so great, yet this Joy that diffuseth it self in the Heart after we have broken thro' all the Reluctancies and Oppositions that our Corruptions, our Sloth, or our worldly Advantages make against them, doth more than compensate the Pains and Trouble we have undergone. There will indeed, in this our imperfect State, be Strivings and Lustings of the Flesh against the Spirit, even in the best of Men: But yet certainly the Delight which the Soul enjoys after it hath conquered its sinful Inclinations, is infinitely beyond all Comparison above the Delight it could have reaped by consenting to them. What a calm and sweet Repose is upon the Face of the Soul, after it hath perform'd a Duty, and can reflect upon it as perform'd sincerely ; after it hath wrestled with a Temptation, and overcome it ? How sweetly then doth he enjoy himself ! How sweetly doth he enjoy his God ! His Prospect into Heaven is clear,  
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and he can discern a pleased God, a loving Father accepting his Service, and preparing his Reward. Let others please themselves in the bitter Sweets of Sin; yet certainly the least Relish of such pure, such unexpressible Joy, is infinitely to be preferr'd before all the washy Pleasures of Vice and Luxury, though Conscience and Condemnation were abstracted from them. Here believe it is true Joy; it is not clamorous nor noisy, but a calm sedate Joy, that ravisheth the Heart with a secret, but powerful Delight. The Pleasures of Sin are but for a Moment, like the empty Crackling of Thorns under a Pot, that make a short-liv'd Blaze, and presently expire in Smoke. But the Pleasures of Holiness are permanent and abiding, and entertain the Soul with a most delightful Remembrance, whensoever it shall look back, and review its Actions. This is a Pleasure that never cloyes, never tires us: Neither can the frequent Repetition, nor the long Continuance of it, weary us. Whereas all earthly Pleasures grow either dull, or distastful, if they are not often changed. But a pious Soul need not invent Variety of Diversions, to entertain himself comfortably. Let him but look within Doors, retire into his own Breast, and he shall there find

abundant Joys, which though they are still the same, are ever fresh. But now this Self-reflexion, which is so sweet and comfortable to a true Christian, is a Rack and Torture to wicked and dissolute Wretches. They carry an hated Monitor about them in their own Breast, a Witness and a Reprover of all their Lewdness; and when they seek for Pleasure in Sinning, it is their Trouble and Vexation that they cannot sin more quietly. There is a busy Conscience of their own, which dogs them at the Heels wherever they go, scourgeth them with Scorpions, and threatens them with the Vengeance of everlasting Fire. And this imbitters their Delights; and though it cannot withhold them from Sinning, yet makes their very Sins their Punishment and Torment. So that if it were only upon the Account of the Reflexions of Conscience, an holy and pious Life is infinitely more pleasant, than a lewd and wicked one.

*Thirdly, The Hope and Expectation of the eternal Reward of our Obedience, makes an holy Life to be pleasant and joyful. The Psalmist tells us, that in the keeping of God's Commandments there is great Reward, Psal. 119. 11. Our very Work is*  
 Reward

Reward for it self; and if God should never give us other, yet we should be abundantly recompensed in the inward Peace and Satisfaction of our Consciences, which can no other way be enjoyed: Yet our gracious God both gives us such Work as is Reward for it self, and promiseth us an infinite Reward for doing of that Work. Were there really as many Difficulties in Religion as our Sloth is apt to imagine, yet methinks when such an excessive Recompence as that of Eternal Life and Glory is propounded to us, this should remove all Obstacles, facilitate all Enterprizes, and make the utmost Pains and Labour to attain it, pleasant and delightful. We see with what Pleasure Men strive and contend for a Prize. The poor pitiful Reward of a mouthful of Praise, or the Gain of some Honourary Trifle, makes them account that but a Sport and Recreation, which else were a Toil, and difficult Labour. And what, shall we, who are running a Race in the Ways of true Wisdom, and see the Crown of Glory and Immortality hung up at the Goal, faint and shrink at it as an uneasy and laborious Task to intend our Nerves, and press still on towards the Mark? Certainly there can be no greater Pleasure

in the World than to strive in this Race, to gain Ground towards Heaven, to make, and to observe our Progress in our Holy Course, to have the Crown still in our Eye, 'till we come at last to reach it with our Hand. And he that cannot account this pleasant, hath not a Soul capable of true Delight ; nor a Spirit brave and gallant enough to be a Christian.

