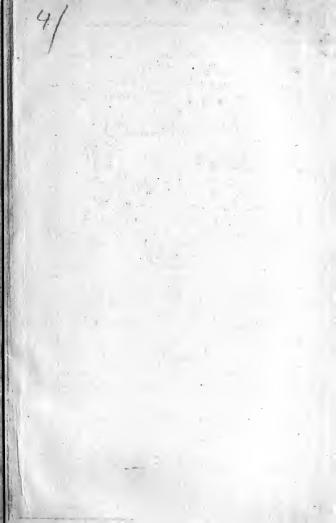


Alasdair Charles Macpherson, Ph.D.

PILOT.OFFICER R,A.F.

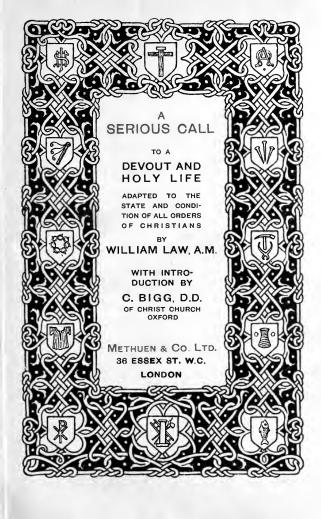
KILLED IN ACTION, AUGUST, 1941











4500 .L3 1920

> November 1899 First Published. Second Edition . May 1902 October 1904 Third Edition . . March Fourth Edition . 1907 . October 1912 Fifth Edition . Sixth Edition . 1920

### INTRODUCTION

1

# Of the Present Edition

WHAT is here offered to the reader is a reprint of the First Edition of the Serious Call, published by William Innys in 1729. Our pages are smaller, but the contents of each page are the same, and in every respect—with the exception of some unimportant details of typography—this edition may be regarded as a facsimile of the Editio princeps.

Law's writing is so transparently clear that no notes, beyond such as are embodied in this Introduction, appear to be either necessary or desirable. In the case of so modern and so English a book, the object of scholarly fidelity is best attained by presenting the text as nearly as possible in the exact shape in which it left the hands of the author.

Even the spelling, and the archaic use of capital letters and italics have been carefully preserved. They will serve to remind

the reader that Law wrote in the eighteenth century, not in the nineteenth—a fact which, as is pointed out in the following pages, is in many respects of importance.

#### II

## Of the Life of William Law

FOR a much richer account of the Life and Opinions of the Reverend William Law, A.M., than can be given here, the student must be referred to the elaborate work of Canon Overton, published by Longmans in 1881. Canon Overton writes with a fulness of knowledge of English religion in the eighteenth century which is possessed by very few; and Law, more than most men, bears the impress of the time in which his lot on earth was cast. Here it will not be possible to do more than sketch the salient features of his remarkable character and history.

William Law was born in 1686, at King's Cliffe, a considerable village near Stamford, in Northamptonshire. His father, Thomas Law, was a grocer and chandler — kept, that

that is to say, the village shop. It is a position, as all country people know, of some importance in the rustic hierarchy, and in those days was more important than it is now. Both the father and the mother—her name was Margaret—were good, religious people. Some have thought that they were the models for Paternus and Eusebia in the Serious Call.

Their son, William-he was the fourth of eight sons, and there were three daughters as well-entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, as sizar, or poor scholar, in 1705; took his B.A. degree in 1708; was elected Fellow and ordained in 1711; and graduated as M.A. in 1712. While at Cambridge he drew up a set of "rules for my future conduct." The first rule was "to fix it deep in my mind that I have one business upon my hands-to seek for eternal happiness by doing the will of God." "Doing the will of God" sums up the earlier part of Law's history, as freedom and peace in the Holy Spirit sums up the later. Through the one he rose to the other, like Origen and many other saints. Yet, when Law was a curate in London — the exact date is unknown - he is said to have courted fashionable fashionable society, and to have been "a great beau." It is possible that about 1720 there was a final act of self-renunciation.

In 1713 Law was for a time suspended from his degrees for a Tripos speech. Part of the ceremonies attending the Bachelors' commencement at Cambridge was a burlesque oration, delivered in the schools on Ash Wednesday, by a bachelor seated on a three-legged stool, and hence known as Tripos. He was expected to be "witty, but modest withal"; but it was difficult for sprightly young men to hit the golden mean. Some of these licensed jesters indulged in gross personalities, some ventured on political satire, and suspensions were not infrequent. Law could not keep the Pretender out of his tirade.

But at the time Law was not Bachelor but Master. If it were safe for an alien to meddle with the arcana of Cambridge life, a suspicion might be expressed that Law was really not Tripos but Praevaricator—a personage who played the same part, as Lord of Misrule or Abbot of Unreason, at the Masters' commencement. However, we learn here three facts about Law: first, that he was a convinced Jacobite; second,

that he was not discreet, or, at anyrate, not worldly wise; third, that he was regarded at Cambridge as a man who could and would make an amusing speech. Indeed, as we can see from his books, Law had a pretty gift of wit, though he was absolutely devoid of humour. The difference is that wit sees the absurdities of others, while humour is conscious of its own.

Shortly afterwards Law testified to the sincerity of his political convictions in a much more serious fashion. On the accession of George I., in 1716, he refused to take the oaths of allegiance and abjuration, and was accordingly deprived of his Fellowship, and of all prospect of employment in the Church.

The loss to Law was very great. His stiff conscientiousness cost him not only influence but work, and he was condemned henceforth to eat his heart as a looker-on. Further, he was exposed to the full force of that sour trial which besets the martyr who is not wanted. The history of Non-jurism, like that of Jacobitism in general, is not edifying. But affliction tries the righteous man, and very pure reverence is due to those who, like Ken, Nelson, and Law, retained their saintliness

saintliness in a world which had cast them out, and which they could not understand.

Almost immediately after the resignation of his Fellowship, Law began to make his mark in the world of literature. The Three Letters to the Bishop of Bangor appeared in 1717; the Remarks upon the Fable of the Bees in 1723; and the Case of Reason in 1731. Mandeville was a silly, scoffing creature; but Hoadly, the latitudinarian bishop, and Tindal, the philosophical Deist, were formidable antagonists, and Law showed himself a match for both. In 1726 appeared the treatise on The Absolute Unlawfulness of Stage Entertainments. Of this, we may notice in passing, that it was suggested by a piece that had been acted "almost every night one whole season," in which Venus, Pan, Silenus, Bacchus, and a number of other "filthy demons of the heathen world" were brought upon the stage to talk in keeping with their character, or want of character. Law, no doubt, was carried too far; he forgot that hewas not living in the age of Tertullian, and on this, as on many other questions, he showed a want of balance. But his disgust at "wanton songs and impure rant" was natural

natural enough in days when the Restoration drama held the stage; and there is much that might be said about the morality of the footlights in any age.

In 1726 appeared the first of Law's devotional works, the Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection. It is significant that Law uses "perfection" here, not, as the old fathers, of love, but of obedience. One result of the book was probably that connection with the Gibbon family which shaped the whole of Law's after-life. About this time Mr Edward Gibbon, the grandfather of the historian, was seeking a tutor for his only son. Law was selected for this office, attended the younger Gibbon to Cambridge, and in 1730, when his pupil went abroad to make the grand tour, found a home in that "spacious house with gardens and land at Putney," where his patron resided, "in decent hospitality." Here he lived, "as the much honoured friend and spiritual director of the whole family," till the establishment was broken up some little time after Mr Gibbon's death in 1736.

In 1729 the publication of the Serious Call had set the seal on Law's reputation, and he was visited and consulted at Putney

by a little circle of disciples. Chief among them were Dr Cheyne, the two Wesleys, and Byrom. The Wesleys drifted away from him; but the good and flighty John Byrom, squire of Kersall, near Manchester—poet, mystic, Jacobite, physician—remained his faithful friend and worshipper through life. But Law was one of those men who have many admirers and few friends, and whose friends are markedly inferior to themselves. They are men who cannot bear contradiction.

In 1737, according to Mr Moreton, in 1740, according to other authorities, we find Law settled at King's Cliffe, his birth-place, in a good house known as King John's Palace, or the Hall Yard. Here, in 1744, he was joined by Miss Hester Gibbon, the daughter of his old patron, and Mrs Elizabeth Hutcheson, the widow of a wealthy country gentleman; and here he died in 1761.

Law's life at King's Cliffe was wholly uneventful. The only dates that emerge are those of the writings which he sent to the Press from time to time, down to the very year of his death. It cannot have been a wholesome existence for so able a man to

have

have been thus immured as domestic chaplain with two women of limited understanding and eccentric character. He seems to have had scarcely any contact with the outside world. Certainly he suffered through the absence of larger duties and converse with his equals. The little household was strictly ordered- The Bible and books of theology were the only literature admitted; nor was any form of recreation tolerated beyond conversation, a little music, and an occasional drive or ride. The historian Gibbon, who is oddly divided between dislike of Law's ways and pride in having been, in a sense, the proprietor of so famous a man, speaks of the house at King's Cliffe as "a hermitage," and the term is not inappropriate.

The Christian duty most insisted upon by Law was charity. He himself was the soul of munificence. He built and endowed a girls' school at King's Cliffe, possibly with the thousand pounds which had been sent to him anonymously by some person who was grateful for spiritual profit received from the Christian Perfection. In 1745 the foundation was increased by Mrs Hutcheson, till it included also a school for boys, almshouses, and a library, which still exist.

Such wise generosity could bear none but good fruits. But the rule of the house was that all surplus income should be given away in alms. As Mrs Hutcheson enjoyed two thousand a year, while Miss Gibbon had inherited half her father's large property, and Law himself possessed some means, the sums thus disposed of must have been very considerable. The natural result was the demoralisation of the whole countryside. King's Cliffe was crowded with undeserving mendicants, and the evil became so serious that the rector preached against it, and the parish made representations to the magistrates.

Here, too, there is a characteristic feature. Law lived just before the iron age of Political Economy set in. Smith's Wealth of Nations appeared in 1776. Perhaps the rector of King's Cliffe was a magistrate. But Law's heart was fixed on the letter of the Gospel, and what he thought to be—though it by no means was—the practice of primitive Christianity. Here also, as in his politics, he stood at the parting of the ways, and failed to see that the old road had come to an end. It was an age of giving. Kings gave pensions; ministers bestowed sinecures; noblemen rained showers

of guineas on troops of gaping dependants; and so the ideal country priest, as he is painted in Goldsmith's Deserted Village, gave all he could to all who asked.

"Pleased with his guests the good man learned to glow, And quite forgot their vices in their woe."

Law would never suffer his portrait to be taken; but Mr Tighe, who visited King's Cliffe some time before 1813, and received information from "a kind person" there, tells us that he "was in stature rather over than under the middle size; not corpulent, but stout made, with broad shoulders; his visage was round, his eyes grey, his features well-proportioned and not large; his complexion ruddy, and his countenance open and agreeable. He was naturally more inclined to be merry than sad. . . . He chose to eat his food from a wooden platter, not from an idea of the unnecessary luxury of a plate, but because it appeared to him that a plate spoiled the knives."

He was a thorough Englishman in person and mind, with the English touch of whimsy about him. Yet he is a noble figure. In all his numerous controversies he never used a discourteous word or used a disingenuous argument

argument. He never fought for trifles, nor for any cause that did not lie very near to the heart of religion. He made great sacrifices, and made them in vain. He found himself condemned to a life of isolation, yet he never lost heart or temper, or showed the least trace of bitterness, though he was naturally of a masterful and positive disposition; indeed, he grew in sweetness and largeness of view to the very end. And certainly no one could be more consistent or thorough. "He left," says Gibbon the historian, "the reputation of a worthy and a pious man, who believed all that he professed and practised all that he enjoined," and these words are just.

### Ш

# Of the Opinions of William Law

SOME readers possibly may wish to have a brief account of Law's intellectual position. It changed very greatly as his life went on.

At Cambridge he wrote a thesis on Malebranche and the Vision of All Things in God. From the first Mysticism had an attraction

attraction for him; but he was never a Platonist. Nor, indeed, though one of the keenest and most logical of men, was he ever a clear and consistent thinker on first principles.

We see his early position best in his controversies with Mandeville and Tindal. In his criticism of the Fable of the Bees he insists on the "eternal fitness of actions." But he immediately proceeds to explain this phrase away. Actions are fit or good when they promote that happiness which is "the perfection of every being"—"the only reasonable end of every being."

But upon what does happiness depend? We learn this from the Case of Reason, the reply to Tindal's Christianity as Old as the Creation. Happiness is relative to our condition, and depends on what we are. And what we are, both in mind and body, depends wholly on the will of God. No action is moral or immoral in itself. "To instance, in the case of Abraham, required to sacrifice his son, the killing of a man is neither good nor bad, considered absolutely in itself." But, when God commanded Abraham to slay Isaac, the act became necessary to Abraham's happiness, and therefore right.

