

and the moral qualities of which their nature partakes. Besides, the feeling of pride and self complacence so deeply rooted in the heart, and extending its influence over the whole of the moral frame, leads us to form high conceptions of ourselves, and to overlook the defects which unquestionably adhere to us. Even the principle of benevolence, amiable and excellent as it is, has a tendency to mislead us in our estimates of human nature. Wishing well to the human race, the transition to thinking well of it, is natural and easy. We cannot bring ourselves to believe that man is such a weak, depraved, and wretched creature as he is sometimes represented. We discover, or think we discover in him certain amiable qualities, these we easily confound with moral excellencies, and thus form to ourselves a picture pleasing and fascinating to the imagination. The error is increased by the habit of viewing the world through the deceitful medium of our own prepossessions, or in the pictures which fancy has constructed for our use. Such erroneous views of human nature, while they afford a momentary pleasure to the mind, are eventually productive of the most baneful effects. They tend to keep us in profound ignorance of our own hearts, and consequently prevent us from seeing and feeling our own wants, or from seeking to have them supplied. They nourish the seeds of pride and vain glory, and other dispositions far remote from the genuine spirit of true religion.

Habits of brotherly kindness and charity are peculiarly well fitted to correct our views of human nature. In the retirement of solitude, contemplating human life and its affairs at a distance, and influenced by our own private wishes and feelings, we form to ourselves the idea of a being naturally pure in his affections, elevated in his views, and enjoying all the felicity of which he is capable. But let us come forth into the world and contemplate the aspect which it actually exhibits. Let us enter the cell of the prisoner, and the cottage of the poor. Let us approach the couch of sickness and of death. With the
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