Thus I have demonstrated to you, that the Pious is the only pleasant Life, both from the Suitableness of it to the Principles of our Reason, the comfortable Reflections of our Consciences, and the Hopes of Eternal Life. Let me add one Demonstration more.

*Fourthly*, That must needs be most pleasant which calms all our Perturbations and Disturbances, and fits us to enjoy both God and our selves in a sedate Composure ; but this is the Effect only of Religion and true Piety. Our Disquiets proceed chiefly from the Hurries of our mutinous Passions : Grief, Anger, Fear, and the rest, do oftentimes break forth upon the Soul, like so many violent Winds upon the Sea, and ruffle it into a Tempest, so that our Reason is in Danger to be toss'd and shipwreck'd. Now it is only the powerful Command of Religion that  
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can say unto these Winds, *Peace, be still.* Certainly that Man can neither enjoy Peace, nor Pleasure, where these unruly Passions tyrannize. What a troublesome vexatious Life doth he lead, that is a Slave either to Envy, or Fear, or Wrath? When he shall be continually fretting himself at another's Prosperity, raging and studying Revenge for every petty Injury, grieving and desponding under every cross Providence; frightened beyond the Succours of his Reason at every Shadow, and suspected Danger? Certainly, if there can be any Pleasure in such a Man's Soul, there may be Pleasure and Peace where Fury dwells. But now Religion, and the Fear of God, settles and composeth all these Perturbations, and by its Majesty and Authority binds them all to the Peace, that we shall not dare immoderately to grieve or fear, not at all to Envy, or meditate Revenge. And although the curbing of our Passions seems so difficult a Matter, and is one of those Things which makes Religion uneasy, and unpleasant to those who are rap'd away with them; yet without Doubt he that checks and restrains the Exorbitancies of his Passions lives a much more pleasant and easy Life, than he who lets them fly out into all Extremities. I leave it to you

to judge, whether it be not more for the Peace and Comfort of a Man's Life to forgive Wrongs, than to perpetuate them by Revenge? Besides the intolerable Torment of a malicious Spirit. Is it not far better to rejoice at thy Neighbour's Prosperity, than to vex and fret at it? For by the one, thou enjoyest a Share of his Blessings; but by the other, thou dost not enjoy thine own. And to resign up thy self to the Will of God with Patience and Contentedness, suppressing thy immoderate Grief for any Affliction brought upon thee, is certainly much more for the Comfort of thy Life, than to languish in Sorrow, and unfruitfully consume thy self for what was not at thy Dispose: So that, I say, Religion is the best Means to quiet all the Tumults of your Passions to make your Minds serene and calm, than which there is scarce a greater Pleasure imaginable.

Well then, to conclude at present: See here the woful Mistake of the World in Point of Pleasure. They all pretend to it; but they seek it in those Ways that are the Causes of all their Disquiet and Trouble. True Pleasure consists not in Noise and Laughter; that's *the Mirth of Fools*; And it is a Sign that all is not quiet

quiet within, when they are so loud and clamorous to drown it. No; true Pleasure consists in clear Thoughts, sedate Affections, sweet Reflexions, a Mind even and stay'd, true to its God, and true to it self. There is indeed a little sordid brutish Pleasure in Sin; but it vanishes like smoke, and if we be not utterly hardned, like Smoke, it will leave us nothing but Tears in our Eyes. Or if customary sinning hath made us unsensible, it is but like giving Drink to an Hydro-pick Person, which though it please his Palate for the present, afterwards sadly increaseth and intrageth his Thirst. Compare the Pleasures that a true pious Christian enjoys, with the muddy Delights of a Swinish Sensualist, who gratifies all his carnal Desires, and you will find so vast a Difference between them, that the very Argument of Pleasure, which usually lies as a main Prejudice against an holy Life, if it be rightly stated, will prove the most advantageous Motive to induce us to embrace it. For consider, whilst thou gratifiest all thy Propensions and Desires, what exquisite Pleasure canst thou find, but such as are common to the very Beasts as well as thee? Yea, and thou shewest thy self more Irrational than the Brute Creatures; for they keep within