It is curious to notice that this is exactly the position of Duns Scotus. But it is more important to observe that we have here the key to the tremendous emphasis laid by Law, in the Serious Call, on the virtue of obedience. All duty resolves itself into a command of the Almighty, and we have no course but to submit. Virtue is, as Law expressed it in his Cambridge rule, not likeness to God, but "doing the will of God."

Again, "we know," says Law, "our moral and social duties, which have their foundation in the conveniences of this life, and the several relations we bear to one another." But our relation to God we do not know; "this is a question which God alone can resolve. Human reason cannot enter into it; it has no principle to proceed upon in it."

The Deists maintained that those who have reason do not want revelation, because reason teaches us our duty both to God and man. Further, that if revelation is not reason, reason cannot test, and therefore cannot accept it. Further, that the Bible revelation is bad, because the conduct of Abraham was not reasonable. These are the objections that Law had to meet, and he meets them by falling back upon the arbitrary will of God.

In effect, he replies Christianity is true because it is true. Obviously, it is not a satisfactory reply; but it is not even acute.

Let the reader compare here the answer given by St Augustine. The same difficulty as to the Old Testament morality that was forced upon Law by the Deists was forced upon Augustine by the Manichees. Augustine replies (Conf. iii. 9) that all men have some knowledge of God, and that this is the criterion of right and wrong. This knowledge grows in the individual and in the world, and the law which it supplies is not capable of absolutely perfect expression in conduct. Hence we must distinguish motive from action, times earlier from times later; we must take account of history, and recognise the fact of moral evolution. Augustine admits that God may command "some strange and unexpected act," but adds the significant words, "Blessed are they who know that Thou hast commanded." confines the distinction of right and wrong to action, admits no criterion but that of happiness, and has no historical sense at all. As to revelation, Augustine would have answered that it is simply more reason; that it leads us higher, but on the same lines; that it sheds light on what we knew before, and brings completer harmony into previous experience: hence, that though we do not know beforehand what it will be, as Tindal fancied we ought, we can recognise it when it comes, as Newton recognised the laws of motion when he had discovered them, or when they had been "revealed" to him. Law says, "The credibility of any external divine revelation with regard to human reason, rests wholly upon such external evidence as is a sufficient proof of the divine operation or interposition. . . . I appeal, therefore, to the miracles and prophecies on which Christianity is founded."

Law, in fact, held a thoroughly empirical view of Reason, derived neither from Descartes nor from Malebranche, but from Locke. His intellectual position was Agnosticism. To this in his earlier days he added Authority; in his later Mysticism, or special revelation; but in both periods his creed was external—was, we may say, an appendix to his philosophy—and was not linked by any vital process to his theoretical opinions.

The most fatal mistake a theologian can make is to set Will above Reason. The

next

next worst is to set Love above Reason. Law fell out of one of these errors into the other. He never altered his views of Reason; indeed, in his later writings he speaks of it with a passionate scorn.

Is theology a matter of temperament? Law was not wise, but he had a strong will and a tender heart, and when he found that his earlier views would not afford him the assurance that he needed, he threw himself into the arms of one who was even more tender-hearted than himself, Jacob Behmen, the illuminated cobbler of Görlitz.

Even before he wrote his reply to Tindal, Law was a diligent reader of mystical books. His special favourites appear to have been a Kempis, Ruysbroek, Tauler, and the Theologia Germanica, who all preach the religion of the heart. The French mystics of the seventeenth century-Madame de Guyon, Madame Bourignon, and the rest -he knew but did not like; there was too much hysteria about them to suit his manly temper. But somewhere about 1733 he fell in with Behmen, who took him by storm. Thus Law, who, in his Three Letters to Hoadly, had scornfully lumped together Quakers, Ranters, Muggletonians, and Socinians Socinians as "Enthusiasts," became an enthusiast himself.

Behmen's works had existed in English since 1641. They gave birth to more than one mystical sect, and, in particular, inspired George Fox. They led also to a great increase in that love for alchemy, which, as we know from Aubrey's Lives, was so common at the time. They induced Isaac Newton to waste three months in searching for the philosopher's stone, and suggested the line of inquiry which issued in the discovery of the Laws of Motion. It was the mystic belief in the unity of Nature that guided Newton in either case.

In the eighteenth century Behmen was widely read. "In winter evenings," says Rusticus in the Way to Divine Knowledge, "when John the shepherd comes out of the fields, his own eyes being bad, the old woman, his wife, puts on her spectacles, and reads about an hour to him, sometimes out of Jacob Behmen. I sat by him one evening, when my old dame, reading Behmen, had much ado to get on. 'John,' said I, 'do you understand all this?' 'Ah,' says he, 'God bless the heart of the dear man, I sometimes

sometimes understand but little of him; and mayhap Betty does not always read aright; but that little which I often do understand does me so much good that I love him where I do not understand him.'"

The truth is that it is not easy, nor, to be frank, is it possible to understand Behmen, who was rather Theosopher than Mystic. We can see that he was a man of gentle, loving disposition, and when he speaks of the sovereign goodness of God we can follow his meaning. But his visions and revelations are among those that have brought discredit on the name of Mystic—as if it signified a dreamer who is next door to a charlatan.

To the true Mystic—Augustine is the most perfect type—Nature is the staircase by which we climb towards the knowledge of its Author. Reason is the candle of which Love or Faith is the flame. The Many lead on to the One,—the Visible to the Invisible. Earth, in its beauty and intelligibility, is a shadow of heaven; matter guides us towards mind, and is in its turn explained by mind. Thus Mind and Matter, and the reasoning processes in which they meet—Ethics, Science, Art—receive their proper due, as parts of one ordered whole. This is

what is often called the sacramental view of Nature.

But the false or bastard Mystic, of whom Behmen is a type, looks for God in his own soul—in a faculty specially imparted for this purpose, and not possessed by all men. There he finds God, and in God all knowledge. The One leads to the Many. The inner light teaches him at once all that there is to be known. Thus he discerns the nature and hidden virtues of things; the signatures of plants, and the diseases they will cure; the affinities of metals, and the method by which they may all be transmuted into gold. He casts away true knowledge and deludes himself with false.

It will be seen that this stamp of Mysticism is the exact inversion of the first. Augustine exalts Reason and makes full use of it, Behmen abolishes Reason; Augustine regards the world as a stepping-stone to religion, to Behmen the world has no religious value at all. Hence, the invariable notes of what we call the bastard Mysticism are ignorance, presumption, and division. What the writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including Henry More the Platonist, branded as Enthusiasm, is as different from true Mysticism

Mysticism as light from darkness. It produces Faustus, but not Augustine.

Both Fox and Law turned away with English common-sense from the worst extravagances of Behmenism, though Fox was tempted for a moment to set up as a physician on the strength of the inner light. But both took from the Görlitz cobbler the whole of his wild theory of the Fall and Redemption. Fox went boldly on to the logical consequence of Behmenism, and rejected all forms, including the sacraments. Behmen himself did not take this perilous step. Nor did Law. But Law adopted a whole set of idle fancies, which are best passed by in silence. Those who care to go further into this melancholy topic, may read his Grounds and Reasons of Christian Regeneration. What is more serious still, Law completely severed his connection with history, which had never been strong. He remained a High Churchman, but without any sort of inner consistency.

Yet what a strange thing Mysticism is, and what power and beauty attach even to its most perverted forms! Behmenism supplied a fruitful idea to Newton, and it made Law a better, a more lovable, and even a wiser man. In his earlier writings virtue appeared

appeared as reasonable self-love; in the later he recognises that selfishness in any form is not religious. He had made far too much of mechanism and drill: now he insists that goodness must be "a living thing." He had leant his whole weight on "evidences," on the props and supports of revelation: now he sees that everything must be its own proof, and that life can be known only by life. He had maintained that goodness is mere utility: now he believes that there is but "one God, one Good, and one Goodness."

The Mystic treatises abound in fine sayings. Let us take a few almost at random. "Faith is the power by which a man gives himself up to anything," whether it be to conduct, to science, to art, or even to politics or business. It follows from this profound definition that Reason is not to be regarded as the antithesis of Faith. "Truth, my friend, whatever you may think of it, is no less than the Saviour and Redeemer of the world." "See that your mind be free, universal, impartial."

In fact, a great change had come over Law, and in many ways it was conspicuously for the better. Some readers will think that he gave himself up too unrestrainedly to the worship of Love; that Love, unless guided by

Wisdom

Wisdom, is not truly divine; and that here again Law's fear of Reason had brought him to the verge of grave errors. But we have already been too critical. "Oh Academicus," we hear Law saying, "forget your Scholarship, give up your Art and Criticism, be a plain man, and then the first rudiments of sense may teach you that there and there only can goodness be, where it comes forth as a Birth of Life, and is the free natural work and fruit of that which lives within us." These are fine words; only we must not take them quite as Law intended them.

#### IV

### Of the Serious Call

THE Serious Call was published in 1729, when its author was about forty-three years of age. The world has always regarded it as Law's masterpiece, and with good reason. In it Law describes his own life and principles, with all the force of earnest sincerity. The book is, we may say, a part of himself. Some prefer the more philosophical writings, but Law was not really eminent in that department of thought, nor

could he ever throw his heart into it. He judged too meanly of reason to wish to excel in speculation. Others, again, would place the mystical treatises first, and it must be admitted that they contain phrases and passages which, both in style and sentiment, rise above anything that is to be found in the Serious Call. On the other hand, every page of the Behmenist writings is marred by touches that to most readers are exceedingly repellent.

The style of the Serious Call is admirably adapted to its subject. It is grave, lucid, strong, but not graceful. There is never the slightest doubt about Law's meaning; he conveys to the reader the exact idea that is in his own mind. He selects the plainest words, the most homely figures, and is not in the least afraid of iteration. A typical instance is to be found in the parable of the Pond, in the eleventh chapter. The picture is as distinct as possible; but it is a picture such as Hogarth drew. Almost the only artistic feature in the book is to be found in the Characters. Some of them are drawn with consummate skill; many of them show how keen a power of sarcasm Law possessed, and how carefully he bridled it. Attempts

Attempts have been made to find real personages behind the characters. Paternus and Eusebia have been identified with Law's own father and mother; and Gibbon persuaded himself that Flavia and Miranda represented his two aunts-"the heathen and the Christian sister "-Katharine and Hester. But of Paternus we are expressly told that "he lived about two hundred years ago," and the characters are all types, suggested, no doubt, by people whom Law had met, yet not drawn from life. Character painting had been for a century a favourite method of conveying moral instruction, and many famous writers, from Earle to Addison, have left us specimens of their skill in this kind of composition. But how few virtuous characters Law has drawn! He gives us the foolish country gentleman, the foolish scholar, the foolish man of affairs, but not their wise counterparts. The reason is that in Law's view of religion, which leaves the world out altogether, one good person is exactly like another. A pious physician is acceptable to God as pious, but not at all as a physician.

The Serious Call has not escaped criticism, and, indeed, it is easy enough to point out features in which it bears the mark

of the eighteenth century. But it is a splendid protest against the spiritual apathy of the times, and no more strenuous plea for consistency and thoroughness was ever delivered.

The book is addressed to Christians, and it is, as its title implies, a *Serious Call* to be what they profess. The point is inevitable; it is driven home with extraordinary force, and Law's whole life gives weight to every word.

It is not in the least necessary to agree with Law in all the details. The question which he presses upon the reader is, "Are you living the Christian life as you believe it ought to be lived? Are you acting up to your convictions? Are you a sham or not?" Few can face this question, as Law will put it to them, without many qualms of conscience.

As in the *Imitation* we have a pure man describing purity, so here we have a real man insisting on reality. Every syllable is transparently genuine. This is the secret of the *Serious Call*. It is remarkable that, of those whom we know to have been deeply affected by the book, not one was in complete sympathy with Law. Nor does

Law expect this. He would say to the reader, "If you are wiser than I, thank God for it, but beware that you are not less sincere." Let us take a few conspicuous instances of this fecundity, this catholicity of the book. For, in spite of his primness and eccentricity, Law had a truly catholic mind.

One of the first and most illustrious of his disciples was John Wesley. "Meeting now," says Wesley,—the time was shortly after his election to the Lincoln Fellowship—"with Mr Law's Christian Perfection and Serious Call, although I was much offended at many parts of both, yet they convinced me more than ever of the exceeding height and breadth and depth of the law of God. The light flowed in so mightily upon my soul that everything appeared in a new light. . . . I was convinced more than ever of the impossibility of being half a Christian."