the Compass of their Nature, but thou transgressedst the Laws of thine : And either Shame or Conscience will give thee many a Secret Twitch and Gird, and whisper sad Things to thee, which will in Spight of thee make thy Heart heavy, when thy Face perhaps runs over with a Counterfeit Laughter. It is impossible, if thou hast any Remainers of a Man left within thee, to debauch away the natural Impressions of a Deity, of Death, Judgment, and future Punishments. These cold and shivering Thoughts will come in, and be like Water cast upon all thy Delights, when they flame highest ; and in the midst of thy Cups and Jollity, and frolick Extravagancies, be like an Hand, not upon *the Wall*, but in thine *own Conscience*, writing bitter Things against thee. Well, when thou hast run through all the Shapes of Voluptuousness, what remains but only a Damp and Dulness upon thy Spirits, a Sting and Anguish in thy Soul, a grating Remembrance of them, and dire Presages of Eternal Vengeance ? Dost thou, not, when the Phrenzy is over, and the Rage of thy Lusts somewhat abated, dost thou not a Thousand Times call thy self Beast and Fool for them ? Hast thou never seen a Drunkard the next Morning spewing

spewing out his Shame, and his Repentance together ? Hast thou never observed the Glutton to sigh and groan under the Load of his crude Surfeits, and endeavour to disburden his Conscience, as well as his Stomach ? These who do not eat and drink that they may live, but live only that they may eat and drink, will then acknowledge, that Temperance and Sobriety are the only true Voluptuousness ; and whilst their Breath is still unfavoury with their undigested Fumes, belch out a Prayer to God to pardon them. And are these the bewitching Pleasures of Sin ? For these, will any be perswaded to provoke his God, stain and wound his own Conscience, dishonour his Body, and ruin his Soul ? Certainly, there is nothing wherein the Sorcery of Sin doth more plainly appear, than in perswading Men that there is any Pleasure in being wicked ; whereas their own Experience can abundantly attest, that it is a very Hell above Ground, and a Damnation beforehand. Are these the Men that are frightened from Religion, because of the Irksomness and Difficulty of its Duties, because it will expose them to Sadness and Melancholy ? Whereas I dare avow to them, that the most melancholy and gloomy Day that a true Christian spends

spends in the most rigorous Parts of his Religion, with Sighs breaking from his Heart, and Tears running down his Cheeks, hath a Thousand Times more true Pleasure, and more true Joy in it, than all the Days of Mirth, and Laughter, and Excess, and Riot of voluptuous Sinners.

But here common Observation and Experience will be cited, to disprove all these Speculations concerning the Pleasure of Religion. For what will the Voluptuary say! Can we believe that there is any such exquisite Pleasure in an holy Life, when we see those who are its Votaries so pensive and melancholy, as if Rust and Soot were the only Ingredients of their Complexion? Their Looks are sower and dejected, their Discourses interrupted with Sighs; still they are lamenting themselves, and the Iniquities or Calamities of the Times, and are fit for no other Converse but with Tombs or Ghosts; Whereas the rest of the World are gay and frolick; Mirth and Laughter are the Employment of their Lives; not a Thought lies heavy on their Hearts, nor a Day on their Hands. And therefore certainly, whatever Advantages a pious Life may have for the future, it cannot have that of Pleasure for the present.

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This is a common Prejudice ; and it is but a Prejudice. For though I must confess, that the morose Temper of too many Christians hath brought this Scandal upon Religion, who by an affected and whining Sadness, and a querulous Humour, occasion the Ways of God to be evil spoken of, and affright others from them ; yet if we nearly examine the Matter, we shall find that (abating the Complexional Infelicity of some) it is altogether as fallacious to judge of Mens Joys by their outward Appearances, as of their Thoughts and Intentions.