There were "many parts" of the book which Wesley did not approve, even at the first. In 1732 he called upon Law at Putney, consulted him upon religious questions, and took him for "a kind of oracle." But in 1738 the little rift widened into a division. On his return from Georgia, Wesley threw in his lot with the Moravians. But

Law could not abide Peter Bohler, whose views of the Atonement, of faith, of instantaneous conversion, and of sinlessness were highly repugnant to him. A sharp correspondence ensued between Wesley and Law (it will be found in Overton or Tyerman), and these two excellent men drifted apart. Later on, Wesley became much more sober in many of his views, but by this time Law had taken up with Behmenism, and this was a new barrier Yet, within eighteen months of his death, Wesley spoke of the Serious Call as "a treatise which will hardly be excelled, if it be equalled, in the English tongue, either for beauty of expression, or for justness and depth of thought."

Again, no good man could well be more unlike Law than Dr Johnson. Johnson held that "no non-juror could reason," and would not admit that Law was an exception. He was often too burly and sweeping in his assertions, but he could not sympathise with Law's politics, or his philosophy, or his peremptory exclusion of the "world" from "religion," which was the unfortunate consequence of his philosophy. Further, Johnson was completely agreed with those who spoke of Law's peculiar type of Mysticism as "crack-brained"

"crack-brained fanaticism." "Law," said . he, "fell latterly into the reveries of Jacob Behmen, whom Law alleged to have been somewhat in the same state with St Paul. and to have seen things unutterable. Were it even so, Jacob would have resembled St Paul still more, by not attempting to utter them." There is truth in this jibe; indeed, setting aside the scorn of the expression, it is the truth. Yet Johnson thought that the Serious Call was "the finest piece of hortatory theology in any language." "When at Oxford," he says in another place, "I took it up expecting to find it a dull book, and perhaps to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an over-match for me; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion after I became capable of religious inquiry."

Thus Law gave a great impulse to Methodism, and breathed new life into the old-fashioned High Church. But he also affected strongly the rising Evangelical school, though, in this particular, his influence was more distinctly of the Socratic kind: he gavé a "torpedo shock," which quickened life, though of a different type from his own. What Hervey, Newton,

## xxxiv Introduction

Venn, and Madan disliked in Law was partly his setting Behmen on a practical equality with Scripture, and partly his view of the Atonement. As to this latter point, it may be said that it is the cause of the depressed tone of all Law's theology. Flying to the opposite extreme from that Calvinism which had wrought such havoc in Church and State, he sedulously eliminated from our Lord's Passion the idea of vicarious suffering; and therefore what he preached was always self-denial and never self-sacrifice. There is nothing in Law at all like St Bernard's "nosegay of myrrh," or that wonderful outburst of mingled sorrow and jubilation which pierced even the sceptical spirit of George Eliot, "the King's High Way of the Cross," in the Imitation. Law's "ethical view" strikes heroism out of religion, casts aside the noblest of motives to which the dullest of men will respond, and turns the spiritual life into a round of unceasing penance. It spoils even his later mystic rhapsodies on the Divine Love. For a love which will not suffer for us is unintelligible, and indeed does not exist.

One other instance may be selected from the history of the Tractarian movement.

"Froude

"Froude told me," says Isaac Williams, "that Keble once, before parting from him, seemed to have something on his mind which he wished to say, but shrank from saying. At last, while waiting, I think, for a coach, he said to him before parting: 'Froude, you said one day that Law's Serious Call was a clever (or pretty, I forget which) book; it seemed to me as if you had said the Day of Judgment would be a pretty sight."

There was much in Law that John Keble would not like-for Keble was a poet; and what a world of difference lies in that one word? There was not a grain of poetry in Law's composition. But Keble, too, was caught by the deep note of absolute sincerity which dominates the Serious Call.

All these instances will help the reader to understand what use he is to make of the book which is here offered to him. Many good men, of widely divergent ways of thinking, have read it with great profit to their The same thing is true of the Imitation, but with a difference. Imitation deals, upon the whole, rather with the goal of the Christian life; the Serious Call, upon the whole, rather with the threshold-with that strait gate through which

## xxxvi Introduction

which all must pass. Shall we say that the end and the beginning are the same for all believers? that only in the middle part of our course do the roads diverge? Perhaps we may gather this lesson from the widespread love for these two books. But what we are to learn above all things from the Serious Call is that there can be no truth and no wholesome life without perfect sincerity. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

A SERIOUS

# CALL

TO A

DEVOUT and HOLY

# LIFE.

Adapted to the State and Condition of

All Orders of Christians.

By WILLIAM LAW, A.M.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

St. Luke viii. 8.

And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me. Rev. xxii. 12.

#### LONDON:

Printed for WILLIAM INNYS, at the West
End of St. Paul's. MDCCXXIX.

d



## THE CONTENTS

#### CHAP. I.

CONCERNING the Nature and Extent of Christian Devotion. Page 1

#### CHAP. II.

An Enquiry into the Reason, why the generality of Christians fall so far short of the Holiness and Devotion of Christianity,

#### CHAP. III.

Of the great danger and folly of not intending to be as eminent and exemplary as we can, in the practice of all Christian virtues, 28

#### CHAP, IV.

We can please God in no state or condition of life, but by intending and devoting it all to his honour and glory, 46 CHAP.

xxxix

### xl The CONTENTS.

#### CHAP. V.

Persons that are free from the necessity of labour and employments, are to consider themselves as devoted to God in a higher degree, Page 68

#### CHAP. VI.

Containing the great obligations, and the great advantages of making a wise and religious use of our estates and fortunes, 79

#### CHAP. VII.

How the imprudent use of an estate corrupts all the tempers of the mind, and fills the heart with poor and ridiculous passions through the whole course of life; represented in the character of Flavia.

#### CHAP. VIII.

How the wise and pious use of an Estate, naturally carrieth us to great perfection in all the virtues of the Christian Life; represented in the character of Miranda.

## The CONTENTS. xli

#### CHAP. IX.

Containing some reflections upon the life of Miranda; and shewing how it may, and ought to be imitated by all her sex, Page 119

#### CHAP. X.

Shewing bow all orders and ranks of men and women of all ages, are obliged to devote themselves unto God.

139

#### CHAP. XI.

Shewing how great devotion fills our lives with the greatest peace and happiness that can be enjoy'd in this life,

#### CHAP. XII.

The happiness of a life wholly devoted unto God, farther prov'd, from the vanity, the sensuality, and the ridiculous, poor enjoyments, which they are forc'd to take up with, who live according to their own humours. This represented in various characters,

#### CHAP. XIII.

That not only a life of vanity, or sensuality, but even the most regular kind of life, that is

### xlii The CONTENTS.

is not govern'd by great devotion, sufficiently shews its miseries, its wants, and emptiness, to the eyes of all the world. This represented in various characters, Pag. 207

#### CHAP. XIV.

Concerning that part of Devotion which relates to times and hours of Prayer. Of daily early prayer in the morning. How we are to improve our forms of Prayer, and how to increase the spirit of devotion.

#### CHAP. XV.

Of chanting, or singing of Psalms in our private devotions. Of the excellency and benefit of this kind of devotion. Of the great effects it hath upon our hearts. Of the means of performing it in the best manner, 262

#### CHAP, XVI.

Recommending devotion at nine o'clock in the morning, call'd in Scripture the third hour of the day. The subject of these prayers is humility, 288

#### CHAP. XVII.

Shewing how difficult the practice of humility is made, by the general spirit and temper of the world.

## The CONTENTS. xliii

world. How Christianity requireth us to live contrary to the world, Pag. 306

#### CHAP. XVIII.

Shewing how the education which men generally receive in their youth, makes the doctrines of humility difficult to be practis'd. The spirit of a better education, represented in the character of Paternus,

#### CHAP. XIX.

Shewing how the method of educating daughters, makes it difficult for them to enter into the spirit of Christian humility. How miserably they are injur'd and abus'd by such an education. The spirit of a better education represented in the character of Eusebia, 347

#### CHAP. XX.

Recommending Devotion at twelve o' Clock, call'd in Scripture the sixth hour of the day. This frequency of Devotion equally desirable by all orders of people. Universal love is here recommended to be the subject of prayer at this hour. Of intercession, as an act of universal love,

## xliv The CONTENTS.

#### CHAP. XXI.

Of the necessity and benefit of Intercession, consider'd as an exercise of universal love. How all orders of men are to pray and intercede with God for one another. How naturally such intercession amends and reforms the hearts of those that use it,

Page 411

#### CHAP. XXII.

Recommending Devotion at three o'clock, called in Scripture the ninth hour of the day. The subject of prayer at this hour, is resignation to the divine pleasure. The nature and duty of conformity to the will of God in all our actions and designs, 439

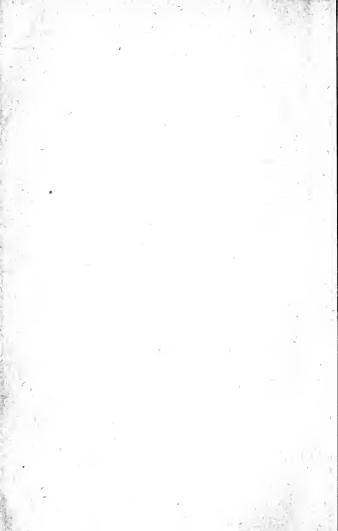
#### CHAP. XXIII.

Of Evening prayer. Of the nature and necessity of examination. How we are to be particular in the confession of all our sins. How we are to fill our minds with a just horror and dread of all sin,

#### CHAP, XXIV.

The Conclusion. Of the Excellency and Greatness of a devout Spirit, 481

## A SERIOUS CALL TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE



#### A

## SERIOUS CALL

TO A

## Devout and Holy Life

#### CHAP. I

Concerning the Nature and Extent of Christian Devotion

DEVOTION is neither private nor publick Prayer, but Prayers whether private or publick, are particular parts or instances of Devotion. Devotion signifies a life given, or devoted to God.

He therefore is the devout man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God, who considers God in every thing, who serves

God in every thing, who makes all the parts of his *common* life, parts of piety, by doing every thing in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to his Glory.

We readily acknowledge, that God alone is to be the rule and measure of our *Prayers*, that in them we are to look wholly unto him, and act wholly for him, that we are only to pray in such a manner, for such things, and

such ends as are suitable to his Glory.

Now let any one but find out the reason why he is to be thus strictly pious in his prayers, and he will find the same as strong a reason to be as strictly pious in all the other parts of his life. For there is not the least shadow of a reason, why we should make God the rule and measure of our prayers, why we should then look wholly unto him, and pray according to his will; but what equally proves it necessary for us to look wholly unto God, and make him the rule and measure of all the other actions of our life. For any ways of life, any employment of our talents, whether of our parts, our time or money, that is not strictly according to the will of God, that is not for such ends as are suitable to his Glory, are as great absurdities and failings, as prayers that are not according to the will of God. For there is no other reason, why our prayers should be according to the will of God, why they should have nothing in them, but what is wise, and boly and beavenly, there is no other reason for this, but that our lives may be of

of the same nature, full of the same wisdom, holiness and heavenly tempers, that we may live unto God in the same spirit that we pray unto him. Were it not our strict duty to live by reason, to devote all the actions of our lives to God, were it not absolutely necessary to walk before him in wisdom and holiness and all heavenly conversation, doing every thing in his name, and for his glory, there would be no excellency or wisdom in the most heavenly prayers. Nay, such prayers would be absurdities, they would be like Prayers for wings, when it was no part of our duty to fly.

As sure therefore as there is any wisdom in praying for the Spirit of God, so sure is it, that we are to make that Spirit the rule of all our actions; as sure as it is our duty to look wholly unto God in our Prayers, so sure is it, that it is our duty to live wholly unto God in our lives. But we can no more be said to live unto God, unless we live unto him in all the ordinary actions of our life, unless he be the rule and measure of all our ways, than we can be said to pray unto God, unless our Prayers look wholly unto him. So that unreasonable and-absurd ways of life, whether in labour or diversion, whether they consume our time, or our money, are like unreasonable and absurd Prayers, and are as truly an offence unto God.

'Tis for want of knowing, or at least considering this, that we see such a mixture of Ridicule

Ridicule in the lives of many People. You see them strict as to some times and places of Devotion, but when the Service of the Church is over, they are but like those that seldom or never come there. In their way of Life, their manner of spending their time and money, in their cares and fears, in their pleasures, and indulgences, in their labour and diversions, they are like the rest of the world. This makes the loose part of the world generally make a jest of those that are devout, because they see their Devotion goes no farther than their Prayers, and that when they are over, they live no more unto God, till the time of Prayers returns again; but live by the same bumour and fancy, and in as full an enjoyment of all the follies of life as other People. is the reason why they are the jest and scorn of careless and worldly People; not because they are really devoted to God, but because they appear to have no other Devotion, but that of occasional Prayers.

Julius is very fearful of missing Prayers; all the Parish supposes Julius to be sick, if he is not at Church. But if you was to ask him why he spends the rest of his time by humour and chance? why he is a companion of the silliest People in their most silly pleasures? why he is ready for every impertinent entertainment and diversion. If you was to ask him why there is no amusement too trifling to please him? why is he busy at all balls and assemblies? why he gives himself up to an idle gossiping

gossiping conversation? why he lives in foolish friendships and fondness for particular persons, that neither want nor deserve any particular kindness? why he allows himself in foolish hatreds and resentments against particular persons, without considering that he is to love every body as himself? if you ask him why he never puts his conversation, his time, and fortune, under the rules of Religion, Julius has no more to say for himself, than the most disorderly Person. For the whole tenor of Scripture lies as directly against such a life, as against debauchery and intemperance: He that lives in such a course of idleness and folly, lives no more according to the Religion of Jesus Christ, than he that lives in gluttony and intemperance.

If a man was to tell Julius that there was no occasion for so much constancy at Prayers, and that he might, without any harm to himself, neglect the service of the Church, as the generality of People do, Julius would think such a one to be no Christian, and that he ought to avoid his company. But if a person only tells him, that he may live as the generality of the world does, that he may enjoy himself as others do, that he may spend his time and money as People of fashion do, that he may conform to the follies and frailties of the generality, and gratify his tempers and passions as most People do, Julius never suspects that man to want a christian spirit, or

that he is doing the devil's work.

And yet if *Julius* was to read all the New Testament from the beginning to the end, he would find his course of life condemn'd in

every page of it.

And indeed there cannot any thing be imagined more absurd in it self, than wise and sublime, and heavenly Prayers added to a life of vanity and folly, where neither labour nor diversions neither time nor money, are under the direction of the wisdom and heavenly tempers of our Prayers. If we were to see a man pretending to act wholly with regard to God in every thing that he did, that would neither spend time nor money, or take any labour or diversion, but so far as he could act according to strict principles of reason and piety, and yet at the same time neglect all Prayer, whether publick or private, should we not be amaz'd at such a man, and wonder how he could have so much folly along with so much religion?

Yet this is as reasonable as for any person to pretend to strictness in *Devotion*, to be careful of observing times and places of Prayer, and yet letting the rest of his life, his time and labour, his talents and money be disposed of without any regard to strict rules of Piety and Devotion. For it is as great an absurdity to suppose holy Prayers, and divine Petitions, without an holiness of life suitable to them, as to suppose an holy and divine life without

Prayers.

Let anyone therefore think, how easily he could confute a man that pretended to great strictness of Life without Prayer, and the same Arguments will as plainly confute another, that pretends to strictness of Prayer, without carrying the same strictness into every other part of life. For to be weak and foolish in spending our time and fortune, is no greater a mistake, than to be weak and foolish in relation to our Prayers. And to allow our selves in any ways of life that neither are, nor can be offer'd to God, is the same irreligion as to neglect our Prayers, or use them in such a manner, as makes them

an offering unworthy of God.

The short of the matter is this, either Reason and Religion prescribe rules and ends to all the ordinary actions of our life, or they do not: If they do, then it is as necessary to govern all our actions by those rules, as it is necessary to worship God. For if Religion teaches us any thing concerning eating and drinking, or spending our time and money, if it teaches us how we are to use and contemn the world, if it tells us what tempers we are to have in common life, how we are to be disposed towards all people, how we are to behave towards the sick, the poor, the old and destitute; if it tells us whom we are to treat with a particular love, whom we are to regard with a particular esteem; if it tells us how we are to treat our enemies, and how we are to mortify and deny our selves, he must be

be very weak, that can think these parts of Religion are not to be observ'd with as much exactness, as any doctrines that relate to

Prayers.

It is very observable, that there is not one command in all the Gospel for Publick Worship; and perhaps it is a duty that is least insisted upon in Scripture of any other. The frequent attendance at it is never so much as mention'd in all the New Testament. Whereas that Religion or Devotion which is to govern the ordinary actions of our life, is to be found in almost every verse of Scripture. Our blessed Saviour and his Apostles are wholly taken up in Doctrines that relate to common life. They call us to renounce the world, and differ in every temper and way of life, from the spirit and way of the world. To renounce all its goods, to fear none of its evils, to reject its joys, and have no value for its happiness. To be as new born babes, that are born into a new state of things, to live as Pilgrims in spiritual watching, in holy fear, and heavenly aspiring after another life. To take up our daily cross, to deny our selves, to profess the blessedness of mourning, to seek the blessedness of poverty of spirit. To forsake the pride and vanity of Riches, to take no thought for the morrow, to live in the profoundest State of Humility, to rejoice in worldly sufferings. To reject the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; to bear injuries, to forgive and bless our enemies

mies, and to love mankind as God loveth them. To give up our whole hearts and affections to God, and strive to enter through the strait gate into a life of eternal Glory.

This is the common Devotion which our Blessed Saviour taught, in order to make it the common life of all Christians. Is it not therefore exceeding strange, that People should place so much piety in the attendance upon publick worship, concerning which there is not one precept of our Lord's to be found, and yet neglect these common duties of our ordinary life, which are commanded in every Page of the Gospel? I call these duties the devotion of our common life, because if they are to be practis'd, they must be made parts of our common life, they can have no place any where else.

If contempt of the world, and heavenly affection, is a necessary temper of Christians, it is necessary that this temper appear in the whole course of their lives, in their manner of using the world, because it can have no

place any where else.

If self-denial be a condition of salvation, all that would be saved, must make it a part of their ordinary life. If humility be a christian duty, then the common life of a Christian, is to be a constant course of humility in all its kinds. If poverty of spirit be necessary, it must be the spirit and temper of every day of our lives. If we are to relieve the naked, the sick, and the prisoner, it must be the

W the common charity of our lives, as far as we can render our selves able to perform If we are to love our enemies, we must make our common life a visible exercise and demonstration of that love. If content and thankfulness, if the patient bearing of evil be duties to God, they are the Duties of every Day, and in every circumstance of our life. If we are to be wise and holy as the new-born sons of God, we can no otherwise be so, but by renouncing every thing that is foolish and vain in every part of our common life. If we are to be in Christ new creatures, we must show that we are so, by having new ways of living in the world. If we are to follow Christ, it must be in our common way of spending every day.

Thus it is in all the virtues and holy tempers of Christianity, they are not ours unless they be the virtues and tempers of our ordinary life. So that Christianity is so far from leaving us to live in the common ways of life, conforming to the folly of customs, and gratifying the passions and tempers which the spirit of the world delights in, it is so far from indulging us in any of these things, that all its virtues which it makes necessary to salvation, are only so many ways of living above, and contrary to the world in all the common actions of our life. If our common life is not a common course of humility, self-denial, renunciation of the world, poverty of spirit, and heavenly

heavenly affection, we don't live the lives of Christians.

But yet though it is thus plain, that this and this alone is Christianity, an uniform open and visible practice of all these virtues, yet it is as plain, that there is little or nothing of this to be found, even amongst the better sort of People. You see them often at Church, and pleas'd with fine preachers, but look into their lives, and you see them just the same sort of People as others are, that make no pretences to devotion. The difference that you find betwixt them, is only the difference of their natural tempers. They have the same taste of the world, the same worldly cares, and fears, and joys, they have the same turn of mind, equally vain in their desires. You see the same fondness for state and equipage, the same pride and vanity of dress, the same self-love and indulgence, the same foolish friendships, and groundless batreds, the same levity of mind, and trifling spirit, the same fondness for diversions, the same idle dispositions, and vain ways of spending their time in visiting and conversation, as the rest of the world, that make no pretences to devotion.

I don't mean this comparison betwixt People seemingly good and profest rakes, but betwixt People of sober lives. Let us take an instance in two modest Women: let it be supposed, that one of them is careful of times of Devotion, and observes them thro' a sense of duty, and that the other has no hearty concern about it, but is at Church seldom or often, just as it happens. Now it is a very easy thing to see this difference betwixt these persons. But when you have seen this, can you find any farther difference betwixt them? Can you find that their common life is of a different kind? Are not the tempers, and customs, and manners of the one, of the same kind as of the other? Do they live as if they belonged to different worlds, had different views in their heads, and different rules and measures of all their actions? Have they not the same goods and evils, are they not pleased and displeased in the same manner, and for the same things? Do they not live in the same course of life? Does one seem to be of this world. looking at the things that are temporal, and the other to be of another world, looking wholly at the things that are eternal? Does the one live in pleasure, delighting her self in shew or dress, and the other live in self-denial and mortification, renouncing every thing that looks like vanity either of person, dress, or carriage? Does the one follow publick diversions, and trifle away her time in idle visits, and corrupt conversation, and does the other study all the arts of improving her time, living in Prayer and Watching, and such good works, as may make all her time turn to her advantage, and be placed to her account at the last day? Is the one careless of expence, and glad to be able to adorn her self with every costly ornament of dress

dress, and does the other consider her fortune as a talent given her by God, which is to be improv'd religiously, and no more to be spent in vain and needless ornaments, than it is to be buried in the earth?

Where must you look, to find one Person of Religion differing in this manner, from another that has none? And yet if they do not differ in these things which are here related, can it with any sense be said, the one is a good Christian, and the other not?

Take another instance amongst the men. Leo has a great deal of good nature, has kept, what they call, good company, hates every thing that is false and base, is very generous and brave to his friends, but has concern'd himself so little with Religion, that he hardly knows the difference betwixt a Jew and a Christian.

Eusebius on the other hand, has had early impressions of Religion, and buys books of Devotion. He can talk of all the feasts and fasts of the Church, and knows the names of most men that have been eminent for Piety. You never hear him swear, or make a loose jest, and when he talks of Religion he talks of it, as of a matter of the last concern.

Here you see, that one person has Religion enough, according to the way of the world, to be reckon'd a pious Christian, and the other is so far from all appearance of Religion, that he may fairly be reckon'd a Heathen; and yet if you look into their common life, if you examine

amine their *chief* and *ruling* tempers in the greatest *articles* of life, or the greatest *doctrines* of Christianity, you will find the least difference imaginable.

Consider them with regard to the use of the world, because that is what every body

can see.

Now to have right notions and tempers with relation to this world, is as essential to Religion, as to have right notions of God. And it is as possible for a man to worship a Crocodile, and yet be a pious man, as to have his affections set upon this world, and yet be

a good Christian.

But now if you consider Leo and Eusebius in this respect, you will find them exactly alike, seeking, using, and enjoying all that can be got in this world in the same manner, and for the same ends. You will find that riches, prosperity, pleasures, indulgences, state, equipage, and honour are just as much the happiness of Eusebius as they are of Leo. And yet if Christianity has not changed a man's mind and temper with relation to these things, what can we say that it has done for him?

For if the doctrines of Christianity were practised, they would make a man as different from other People as to all worldly tempers, sensual pleasures, and the pride of life, as a wise man is different from a natural; it would be as easie a thing to know a Christian by his outward course of life, as it is now difficult to find any body that lives it. For it is notorious

that

that Christians are now not only like other men in their frailties and infirmities, this might be in some degree excusable, but the complaint is, they are like Heathens in all the main and chief articles of their lives. enjoy the world, and live every day in the same tempers, and the same designs, and the same indulgences as they did who knew not God, nor of any happiness in another life. Every body that is capable of any reflexion, must have observ'd, that this is generally the state even of devout People, whether men or . women. You may see them different from other People so far as to times and places of Prayer, but generally like the rest of the world in all the other parts of their lives. That is, adding Christian Devotion to an Heathen life: I have the authority of our Blessed Saviour for this remark, where he says, Take no thought, saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be cloathed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek. But if to be thus affected even with the necessary things of this life, shews that we are not yet of a Christian Spirit, but are like the Heathens, surely to enjoy the vanity and folly of the world as they did, to be like them in the main chief tempers of our lives, in self-love and indulgence, in sensual pleasures and diversions, in the vanity of dress, the love of shew and greatness, or any other gaudy distinctions of fortune, is a much greater sign of an Heathen temper. And consequently

sequently they who add Devotion to such a life, must be said to pray as Christians, but live as Heathens.

#### CHAP. II

An Enquiry into the Reason, why the generality of Christians fall so far short of the Holiness and Devotion of Christianity

IT may now be reasonably enquir'd, how it comes to pass, that the lives even of the better sort of People are thus strangely contrary to the principles of Christianity.