And therefore, *First*, I grant that the Joys of Religion are not loud and tumultuous, but grave, solid, and serious. It is a true Saying, *Res severa est verum gaudium* ; True Joy is a severe Thing. 'Tis not so light and frothy as to float upon the Superficies of the Face : It lies deep and recondite in the Centre of the Soul, and fills it with calm Thoughts, sedate Affections, an uniform Peace and Tranquillity, and diffuseth such a Sweetness through all the Powers of it, that a true Christian who loves his God, loves likewise himself, and the Entertainment that he finds at Home in his own Bosom. And this ravishing Joy so wholly possesseth him, that if he seem less affected with

with the ludicrous Follies of this World, it is but as grave and wise Men are, not much pleased with the Play-Games of Children, because they have nobler and more generous Delights of their own. The Mirth and Jollity of slight Persons is too trivial, and their Laughter it self too ridiculous to recreate him. The soft and peaceful Whispers of his dear Conscience are a Thousand Times more diverting to him, than all the Wit and Merriment of those pleasant Companions, whose whole Life is but a Jest and a Tale. And if at any Time he seem reserv'd and retir'd in their Company, it is that he may listen to the more chearful Discourses of his own Heart; or that he is really concern'd that the Noise and Din about him hath disturb'd that secret Communication; Or, *lastly*, that he is cautious, lest he should be betrayed to any thing that might grieve a better Friend, than any of them. And now can you really think, that such a Person is melancholy and displeased, who carries himself thus, only lest he should be so? The Mirth of the sensual and debauch'd World would violate all his Delights: 'Twould be but like a dirty Torrent tumbling into a clear River, troubling its pure Streams, and leaving nothing but Defilement, Mud,  
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and Disturbance behind it. And shall we think that Man's Life sad and disconsolate, because he seems less merry and jovial than others; whereas in Truth he is so wholly addicted to Pleasure, so much a Servant to his own Content, that he had much rather displease all the World than himself, and studies nothing more, than how he may keep his Joys free from Mixture and Abatement.

But, *Secondly*, If at any Time he be really sad and dejected, the Cause of this is not to be imputed to Religion and Piety, but to the Want of it; either in himself or others. The Irreligion and Impieties of the Age in which he lives, often draw Tears from his Eyes, and Sighs from his Heart: And when the Flood-gates of Wickedness are opened, and a Deluge of Sin and Profaneness overspreads the Face of the whole Earth, can you think it an unreasonable Melancholy, that he should wish with the Prophet *Jeremiah*, that *his Head were Waters, and his Eyes Fountains of Tears, that he might weep Day and Night for the Stain of his People*, for so many Thousands that fall, and are slain by their Vices and Debaucheries? Were but the World more holy, there would not be so great Occasion for Grief and Sadness as there is;  
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neither would the Godly lament so mournfully, nor all smart so sorely as they do: But whilst wicked Men are merrily sporting themselves to Death, and plucking Vengeance upon their own Heads, his Charity and Compassion move him to mourn for those who do not, who will not mourn for themselves, and to deprecate those Judgments which they are defying. And therefore for them to object Melancholy and Pensiveness, to abuse their Gravity, and turn their Seriousness into Ridicule, is both disingenuous and ingrateful. Disingenuous it is to upbraid them with that Sorrow and Sadness, of which they themselves are the Cause. And it is ingrateful to upbraid them with it, since it many Times averts those Plagues and Judgments, which else would soon turn their Rants and Frolics into Roarings and Howlings. But as they have too much Cause to mourn for the Sins of the Times and Places in which they live, so likewise for the Sins of which they themselves are guilty. They often weep over the Review of their own Faults and Follies, and with the holy Apostle cry out, *O wretched Men that we are! who shall deliver us from this Body of Death?* And indeed it is but fit and just, that whilst the Heart is a Fountain of Sin, the Eyes

Eyes should be *Fountains of Tears*. But what, shall we therefore be so unreasonable as to charge their Holiness with their Grief and Sorrow, whereas were they not in part unholy, they would have no Cause for it? It is not their walking in the Ways of Wisdom, but their deviating from them, that makes their Lives unpleasant: It is their wanton straying into the World's Common, and seeking the foreign Delights of Sin, that disturbs their Peace, fills their Hearts with Heaviness, their Eyes with Tears, and their Face with Shame. Whereas had they kept themselves within the Limits of their Duty, and the Boundaries that God had prescribed them, their Peace had been as secure as their Innocence. Did you ever hear any of them complain that they had been too holy and strict, too circumspect and consciencious? This is the Complaint of the World against them, but it was never theirs: Whereas there are Thousands and Ten Thousands who sadly lament their former Ways of Sin and Wickedness, (for Sorrow and Shame are the necessary Consequences of Guilt) either here on Earth to True Repentance, or else in Hell to Everlasting Despair. So that it is not Holiness and Piety, but the Want and Defects of it,

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which are the Cause of all that Sadness which so much discourageth the World, and makes them wrongfully accuse Religion for it.