But before I give a direct answer to this, I desire it may also be enquir'd, how it comes to pass that swearing is so common a vice amongst Christians? It is indeed not yet so common amongst women, as it is amongst men. But amongst men this sin is so common, that perhaps there are more than two in three that are guilty of it through the whole course of their lives, swearing more or less, just as it happens, some constantly, others only now and then, as it were by chance. Now I ask how comes it, that two in three of the men are guilty of so gross and prophane a sin as this is? There is neither ignorance nor human infirmity to plead for it: It is against an ex-

press commandment, and the most plain Doctrine of our blessed Saviour.

Do but now find the reason why the generality of men live in this notorious vice, and then you will have found the reason, why the generality even of the better sort of People, live so contrary to Christianity.

Now the reason of common swearing is this; it is because men have not so much as the intention to please God in all their actions. For let a man but have so much piety as to intend to please God in all the actions of his life, as the happiest and best thing in the world, and then he will never swear more. It will be as impossible for him to swear, whilst he feels this intention within himself, as it is impossible for a man that intends to please his Prince, to go up and abuse him to his face.

It seems but a small and necessary part of piety to have such a sincere intention as this; and that he has no reason to look upon himself as a Disciple of Christ, who is not thus far advanced in piety. And yet it is purely for want of this degree of piety, that you see \ such a mixture of sin and folly in the lives even of the better sort of People. It is for want of this intention, that you see men that profess religion, yet live in swearing and sensuality; that you see Clergymen given to pride and covetousness, and worldly enjoyments. It is for want of this intention, that you see women that profess Devotion, yet living in all the folly and vanity of dress, wasting their time

time in idleness and pleasures, and in all such instances of state and equipage as their estates will reach. For let but a woman feel her heart full of this intention, and she will find it as impossible to patch or paint, as to curse or swear; she will no more desire to shine at Balls and Assemblies, or make a figure amongst those that are most finely dress'd, than she will desire to dance upon a Rope to please Spectators: She will know, that the one is as far from the wisdom and excellency of the

Christian Spirit, as the other.

It was this general intention, that made the primitive Christians such eminent instances of piety, that made the goodly fellowship of the saints, and all the glorious army of martyrs and confessors. And if you will here stop, and ask your self, why you are not as pious as the primitive Christians were, your own heart will tell you, that it is neither through ignorance nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it. You observe the same Sunday-worship that they did; and you are strict in it, because it is your full intention to be so. And when you as fully intend to be like them in their ordinary common life, when you intend to please God in all your actions, you will find it as possible, as to be strictly exact in the service of the Church. And when you have this intention to please God in all your actions, as the happiest and best thing in the world, you will find in you as great an aversion to every thing that is vain and *impertinent* in common life, whether of business or pleasure, as you now have to any thing that is *prophane*. You will be as fearful of living in any foolish way, either of spending your *time*, or your *fortune*, as you are now fearful of neglecting the publick Worship.

Now who that wants this general sincere intention, can be reckon'd a Christian? And yet if it was amongst Christians, it would change the whole face of the world; true piety, and exemplary holiness, would be as common and visible, as buying and selling, or

any trade in life.

Let a Clergyman but be thus pious, and he will converse as if he had been brought up by an Apostle, he will no more think and talk of noble preferment, than of noble eating, or a glorious chariot. He will no more complain of the frowns of the world, or a small cure, or the want of a patron, than he will complain of the want of a lac'd coat, or a running borse. Let him but intend to please God in all his actions, as the happiest and best thing in the world, and then he will know, that there is nothing noble in a Clergyman, but a burning zeal for the salvation of souls; nor any thing poor in his profession, but idleness and a worldly Spirit.

Again, let a *Tradesman* but have this *intention*, and it will make him a saint in his *shop*; his every-day business will be a course of wise and reasonable actions, made holy to God, by

being done in obedience to his will and pleasure. He will buy and sell, and labour and travel, because by so doing he can do some good to himself and others. But then, as nothing can please God but what is wise, and reasonable, and holy, so he will neither buy, nor sell, nor labour in any other manner, nor to any other end, but such as may be shewn to be wise, and reasonable, and holy. He will therefore consider, not what arts, or methods, or application will soonest make him richer and greater than his brethren, or remove him from a shop to a life of state and pleasure; but he will consider what arts, what methods, what application can make worldly business most acceptable to God, and make a life of trade a life of holiness, devotion and piety. This will be the temper and spirit of every tradesman; he cannot stop short of these degrees of piety, whenever it is his intention to please God in all his actions, as the best and happiest thing in the world.

And on the other hand, whoever is not of this spirit and temper in his trade and profession, and does not carry it on only so far as is best subservient to a wise and holy and heavenly life; it is certain that he has not this intention, and yet without it, who can be shewn to be a follower of Jesus Christ?

Again, let the *Gentleman* of birth and fortune but have this *intention*, and you will see how it will carry him from every appearance of evil, to every instance of piety and goodness.

He cannot live by chance, or as humour and fancy carries him, because he knows that nothing can please God but a wise and regular course of life. He cannot live in idleness and indulgence, in sports and gaming, in pleasures and intemperance, in vain expences and high living, because these things cannot be turned into means of piety and holiness, or made so many parts of a wise and religious, life.

As he thus removes from all appearance of evil, so he hastens and aspires after every instance of goodness. He does not ask what is allowable and pardonable, but what is commendable and praise-worthy. He does not ask whether God will forgive the folly of our lives, the madness of our pleasures, the vanity of our expences, the richness of our equipage, and the careless consumption of our time; but he asks, whether God is pleased with these things, or whether these are the appointed ways of gaining his favour. He does not enquire, whether it be pardonable to hoard up money, to adorn ourselves with diamonds, and gild our chariots, whilst the widow and the orphan, the sick and the prisoner want to be reliev'd; but he asks, whether God has required these things at our hands, whether we shall be call'd to account at the last day for the neglect of them; because it is not his intent to live in such ways as, for aught we know, God may perhaps pardon, but to be diligent in such ways, as we know, that God will infallibly reward.

He

He will not therefore look at the lives of Christians, to learn how he ought to spend his estate, but he will look into the Scriptures, and make every doctrine, parable, precept, or instruction that relates to rich men, a law to himself in the use of his estate.

He will have nothing to do with costly apparel, because the rich man in the Gospel was cloathed with purple and fine linnen. He denies himself the pleasures and indulgences which his estate could procure, because our blessed Saviour saith, Wo unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation. He will have but one rule for charity, and that will be, to spend all that he can that way, because the judge of quick and dead hath said, that all that is so given, is given to him.

He will have no bospitable table for the rich and wealthy to come and feast with him in good eating and drinking; because our blessed Lord saith, When thou makest a dinner, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the

poor, the mained, the lame, the Luke xiv. blind, and thou shalt be blessed.

12, 13, 14. For they cannot recompence thee,

for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

He will waste no money in gilded roofs, or costly furniture: He will not be carried from pleasure to pleasure in expensive state and equipage equipage, because an inspir'd Apostle hath said, that all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Let not any one look upon this as an imaginary description of charity, that looks fine in the notion, but cannot be put in practice. For it is so far from being an imaginary impracticable form of life, that it has been practised by great numbers of Christians in former ages, who were glad to turn their whole estates into a constant course of charity. And it is so far from being impossible now, that if we can find any Christians, that sincerely intend to please God in all their actions as the best and happiest thing in the world, whether they be young or old, single or married, men or women, if they have but this intention, it will be impossible for them to do otherwise. This one principle will infallibly carry them to this height of charity, and they will find themselves unable to stop short of it.

For how is it possible for a man that intends to please God in the use of his money, and intends it because he judges it to be his greatest happiness, how is it possible for such a one in such a state of mind, to bury his money in needless impertinent finery, in-covering himself or his borses with gold, whilst there are any works of piety and charity to be done with it; or any ways of spending it

well.

This is as strictly impossible, as for a man that intends to please God in his words, to go into company on purpose to swear and lye. For as all waste and unreasonable expence is done designedly, and with deliberation, so no one can be guilty of it, whose constant intention is to please God in the use of his money.

I have chose to explain this matter, by appealing to this intention, because it makes the case so plain, and because every one that has a mind, may see it in the clearest light, and feel it in the strongest manner, only by looking into his own heart. For it is as easy for every person to know, whether he intends to please God in all his actions; as for any servant to know, whether this be his intention towards his master. Every one also can as easily tell how he lays out his money, and whether he considers how to please God in it, as he can tell where his estate is, and whether it be in money or land. So that here is no plea left for ignorance or frailty, as to this matter every body is in the light, and every body has power. And no one can fail, but he that is not so much a Christian as to intend to please God in the use of his estate.

You see two persons, one is regular in publick and private Prayer, the other is not. Now the reason of this difference is not this, that one has strength and power to observe Prayer, and the other has not; but the reason is this, that one intends to please God in the duties of Devotion, and the other has no intention

about it. Now the case is the same in the right or wrong use of our time and money. You see one person throwing away his time in sleep and idleness, in visiting and diversions, and his money in the most vain and unreasonable expences. You see another careful of every day, dividing his hours by rules of reason and Religion, and spending all his money in works of charity; now the difference is not owing to this, that one has strength and power to do thus, and the other has not; but it is owing to this, that one intends to please God in the right use of all his time and all his money, and the other has no intention about it.

Here therefore let us judge our selves sincerely, let us not vainly content our selves with the common disorders of our lives, the vanity of our expences, the folly of our diversions, the pride of our habits, the idleness of our lives, and the wasting of our time, fancying that these are such imperfections as we fall into thro' the unavoidable weakness and frailty of our natures; but let us be assured, that these disorders of our common life are owing to this, that we have not so much Christianity, as to intend to please God in all the actions of our life, as the best and happiest thing in the world. So that we must not look upon our selves in a state of common and pardonable imperfection, but in such a state, as wants the first and most fundamental principle of Christianity, viz. an intention to please God in all our actions.

And if any one was to ask himself, how it comes to pass, that there are any degrees of sobriety which he neglects, any practices of humility which he wants, any method of charity which he does not follow, any rules of redeeming time which he does not observe, his own heart will tell him, that it is because he never intended to be so exact in those duties. For whenever we fully intend it, it is as possible to conform to all this regularity of life, as 'tis possible for a man to observe times of Prayer.

So that the fault does not lie here, that we desire to be good and perfect, but thro' the weakness of our nature fall short of it; but it is, because we have not piety enough to intend to be as good as we can, or to please God in all the actions of our life. This we see is plainly the case of him that spends his time in sports, when he should be at Church; it is not his want of power, but his want of

intention, or desire to be there.

And the case is plainly the same in every other folly of human life. She that spends her time and money in the unreasonable ways and fashions of the world, does not do so, because she wants power to be wise and religious in the management of her time and money, but because she has no intention or desire of being so. When she feels this intention, she will

## to a Devout and Holy Life 27

will find it as possible to act up to it, as to be strictly *sober* and *chaste*, because it is her care and desire to be so.

This doctrine does not suppose, that we have no need of divine grace, or that it is in our own power to make our selves perfect. It only supposes, that through the (want) of a sincere intention of pleasing God in all our actions, we fall into such irregularities of life, as by the ordinary means of grace, we should have power to avoid.

And that we have not that perfection, which our present state of grace makes us capable of, because we don't so much as

intend to have it.

It only teaches us, that the reason why you see no real mortification, or self-denial, no eminent charity, no profound humility, no heavenly affection, no true contempt of the world, no Christian meekness, no sincere zeal, no eminent piety in the common lives of Christians, is this, because they don't so much as intend to be exact and exemplary in these virtues.

## CHAP. III

Of the great danger, and folly of not intending to be as eminent and exemplary, as we can, in the practice of all Christian virtues

A LTHOUGH the goodness of God, and his rich mercies in Christ Jesus are a sufficient assurance to us, that he will be merciful to our unavoidable weaknesses and infirmities, that is, to such failings as are the effects of ignorance or surprize; yet we have no reason to expect the same mercy towards those sins which we have liv'd in, through a want of intention to avoid them.

For instance, the case of a *common* swearer who dies in that guilt, seems to have no title to the divine mercy, for this reason, because he can no more plead any weakness, or infirmity in his excuse, than the man that hid his talent in the earth, could plead his want of strength to keep it out of the earth.

But now if this be right reasoning in the case of a common swearer, that his sin is not to be reckon'd a pardonable frailty, because he has no weakness to plead in its excuse, why then do we not carry this way of reasoning to its true extent? Why don't we as much condemn every other error of life, that has no more weakness to plead in its excuse than common swearing?

For

For if this be so bad a thing, because it might be avoided, if we did but sincerely intend it, must not then all other erroneous ways of life be very guilty, if we live in them, not through weakness and inability, but because we never sincerely intended to avoid them?

For instance, you perhaps have made no progress in the most important christian virtues, you have scarce gone half way in humility and charity; now if your failure in these duties is purely owing to your want of intention of performing them in any true degree, have you not then as little to plead for your self, and are you not as much without all excuse as the common swearer?

Why, therefore, don't you press these things home upon your conscience? Why do you not think it as dangerous for you to live in such defects as are in your power to amend, as 'tis dangerous for a common swearer to live in the breach of that duty, which it is in his power to observe? Is not negligence, and a want of a sincere intention, as blameable in one case, as in another?

You, it may be, are as far from Christian Perfection, as the common swearer is from V keeping the third Commandment; are you not therefore as much condemn'd by the doctrines of the Gospel, as the swearer is by the third Commandment?

You perhaps will say, that all People fall short of the Perfection of the Gospel, and therefore therefore you are content with your failings. But this is saying nothing to the purpose. For the question is not whether Gospel Perfection can be fully attain'd, but whether you come as near it as a sincere intention, and careful diligence can carry you. Whether you are not in a much lower state than you might be, if you sincerely intended, and carefully labour'd to advance your self in all Christian virtues.

If you are as forward in the Christian Life, as your best endeavours can make you, then you may justly hope that your *imperfections* will not be laid to your charge; but if your defects in *piety*, *humility*, and *charity*, are owing to your negligence, and want of *sincere intention* to be as eminent as you can in these virtues, then you leave your self as much without excuse, as he that lives in the sin of swearing, through the want of a sincere intention to depart from it.

The salvation of our souls is set forth in Scripture as a thing of difficulty, that requires all our diligence, that is to be work'd out with

fear and trembling.

We are told, that strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. That many are called, but few are chosen. And that many will miss of their salvation, who seem to have taken some pains to obtain it. As in these words, Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many

I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

Here our blessed Lord commands us to strive to enter in, because many will fail, who only seek to enter. By which we are plainly taught, that Religion is a state of labour and striving, and that many will fail of their salvation; not because they took no pains or care about it, but because they did not take pains and care enough; they only sought, but did not strive to enter in.

Every Christian, therefore, should as well examine his life by these Doctrines, as by For these Doctrines the Commandments. are as plain marks of our condition, as the Commandments are plain marks of our duty.

For if salvation is only given to those who strive for it, then it is as reasonable for me to consider, whether my course of life be a course of striving to obtain it, as to consider whether I am keeping any of the Commandments.

If my Religion is only a formal compliance with those modes of worship that are in fashion where I live; if it costs me no pains or trouble; if it lays me under no rules and restraints; if I have no careful thoughts and sober reflections about it, is it not great weakness to think that I am striving to enter in at the strait gate?

If I am seeking every thing that can delight my senses, and regale my appetites; spending my time and fortune in pleasures, in diversions

diversions, and worldly enjoyments, a stranger to watchings, fastings, prayers, and mortifications, how can it be said that I am working out my salvation with fear and

trembling?

If there is nothing in my life and conversation, that shews me to be different from Jews and Heathens; if I use the world, and worldly enjoyments, as the generality of people now do, and in all ages have done, why should I think that I am amongst those few, who are walking in the narrow way to heaven?

And yet if the way is narrow, if none can walk in it but those that strive, is it not as necessary for me to consider, whether the way I am in be narrow enough, or the labour I take be a sufficient striving, as to consider whether I sufficiently observe the second or third Commandment?

'The sum of this matter is this: From the above-mention'd, and many other passages of Scripture, it seems plain, that our salvation depends upon the sincerity and perfection of our endeavours to obtain it.

Weak and imperfect men shall, notwithstanding their frailties and defects, be receiv'd, as having pleas'd God, if they have done

their utmost to please him.

The rewards of charity, piety, and humility, will be given to those, whose lives have been a careful labour to exercise these virtues in as bigh a degree as they could.

We

We cannot offer to God the service of Angels; we cannot obey him as man in a state of perfection could; but fallen men can do their best, and this is the perfection that is requir'd of us; it is only the perfection of our best endeavours, a careful labour to be as perfect as we can.

But if we stop short of this, for aught we know, we stop short of the mercy of God, and leave our selves nothing to plead from the terms of the Gospel. For God has there made no promises of mercy to the slothful and negligent. His mercy is only offer'd to our frail and imperfect, but best endeavours to practise all manner of righteousness.

As the law to angels is angelical righteousness, as the law to perfect beings is strict perfection, so the law to our imperfect natures is the best obedience that our frail

nature is able to perform.

The measure of our love to God, seems, in justice to be the measure of our love of every virtue. We are to love and practise it with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. And when we cease to live with this regard to virtue, we live below our nature, and instead of being able to plead our infirmities, we stand chargeable with negligence.

It is for this reason that we are exhorted, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; because unless our heart and passions are eagerly bent upon the work of our salvation;

unless *boly fears* animate our endeavours, and keep our consciences strict and tender about every part of our duty, constantly examining how we live, and how fit we are to die, we shall in all probability fall into a state of negligence, and sit down in such a course of life, as will never carry us to the rewards of heaven.

And he that considers, that a just God can only make such allowances as are suitable to his justice, that our works are all to be examin'd by fire, will find that fear and trembling are proper tempers for those that are drawing near so great a trial.

And indeed there is no probability that any one should do all the duty that is expected from him, or make that progress in piety, which the holiness and justice of God requires of him; but he that is con-

stantly afraid of falling short of it.

Now this is not intended to possess people's minds with a scrupulous anxiety and discontent in the service of God, but to fill them with a just fear of living in sloth and idleness, and in the neglect of such virtues as they will want at the day of judgment.

It is to excite them to an earnest examination of their lives, to such zeal, and care and concern after christian perfection, as they use in any matter that has gain'd their

heart and affections.

It is only desiring them to be so apprehensive of their state, so humble in the opinion

of themselves, so earnest after higher degrees of piety, and so fearful of falling short of happiness, as the great Apostle St. Paul was, when he thus wrote to the

Philippians.

Not as though I had already attain'd, either were already perfect, - but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before: I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And then he adds, let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded.

But now, if the Apostle thought it necessary for those who were in his state of perfection, to be thus minded; that is, thus labouring, pressing and aspiring after some degrees of holiness, to which they were not then arriv'd; surely it is much more necessary for us, who are born in the dregs of time, and labouring under great imperfections, to be thus minded; that is, thus earnest and striving after such degrees of a holy and divine life, as we have not yet attain'd.

The best way for any one to know how much he ought to aspire after holiness, is to consider, not how much will make his present life easy, but to ask himself, how much he thinks will make him easy at the

hour of death.

Now any man that dares be so serious as to put this question to himself, will be forc'd to answer, that at death every one will wish that he had been as perfect as human nature can be.

Is not this therefore sufficient to put us not only upon wishing, but labouring after all that perfection, which we shall then lament the want of? Is it not excessive folly to be content with such a course of piety as we already know cannot content us, at a time when we shall so want it, as to have nothing else to comfort us? How can we carry a severer condemnation against our selves, than to believe, that at the hour of death we shall want the virtues of the Saints, and wish that we had been amongst the first servants of God, and yet take no methods of arriving at their height of piety whilst we are alive?

Though this is an absurdity that we can easily pass over at present, whilst the health of our bodies, the passions of our minds, the noise, and hurry, and pleasures, and business of the world, lead us on with eyes that see not, and ears that hear not, yet at death it will set it self before us in a dreadful magnitude, it will haunt us like a dismal Ghost, and our conscience will never let us take our eyes from it.

We see in worldly matters, what a torment self-condemnation is; and how hardly a man is able to forgive himself, when he has brought himself into any calamity or disgrace, purely by his own folly. The affliction is made doubly tormenting; because he is forc'd to charge it all upon himself, as his own act and deed,

against

against the nature and reason of things, and contrary to the advice of all' his friends.

Now by this we may in some degree guess, how terrible the pain of that self-condemnation will be, when a man shall find himself in the miseries of death, under the severity of a self-condemning conscience; charging all his distress upon his own folly, and madness, against the sense and reason of his own mind, against all the doctrines and precepts of Religion, and contrary to all the instructions, calls and warnings, both of God and man.

Penitens was a busy, notable tradesman, and very prosperous in his dealings, but died

in the thirty-fifth year of his age.

A little before his death, when the doctors had given him over, some of his neighbours came one evening to see him; at which time

he spake thus to them.

I see, says he, my friends, the tender concern you have for me, by the grief that appears in your countenances, and I know the thoughts that you now have about me. You think how melancholy a case it is to see so young a man, and in such flourishing business, deliver'd up to death. And perhaps, had I visited any of you in my condition, I should have had the same thoughts of you.

But now, my friends, my thoughts are no more like your thoughts, than my condition

is like yours.

It is no trouble to me now to think that I amtodie young, or before I have rais'd an estate.

These

These things are now sunk into such mere nothings, that I have no name little enough to call them by. For if in a few days, or hours, I am to leave this carcase to be buried in the earth, and to find my self either for ever happy in the favour of God, or eternally separated from all light and peace, can any words sufficiently express the littleness of every thing else?

Is there any dream like the dream of life, which amuses us with the neglect and disregard of these things? Is there any folly like the folly of our manly state, which is too wise and busy to be at leisure for these re-

flexions?

When we consider death as a misery, we only think of it as a miserable separation from the enjoyments of this life. We seldom mourn over an old man that dies rich, but we lament the young that are taken away in the progress of their fortune. You your selves look upon me with pity, not that I am going unprepar'd to meet the Judge of quick and dead, but that I am to leave a prosperous trade in the flower of my life.

This is the wisdom of our manly thoughts. And yet what folly of the silliest children is

so great as this?

For what is there miserable or dreadful in death, but the consequences of it? When a man is dead, what does any thing signify to him, but the state he is then in?

Our poor friend *Lepidus* dy'd, you know, as he was dressing himself for a *feast*; do you think it is now part of his trouble, that he did not live till that entertainment was over?

Feasts, and business, and pleasures, and enjoyments, seem great things to us, whilst we think of nothing else; but as soon as we add death to them, they all sink into an equal littleness; and the soul that is separated from the body, no more laments the loss of business, than the losing of a feast.

If I am now going into the joys of God, could there be any reason to grieve, that this happen'd to me before I was forty years of age? Could it be a sad thing to go to heaven, before I had made a few more bargains, or stood a little longer behind a

counter?

And if I am to go amongst lost spirits, could there be any reason to be content, that this did not happen to me till I was old, and full of riches?

If good Angels were ready to receive my soul, could it be any grief to me, that I was

dying upon a poor bed in a garret?

And if God has deliver'd me up to evil spirits, to be dragg'd by them to places of torments, could it be any comfort to me that

they found me upon a bed of state?

When you are as near death as I am, you will know, that all the different states of life, whether of youth or age, riches or poverty, greatness or meanness, signify no more to you,

than whether you die in a poor or stately

apartment.

The greatness of those things which follow death, makes all that goes before it sink into

nothing.

Now that *judgment* is the next thing that I look for, and everlasting happiness or misery is come so near me, all the enjoyments and prosperities of life seem as vain and insignificant, and to have no more to do with my happiness, than the cloaths that I wore before I could speak.

But, my friends, how am I surpriz'd that I have not always had these thoughts? for what is there in the terrors of death, in the vanities of life, or the necessities of piety, but what I might have as easily and fully seen in

any part of my life?

What a strange thing is it, that a little *health*, or the poor business of a *shop*, should keep us so senseless of these great things that

are coming so fast upon us!

Just as you came into my chamber, I was thinking with my self, what numbers of souls there are now in the world, in my condition at this very time, surpriz'd with a summons to the other world; some taken from their shops and farms, others from their sports and pleasures, these at suits at Law, those at Gaming-tables, some on the road, others at their own fire-sides, and all seiz'd at an hour when they thought nothing of it; frighted at the approach of death, confounded at the va-

nity of all their labours, designs, and projects, astonish'd at the folly of their past lives, and not knowing which way to turn their thoughts, to find any comfort. Their consciences flying in their faces, bringing all their sins to their remembrance, tormenting them with decpest convictions of their own folly, presenting them with the sight of the

angry Judge, the worm that never dies, the fire that is never quench'd, the gates of hell, the powers of darkness, and the bitter pains

of eternal death.

Oh my friends! bless God that you are not of this number, that you have time and strength to employ your selves in such works of piety, as may bring you peace at the last.

And take this along with you, that there is nothing but a life of great piety, or a death of great stupidity, that can keep off these

Apprehensions.

Had I now a thousand worlds, I would give them all for one year more, that I might present unto God, one year of such devotion and good works, as I never before so much as intended.

You perhaps, when you consider that I have liv'd free from scandal and debauchery, and in the communion of the Church, wonder to see me so full of remorse and self-condemnation at the approach of death.

But alas! what a poor thing is it, to have liv'd only free from *murder*, *theft* and *adultery*, which is all that I can say of my self.