But, *Thirdly*, Even the Tears and Sorrows of a true pious Christian have a more solid Joy in them than all the Noise and extravagant Jollity of wicked Men. There is a Sweetness even in Mourning when it is filial and ingenuous; Tears are a Solace, and Grief it self an Entertainment. Sometimes the very Delicacy of a Man's Spirit will make him dissolve into Weeping; and the Love of God, as an heavenly Flame inkindled in the Heart, will distil Tears through his Eyes. The Tenderness of his Affection will engage him to a sweet Mourning over his Faults and Miscarriages. And whilst the Spirit of God *moves* upon the Face of these Waters; the next Thing to be created in that Soul, is Light, Peace, and Joy. Those who have experienc'd it can tell you, that the most transporting Consolation of the Holy Ghost, are then given in when they are most retired and penfive. They can rejoice that they are sad, because such a Kind and Child-like Sorrow is to them a most certain Evidence of the Favour of God, and the Remission of those Sins for which they

mourn. Whereas on the contrary, *Solomon* tells us, *Prov. 14. 13. Even in Laughter the Heart is sorrowful, and the End of that Mirth is Heaviness.* Such indeed is the Mirth of all wicked Men. Let them dissemble it never so artificially, yet they do but with the *Spartan* Boy laugh and smile, while the Fox which he had stolen, and kept conceal'd under his Coat, was all the while tearing out his Bowels: So these put on a counterfeit Laughter, when yet all the while Guilt and Fear, Terrors and Anguish, are corroding and gnawing their very Bowels.

So that hence you see, the Sadness and Mournfulness of the true pious Christians, is but a conceived Prejudice, no real Objection against the Ways of Religion and Holiness.

But what, you will say, Is there then nothing unpleasant, nothing grievous and irksome in them? Can it be possible that this strait and narrow Way should have no Thorns, no Rubs in it; nothing that is rigorous, severe, and uneasy? What then shall we think of Mortification, and Self-Denial; of plucking out our Right Eyes, and cutting off our Right Hands; a patient induring of Injuries, and requiting them with Kindnesses; forgiving our most malicious Enemies, and praying

for them; a Willingness to sacrifice our dearest Enjoyments, yea, our Lives themselves, for the Name of Christ, and the Testimony of a good Conscience? Are not these main and essential Parts of our Religion? And is there nothing in them that is difficult to be done, and grievous to be born? If not; why then are we so often commanded to strive, to watch, to fight, to wrestle, to run, to endure and hold out unto the last? All which Expressions do certainly import, that there is much Pains and Hardship to be undergone in a Christian Life; especially also since it is represented as such a difficult and admirable Thing to persevere in it unto the End. What Pleasure can there be in crossing a Man's own Inclinations and Appetites? In the Self-cruelty of cutting off what is as dear to us as the Limbs of our Body? What Pleasure in losing all for the sake of our Religion? In rotting in a Prison, or frying at a Stake? What Pleasure in bearing Affronts and Contumelies, without either Reply, or Revenge? Certainly, he that can find out Pleasure in these Things, is fit to advance what Paradoxes he pleaseth to the World, but will be much puzzled to find either Reasons to maintain them, or Persons to believe them.

To this I answer, *First*, That there are many Things in Religion, which are indeed difficult and laborious, but this doth not presently argue them to be unpleasant and grievous. Some of the greatest Pleasures of this Life are so; and that is scarce held a Pleasure which is not heightened and commended by Labour. The Pleasantness of Religion and Piety consists not in supine Sloth and Negligence. There must be earnest Endeavours, Strivings and Strugglings to the uttermost. To a generous Mind, as a Christian's is, nothing can be more pleasant than Victory and Conquest, which cannot be atchieved without contending for it. The whole Life of a Christian is a continual Warfare. Now that which makes the Name of War so dreadful, is only the Uncertainty of Success. Who is there so cowardly and faint-hearted, that were he sure of Victory and Triumph would be afraid of the Encounter? Why, Victory it self is listed under a Christians Command. Other Conquerors have found it very fickle and unconstant. When they have levied Armies, and shaken Nations, yet they could never make Success take Pay under them. But herein a Christian is more than a Conqueror, because he is alway sure of Conquest, if