You

You know indeed, that I have never been reckon'd a sot, but you are at the same time witnesses, and have been frequent companions of my intemperance, sensuality and great indulgence. And if I am now going to a Judgment, where nothing will be rewarded but good works, I may well be concern'd, that tho' I am no sot, yet I have no Christian

sobriety to plead for me.

It is true, I have liv'd in the communion of the Church, and generally frequented its worship and service on *Sundays*, when I was neither too *idle*, or not otherwise dispos'd of by my *business* and *pleasures*. But then my conformity to the publick worship has been rather a thing of course, than any real intention of doing that which the service of the Church supposes; had it not been so, I had been oftner at Church, more devout when there, and more fearful of ever neglecting it.

But the thing that now surprizes me above all wonders is this, that I never had so much as a general intention of living up to the piety of the Gospel. This never so much as enter'd into my head or my heart. I never once in my life consider'd, whether I was living as the laws of Religion direct, or whether my way of life was such as would procure me the mercy of God at this

hour.

And can it be thought that I have kept the Gospel terms of salvation, without ever so much as *intending* in any serious and deli-

berate

berate manner either to know them, or keep them? Can it be thought that I have pleased God with such a life as he requires, tho' I have liv'd without ever considering what he requires, or how much I have performed? How easy a thing would salvation be, if it could fall into my careless hands, who have never had so much serious thoughts about it, as about any one common

bargain that I have made?

In the business of life I have used prudence and reflection, I have done every thing by rules and methods. I have been glad to converse with men of experience and judgment, to find out the reasons why some fail, and others succeed in any business. I have taken no step in trade but with great care and caution, considering every advantage or danger that attended it. I have always had my eye upon the main end of business, and have study'd all the ways and means of being a gainer by all that I undertook.

But what is the reason that I have brought none of these tempers to Religion? What is the reason that I, who have so often talk'd of the necessity of rúles and methods, and diligence in worldly business, have all this while never once thought of any rules, or methods, or managements, to carry me on

in a life of Piety.

Do you think any thing can astonish, and confound a dying man like this? What pain do you think a man must feel, when his conscience

science lays all this folly to his charge, when it shall shew him how regular, exact, and wise he has been in small matters, that are passed away like a dream, and how stupid and senseless he has liv'd, without any reflection, without any rules, in things of such eternal moment, as no heart can sufficiently conceive them!

Had I only my frailties and imperfections to lament at this time, I should lye here humbly trusting in the mercies of God. But alas! how can I call a general disregard, and a thorough neglect of all religious improvement, a frailty or imperfection; when it was as much in my power to have been exact, and careful, and diligent in a course of piety, as in the business of my trade.

I could have call'd in as many helps, have practised as many rules, and been taught as many certain methods of holy living, as of thriving in my shop, had I but so

intended and desir'd it.

Oh my friends! a careless life, unconcern'd and unattentive to the duties of Religion, is so without all excuse, so unworthy of the mercy of God, such a shame to the sense and reason of our minds, that I can hardly conceive a greater punishment, than for a man to be thrown into the state that I am in, to reflect upon it.

Penitens was here going on, but had his mouth stopp'd by a convulsion, which never suffer'd him to speak any more. He lay convuls'd

## to a Devout and Holy Life 45

about twelve hours, and then gave up the

ghost.

Now if every reader would imagine this Penitens to have been some particular acquaintance or relation of his, and fancy that he saw and heard all that is here described, that he stood by his bed-side when his poor friend lay in such distress and agony, lamenting the folly of his past life, it would in all probability teach him such wisdom as never enter'd into his heart before. If to this, he should consider, how often he himself might have been surprized in the same state of negligence, and made an example to the rest of the world, this double reflection, both upon the distress of his friend, and the goodness of that God, who had preserv'd him from it, would in all likelihood soften his heart into holy tempers, and make him turn the remainder of his life into a regular course of piety.

This therefore being so useful a meditation, I shall here leave the reader, as, I hope,

seriously engag'd in it.

## CHAP. IV

We can please God in no state, or employment of life, but by intending and devoting it all to his honour and Glory

HAVING in the first Chapter stated the general nature of Devotion, and shewn, that it implies not any form of Prayer, but a certain form of life, that is offer'd to God not at any particular times, or places, but every where and in every thing; I shall now descend to some particulars, and shew how we are to devote our labour and employment, our time and fortunes unto God.

As a good Christian should consider every place as holy, because God is there, so he should look upon every part of his life as a matter of holiness, because it is to be offer'd

unto God.

The profession of a *Clergyman*, is an holy profession, because it is a ministration in *holy things*, an attendance at the *Altar*. But worldly business is to be made holy unto the Lord, by being done as a service to him, and in conformity to his divine will.

For as all men and all things in the World, as truly belong unto God, as any *places, things*, or *persons* that are devoted to divine service, so all things are to be *used*, and all persons are

to act in their several states and employments

for the Glory of God.

Men of worldly business therefore must not look upon themselves as at liberty to live to themselves, to sacrifice to their own humours and tempers, because their employment is of a worldly nature. But they must consider, that as the world and all worldly professions, as truly belong to God, as persons and things that are devoted to the Altar, so it is as much the duty of men in worldly business to live wholly unto God, as 'tis the duty of those, who are devoted to divine service.

As the whole world is God's, so the whole world is to act for God. As all men have the same *relation* to God, as all men have all their *powers* and *faculties* from God, so all men are oblig'd to act for God

with all their powers and faculties.

As all things are God's, so all things are to be used and regarded as the things of God. For men to abuse things on earth, and live to themselves, is the same rebellion against God, as for Angels to abuse things in Heaven; because God is just the same Lord of all on earth, as he is the Lord of all in Heaven.

Things may, and must differ in their use, but yet they are all to be used according to the will of God.

Men may, and must differ in their employments, but yet they must all act for the same ends, as dutiful servants of God, in the

right

right and pious performance of their several

callings.

Clergymen must live wholly unto God in one particular way, that is, in the exercise of Holy offices, in the ministration of Prayers and Sacraments, and a zealous distribution of spiritual goods.

But men of other employments are in their particular ways as much obliged to act as the servants of God, and live wholly un-

to him in their several callings.

This is the only difference between Clergy-

men, and People of other callings.

When it can be shewn, that men might be vain, covetous, sensual, worldly minded, or proud in the exercise of their worldly business, then it will be allowable for Clergymen to indulge the same tempers in their sacred profession. For tho' these tempers are most odious and most criminal in Clergymen, who besides their baptismal vow, have a second time devoted themselves to God, to be his servants, not in the common offices of human life, but in the spiritual service of the most holy sacred things; and who are therefore to keep themselves as separate and different from the common life of other men, as a Church or an Altar is to be kept separate from houses and tables of common use. Yet as all Christians are by their baptism devoted to God, and made professors of holiness, so are they all in their several callings to live as holy and heavenly persons; doing every thing in their common life only

only in such a manner, as it may be received by God, as a service done to him. For things spiritual and temporal, sacred and common, must, like *men* and *angels*, like *heaven* and *earth*, all conspire in the glory of God.

As there is but one God and Father of us all, whose Glory gives light and life to every thing that lives; whose presence fills all places, whose power supports all beings, whose providence ruleth all events; so every thing that lives, whether in beaven or earth, whether they be thrones or principalities, men or angels, they must all with one spirit, live wholly to the praise and glory of this one God and Father of them all. Angels as angels in their heavenly ministrations, but men as men, women as women, bishops as bishops, priests as priests, and deacons as deacons; some with things spiritual, and some with things temporal, offering to God the daily sacrifice of a reasonable life, wise actions, purity of heart, and heavenly affections.

This is the common business of all persons in this world. It is not left to any women in the world to trifle away their time in the follies and impertinencies of a fashionable life, nor to any men to resign themselves up to worldly cares and concerns; it is not left to the rich to gratify their passions in the indulgences and pride of life, nor to the poor to vex and torment their hearts with the poverty of their state; but men and women, rich and poor, must with bishops and priests, walk before

God in the same wise and holy spirit, in the same denial of all vain tempers, and in the same discipline and care of their souls; not only because they have all the same rational nature, and are servants of the same God, but because they all want the same holiness to make them fit for the same happiness, to which they are all called. It is therefore absolutely necessary for all christians, whether men or women, to consider themselves as persons that are devoted to holiness; and so order their common ways of life by such rules of reason and piety, as may turn it into continual service unto almighty God.

Now to make our labour or employment an acceptable service unto God, we must carry it on with the same spirit and temper that is required in giving of alms, or any work of piety. For, if whether we eat or 1 Cor. x. 31. drink, or whatsoever we do, we must do all to the glory of God; if we are to use this world as if we used it not; if we are to present our bodies a living sacri-Rom. xii. 7. fice, holy, acceptable to God; if we are to live by faith, and not by sight, and to have our conversation in heaven; then it is necessary that the common way of our life in every state, be made to glorify God by such tempers, as make our prayers and adorations acceptable For if we are worldly or earthlyminded in our employments, if they are carried on with vain desires, and covetous tempers, only to satisfy our selves, we can no more be

said to live to the glory of God, than gluttons and drunkards can be said to eat and drink to

the glory of God.

As the glory of God is one and the same thing, so whatever we do suitable to it, must be done with one and the same spirit. same state and temper of mind, which makes our alms and devotions acceptable, must also make our labour or employment a proper offering unto God. If a man labours to be rich, and pursues his business, that he may raise himself to a state of figure and glory in the world, he is no longer serving God in his employment; he is acting under other masters, and has no more title to a reward from God, than he that gives alms that he may be seen, or prays that he may be heard of men. For vain and earthly desires are no more allowable in our employments, than in our alms and devo-For these tempers of worldly pride, and vain glory, are not only evil when they mix with our good works, but they have the same evil nature, and make us odious to God, when they enter into the common business of our employment. If it were allowable to indulge covetous or vain passions in our worldly employments, it would then be allowable to be vain-glorious in our devotions. But as our alms and devotions are not an acceptable service, but when they proceed from a heart truly devoted to God, so our common employment cannot be reckon'd a service to him,

but

but when it is perform'd with the same temper

and piety of heart.

Most of the employments of life are in their own nature lawful; and all those that are so, may be made a substantial part of our duty to God, if we engage in them only so far, and for such ends, as are suitable to beings that are to live above the world, all the time that they live in the world. This is the only measure of our application to any worldly business, let it be what it will, where it will, it must have no more of our hands, our hearts, or our time, than is consistent with an hearty, daily, careful preparation of our selves for another life. For as all christians, as such, have renounced this world, to prepare themselves by daily devotion, and universal holiness, for an eternal state of quite another nature, they must look upon worldly employments, as upon worldly wants, and bodily infirmities; things not to be desir'd, but only to be endur'd and suffer'd, till death and the resurrection has carry'd us to an eternal state of real happiness.

Now he that does not look at the things of this life in this degree of littleness, cannot be said either to feel or believe the greatest truths of Christianity. For if he thinks any thing great or important in human business, can he be said to feel or believe those Scriptures which represent this life, and the greatest things of life, as bubbles, vapours, dreams and

shadows.

If he thinks figure, and shew, and worldly glory, to be any proper happiness of a christian, how can he be said to feel or believe this doctrine, Blessed are ye when men . shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of man's sake? For surely if there was any real happiness in figure and shew, and worldly glory; if these things deserved our thoughts and care, it could not be matter of the highest joy, when we are torn from them by persecutions and sufferings? If, therefore, a man will so live, as to shew that he feels and believes the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity, he must live above the world? this is the temper that must enable him to do the business of life, and yet live wholly unto God, and to go through some worldly employment with a heavenly mind. And it is as necessary that people live in their employments with this temper, as it is necessary that their employment it self be lawful.

The husbandman that tilleth the ground, is employ'd in an honest business, that is necessary in life, and very capable of being made an acceptable service unto God.' But if he labours and toils, not to serve any reasonable ends of life, but in order to have his plow made of silver, and to have his borses harnessed in gold, the honesty of his employment is lost as to him, and his labour

becomes his folly.

A tradesman may justly think, that it is agreeable to the will of God, for him to sell such things as are innocent and useful in life, such as help both himself, and others, to a reasonable support, and enable them to assist those that want to be assisted. But if instead of this, he trades only with regard to himself, without any other rule than that of his own temper, if it be his chief end in it to grow rich, that he may live in figure and indulgence, and be able to retire from business to idleness and *luxury*, his trade, as to him, loses all its innocency, and is so far from being an acceptable service to God, that it is only a more plausible course of covetousness, self-love and ambition. For such a one turns the necessities of employment into pride and covetousness, just as the sot and epicure turn the necessities of eating and drinking into gluttony and drunken-Now he that is up early and late, that sweats and labours for these ends, that he may be some time or other rich, and live in pleasure and indulgence, lives no more to the glory of God, than he that plays and games for the same ends. For though there is a great difference between trading and gaming, yet most of that difference is lost, when men once trade with the same desires and tempers. and for the same ends that others game. Charity and fine dressing, are things very different, but if men give alms for the same reasons that others dress fine, only to be seen and admir'd, charity is then but like the vanity of fine cloaths

cloaths. In like manner, if the same motives make some people painful and industrious in their trades, which make others constant at gaming, such pains is but like the pains of

gaming.