himself will. And whensoever we go forth to the Combat, if we be not extremely base and perfidious to our own Souls, we may be sure to return adorned with Wreaths, and loaden with Spoils. The Mortification of our Lusts is confessedly the most uneasy, as it is the most necessary part of our Religion : And yet what are they but Shadows cast upon your Fancies, flitting, airy, and empty Nothings ? We are to conflict with our own Desires, our own Passions, our own Wills ; and what more is required to a Conquest over these, besides a firm and undaunted Resolution. That Man shall certainly be Master of himself, that will but dare to be so. What though it may cost Pains, and Striving ; though it may make the Heart pant, and the Soul run down with Sweat : Yet to see your Enemies fall by Heaps before your Sword, to tread upon the Slain, and to dip your Foot in their Blood ; this Certainty of Conquest will make the Combat pleasant, though it be laborious. And he who cannot think this an incomparable Pleasure, hath not Spirit enough to be a Christian.

*Secondly*, Since all Pleasure ariseth from the Suitableness of Objects and Actions to our Natures, we must consider that  
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there is a twofold Nature in every Christian, his Corrupt, and his Divine Nature : He is not all of a Piece, but hath two contrary Parties struggling within him. There is the Flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh ; and what is pleasing to the one, is a Vexation and Torment to the other. Now all those rigorous Duties of Religion that have been objected, are only so to thy corrupt and sinful Inclinations ; but they are a Joy and Pleasure to thy renewed and sanctified Nature. Thou must therefore of Necessity grieve and displease one Part of thy self ; and why then should it not be that which is thy vile and fordid Part ? Give thy Noble and Heaven-born Self the Pleasure and Divertisement of thwarting and over-ruling thy Sensual Desires : Yea, this indeed, if thou art a Christian, is thy true and proper self ; the other is but thy Slave and Vassal. Grace is that which gives a Christian his Individuation and Denomination ; and the New and Divine Nature, of which thou partakest, ought to be the commanding Principle within thee, as being a Participation of God, and therefore cannot without the highest practical Blasphemy be subjected to thy

Lusts and Corruptions, which are the Portion of the Devil. And therefore the Apostle distinguisheth between his unrenewed Part, and himself, *Rom. 7. 17. It is no more I, but Sin that dwelleth in me.* So that those which are accounted the greatest Rigours and Severities of Religion; and which fright so many from embracing it, are really the Pleasures and Entertainments of a pious Soul : Yea, I will be bold to say, that a true Christian more indulgeth himself by Mortification, more gratifieth himself by denying himself, enjoys more true Pleasure and Satisfaction in those Things which are look'd upon as the Austerities of an holy Life, than all the Voluptuaries of the World can, in abandoning themselves over to all the profuse Delights of a sinful and wicked Life. For even where there is no true Grace to make a conquering Resistance, yet there is a natural Conscience to make a murmuring and a troublesome one. All the Disturbance that a true Christian finds, is only in the Conflict; and when that is ended, he sits down, and enjoys the blessed Fruits of his Victory in Peace and Satisfaction. But in wicked Men, the Pleasure of Sinning makes many sowre Returns upon them; and there are  
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not only some Stings mingled with their Honey whilst it is yet in their Mouths, but afterwards it turns all to Sting in their Consciences, and Gall and Wormwood in their Bowels. Now let me leave it to you to judge ; which enjoyeth a more pleasant and quiet Life, either they that cross their Corruptions, and afterwards rejoice that they have done it ; or they that cross their Consciences, and are afterwards vex'd and tormented for it ? The one indeed conflicts with his Lusts, buffets his Slaves when they rebel against him, but afterwards finds that Peace and Joy which more than compensates his Labour : The other conflicts with his Light, and after he hath offered horrid Violence to his natural Sentiments, is tormented with such Pangs and Horrors, that he becomes a Burden and Executioner to himself. And this puts him upon far greater Abominations, that he may quite extinguish that glowing Spark within him ; that he may murder that troublesome Monitor, his own Conscience, and, if it be possible, may attain to the highest Perfection both of his Pleasure, and Misery, even to sin quietly.

*Thirdly*, Consider that the Severities of Religion, as Mortification, Self-Denial, &c. are far more difficult and distastful at our first Entrance upon an holy Life, than they will be when we are confirmed, and habituated in it. Indeed, those who are early pious, whose Virtue grows up and increaseth with them from their tender Years, they escape the Pangs and Molestations that others endure in rooting out inveterate Habits, and changing the whole Course of their Lives at once. It must needs appear irksome at first to check those inordinate Desires, and put a Stop to the Current of those Vices which have got Authority by Prescription, and never knew what it was to be opposed, or denied before. But whatever Difficulties we may find in this, ought rather to be imputed to the Novelty and Unusualness, than to the real Hardship of the Undertaking. And perhaps, were a Man resolved, from a long continued and habituated Virtue, to turn debauch'd and profligate, he would at first find not much less Trouble in the Ways of Vice, than a new Convert meets with in the Ways of Piety. Custom and Continuance will facilitate all Things; and when the Roughness which is upon the

the Soul is well worn off by Use, it will the more easily and sweetly move it self in a strict und religious Course.

*Fourthly*, Consider, That the Severities of Religion are no more nor greater than what we are content to undergo in Things of another Nature. Nay, many Times the Sinner meets with far more Trouble in the Ways of Sin, than the most strict and holy Christian can do in the Ways of Obedience. What strange Artifices must he oftentimes use, intricate Methods, sometimes to commit his Sins, but most commonly to conceal them! It requires a Piece of Subtilty and Stratagem to be wicked; whereas Piety is an open, plain, and simple Thing. We need not lay Plots for it, nor study to find out the Methods of it. There needs no other Skill, besides an honest Heart, and a firm Resolution. And therefore it is said, *Isaiah 35. 8. An High-way shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness.* The Wayfaring Men, though Fools, shall not err therein: Nay, were we but content to undergo as much Hardship and Difficulty in the Ways of Religion for the obtaining of Heaven and eternal Happiness, as the Men of this World do,  
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for the gaining of some poor, sordid, secular Advantages, we should be most unreasonable to complain of them as rough and uneasy. What Christian is there that takes so much Pains to be saved, as many Thousand Artificers do, who drudge Day and Night at some poor Manual Employment to get a little Pelf? And yet it is far more certain that an industrious Christian shall be saved, than that an industrious Tradesman shall grow rich. Men are contented to rise up early and to go to Bed late, and to eat the Bread of Carefulness, to bear many Disappointments, and undergo many Hardships, only in Hopes to gain some Temporal Advantage. And yet they murmur and complain of it as an insupportable Burden, if they are put upon any Difficulties for the gaining of Heaven, and eternal Salvation, although the Gain of this latter be as infinitely more certain, as it is infinitely more precious than the gaining of the former. So that in Truth all the Complaints against the Rigours of Religion, proceed only upon Mistakes and Prejudices, and there is no Course of Life, shape it which way you will, that hath so much Ease, Sweetness, and Delight in it, as the truly pious and holy.

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Let me then persuade you, not to give Ear to the Lying Suggestions of the Devil, and your own Sloth. They are but Slanders cast upon the Ways of God, on Purpose to deter you from walking in them. Do but make the Trial; enter upon them, and you shall find incomparably more Sweetness and Satisfaction, more Joy and Peace in them, than ever you found in the Ways of Sin and Folly. Possibly some, who only as Spies have entered upon the Borders of this Land of *Canaan*, have brought up an *Evil Report upon it* when they have returned back again to the Wilderness. But, I beseech you to believe the concurrent Testimonies of all good Men who have search'd it throughout, and have neither Interest, nor Design to deceive you. Believe the Testimony of a *Caleb*, of a *Joshua*, rather than the Reports of those, whose Sloth or Cowardise represents all Attempts difficult, and all Difficulties insuperable. Believe the Testimony of God himself, who assures you, *it is a Land flowing with Milk and Honey*: Let me therefore encourage you in the Words of *Caleb*; *Let us go up and possess it, for we are able to overcome it*. All imagined Hardships

ships shall vanish before us, and instead of rough Encounters, we shall certainly enjoy our selves in Pleasure and Peace. This is the only Way wherein we can enjoy either God or our selves. And this Way, which is Joy and Peace throughout, will infallibly bring us to that Blessed Presence, where there is *Fulness of Joy, and Pleasures for evermore.*

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