Calidus has traded above thirty years in the greatest city of the kingdom; he has been so many years constantly increasing his trade and his fortune. Every hour of the day is with him an hour of business; and though he eats and drinks very heartily, yet every meal seems to be in a hurry, and he would say grace if he had time. Calidus ends every day at the tavern, but has not leisure to be there till near nine a clock. He is always forc'd to drink a good hearty glass, to drive thoughts of business out of his head, and make his spirits drowsy enough for sleep. He does business all the time that he is rising, and has settled several matters before he can get to his compting-room. His prayers are a short ejaculation or two, which he never misses in stormy tempestuous weather, because he has always something or other at Sea. Calidus will tell you with great pleasure, that he has been in this hurry for so many years, and that it must have kill'd him long ago, but that it has been a rule with him to get out of the town every Saturday, and make the Sunday a day of quiet and good refreshment in the country.

He is now so rich, that he would leave off his business, and amuse his *old age* with building and furnishing a fine house in the country, but that he is afraid he should grow melan-choly, if he was to quit his business. He will tell you with great gravity, that it is a dangerous thing for a man, that has been us'd to get money, ever to leave it off. If thoughts of Religion happen at any time to steal into his head, Calidus contents himself with thinking, that he never was a friend to bereticks and infidels, that he has always been civil to the Minister of his parish, and very often given something to the charity-schools.

Now this way of life is at such a distance from all the doctrines and discipline of christianity, that no one can live in it through ignorance or frailty. Calidus can no more imagine,

that he is born again of the spirit; that he is in Christ a new 1 Pet. ii. 11. creature; that he lives here as a Collos. iii. 1. stranger and pilgrim, setting his affections upon things above, and

laying up treasures in heaven. He can no more imagine this, than he can think that he has been all his life an Apostle, working Miracles,

and preaching the Gospel.

It must also be own'd, that the *generality* of trading people, especially in *great towns*, are too much like *Calidus*. You see them all the week bury'd in business, unable to think of any thing else; and then spending the *Sunday* in idleness and refreshment, in wandring into the country, in such visits and jovial meetings, as make it often the worst day of the week.

Now

Now they do not live thus, because they cannot support themselves with less care and application to business; but they live thus, because they want to grow rich in their trades, and to maintain their families in some such figure and degree of finery as a reasonable Christian life has no occasion for. Take away but this temper, and then people of all trades, will find themselves at leisure to live every day like Christians, to be careful of every duty of the Gospel, to live in a visible course of Religion, and be every day strict observers both of private and publick Prayer.

Now the only way to do this, is for people to consider their trade as something that they are oblig'd to devote to the glory of God, something that they are to do only in such a manner, as that they may make it a duty to him. Nothing can be right in business, that is not under these rules .- The Apostle commands servants, to be obedient to their masters in singleness of heart as unto Christ. Not with eyeservice as men pleasers, but as the

servants of Christ, doing the will Ephes. vi. 5. Coll. iii. 22, of God from the heart. With good will doing service as unto the Lord.

and not to men.

This passage sufficiently shews, that all Christians are to live wholly unto God in every state and condition, doing the work of their common calling in such a manner, and for such ends, as to make it a part of their devotion or service to God. For certainly if poor slaves

are not to comply with their business as men pleasers, if they are to look wholly unto God in all their actions, and serve in singleness of heart, as unto the Lord, surely men of other employments and conditions must be as much obliged to go thro' their business with the same singleness of heart; not as pleasing the vanity of their own minds, not as gratifying their own selfish, worldly passions, but as the servants of God in all that they have to do. For surely no one will say, that a slave is to devote his state of life unto God, and make the will of God, the sole rule and end of his service, but that a tradesman need not act with the same spirit of devotion in his business. For this is as absurd as to make it necessary for one man to be more just or faithful than another.

It is therefore absolutely certain, that no Christian is to enter any farther into business, nor for any other ends, than such as he can in singleness of heart offer unto God, as a reasonable service. For the Son of God has redeem'd us for this only end, that we should by a life of reason and piety live to the glory of God; this is the only rule and measure for every order and state of life. Without this rule the most lawful employment, becomes a

sinful state of life.

Take away this from the life of a *Clergyman*, and his holy profession serves only to expose him to a *greater damnation*. Take away this from *tradesmen*, and shops are but so many houses of greediness and filthy lucre. Take

away

away this from gentlemen, and the course of their life, becomes a course of sensuality, pride and wantonness. Take away this rule from our tables, and all falls into gluttony and drunkenness. Take away this measure from our dress and habits, and all is turn'd into such paint, and glitter, and ridiculous ornaments as are a real shame to the wearer. Take away this from the use of our fortunes, and you will find people sparing in nothing but charity. Take away this from our diversions, and you will find no sports too silly, nor any entertainments too vain and corrupt to be the pleasure of Christians.

If therefore we desire to live unto God. it is necessary to bring our whole life under this law, to make his glory the sole rule and measure of our acting in every employment. of life. For there is no other true devotion. but this of living devoted to God in the

common business of our lives.

So that men must not content themselves with the lawfulness of their employments, but must consider whether they use them, as they are to use every thing, as strangers and

pilgrims, that are baptiz'd into the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that are to follow him Ephes. v. 26, in a wise and heavenly course of life, in the mortification

Col. iii. 1. 27.

of all worldly desires, and in purifying and preparing their souls for the blessed enjoyment of God.

For

For to be vain, or proud, or covetous, or ambitious in the *common course* of our business, is as contrary to these holy tempers of Christianity, as cheating and dishonesty.

If a glutton was to say in excuse of his gluttony, that he only eats such things as it is lawful to eat, he would make as good an excuse for himself, as the greedy, covetous, ambitious tradesman, that should say, he only deals in lawful business. For as a Christian is not only requir'd to be honest, but to be of a Christian spirit, and make his life an exercise of humility, repentance and heavenly affection, so all tempers that are contrary to these, are as contrary to Christianity, as cheating is contrary to honesty.

So that the matter plainly comes to this, all irregular tempers in *trade* and *business*, are but like irregular tempers in *eating* and *drinking*.

Proud views, and vain desires in our worldly employments, are as truly vices and corruptions, as hypocrisy in prayer, or vanity in alms. And there can be no reason given, why vanity in our alms, should make us odious to God, but what will prove any other kind of pride to be equally odious. He that labours and toils in a calling, that he may make a figure in the world, and draw the eyes of People upon the splendor of his condition, is as far from the pious humility of a Christian, as he that gives alms that he may be seen of men. For the reason, why pride and vanity in our prayers and alms renders them an unacceptable service

service to God, is not because there is any thing particular in prayers and alms that cannot allow of pride, but because pride is in no respect, nor in any thing made for man; it destroys the piety of our prayers and alms, because it destroys the piety of every thing that it touches, and renders every action that it governs, incapable of being offer'd unto God.

So that if we could so *divide* our selves, as to be *humble* in some respects, and proud in others, such humility would be of no service to us, because God requires us as truly to be humble in *all* our *actions* and designs, as to be true and honest in all our actions and designs.

And as a man is not honest and true, because he is so to a great many People, or upon several occasions, but because truth and honesty is the measure of all his dealings with every body; so the case is the same in humility, or any other temper, it must be the general ruling habit of our minds, and extend it self to all our actions and designs, before it can be imputed to us.

We indeed sometimes talk, as if a man might be humble in some things, and proud in others, humble in his *dress* but proud of his *learning*, humble in his *person*, but proud in his *views* and *designs*. But tho' this may pass in common discourse, where few things are said according to *strict* truth, it cannot be allow'd when we examine into the nature of our actions.

It is very possible for a man that lives by cheating, to be very punctual in *paying* for what he buys; but then every one is assur'd, that he does not do so, out of any

principle of true honesty.

In like manner it is very possible for a man, that is proud of his estate, ambitious in his views, or vain of his learning, to disregard his dress, and person, in such a manner as a truly humble man would do; but to suppose that he does so out of a true principle of religious humility, is full as absurd, as to suppose that a cheat pays for what he buys, out of a principle of religious honesty.

As therefore all kinds of dishonesty destroy our pretences to an *honest principle* of mind, so all kinds of pride destroy our pretences to

an humble spirit.

No one wonders that those *prayers*, and *alms*, which proceed from pride and ostentation are odious to God; but yet it is as easie to shew, that pride is as pardonable there,

as any where else.

If we could suppose, that God rejects pride in our prayers and alms, but bears with pride in our dress, our persons, or estates, it would be the same thing as to suppose that God condemns falsehood in some actions, but allows it in others. For pride in one thing differs from pride in another thing, as the robbing of one man differs from the robbing of another.

Again

Again, if pride and ostentation is so odious that it destroys the merit and worth of the most reasonable actions, surely it must be equally odious in those actions, which are only founded in the weakness and infirmity of our nature. As thus, alms are commanded by God, as excellent in themselves, as true instances of a divine temper, but cloaths are only allow'd to cover our shame; surely therefore it must at least be as odious a degree of pride to be vain in our cloaths, as to be vain in our alms.

Again, we are commanded to pray without ceasing, as a means of rendering our souls more exalted and divine, but we are forbidden to lay up treasures upon earth; and can we think that it is not as bad, to be vain of those treasures, which we are forbidden to lay up, as to be vain of those prayers, which

we are commanded to make.

Women are requir'd to have their beads cover'd, and to adorn themselves with shame-facedness; if therefore they are

vain in those things which are expressly forbidden, if they patch and paint that part, which

13. 1 Tim. ii. 9.

can only be adorn'd by shamefacedness, surely they have as much to repent of for such a pride, as they have, whose pride is the motive to their prayers and charity. This must be granted, unless we will say, that it is more pardonable to glory in our shame, than to glory in our virtue.

All

All these instances are only to shew us the great necessity of such a regular and uniform piety, as extends it self to all the

actions of our common life.

That we must eat and drink, and dress and discourse according to the sobriety of the Christian spirit, engage in no employments but such as we can truly devote unto God, nor pursue them any farther, than so far as conduces to the reasonable ends of a holy devout life.

That we must be honest, not only on particular occasions, and in such instances as are applauded in the world, easy to be perform'd and free from danger, or loss, but from such a living principle of justice, as makes us love truth and integrity in all its instances, follow it through all dangers, and against all opposition; as knowing that the more we pay for any truth, the better is our bargain, and that then our integrity becomes a pearl, when we have parted with all to keep it.

That we must be humble, not only in such instances as are expected in the world, or suitable to our tempers, or confin'd to particular occasions, but in such an humility of spirit, as renders us meek and lowly in the whole course of our lives, as shews it self in our dress, our person, our conversation, our enjoyment of the world, the tranquility of our minds, patience under injuries, submission to superiors, and condescentions to those that are below us, and in all the outward actions of our lives.

# to a Devout and Holy Life 65

That we must devote, not only times and places to prayer, but be every-where in the spirit of devotion, with hearts always set towards heaven, looking up to God in all our actions, and doing every thing as his servants. living in the world as in a holy temple of God, and always worshipping him, though not with our lips, yet with the thankfulness of our hearts, the holiness of our actions, and the pious and charitable use of all his gifts. That we must not only send up petitions and thoughts now and then to heaven, but must go through all our worldly business with an heavenly spirit, as members of Christ's mystical body, that with new hearts, and new minds, are to turn an earthly life into a preparation for a life of greatness and glory in the kingdom of heaven.

Now the only way to arrive at this piety of spirit, is to bring all your actions to the same rule as your devotions and alms. You very well know what it is, that makes the piety of your alms or devotions; now the same rules, the same regard to God, must render every thing else that you do, a fit and

acceptable service unto God.

Enough, I hope, has been said, to shew you the necessity of thus introducing Religion into all the actions of your common life, and of living and acting with the same regard to God in all that you do, as in your prayers

and alms.

Eating is one of the lowest actions of our lives, it is common to us with mere animals, yet we see that the piety of all ages of the world, has turned this ordinary action of an animal life, into a piety to God, by making every meal to begin and end with devotion.

We see yet some remains of this custom in most christian families; some such little formality, as shews you, that people us'd to call upon God at the beginning and end of their meals. But, indeed, it is now generally so perform'd, as to look more like a mockery upon devotion, than any solemn application of the mind unto God. In one house you may perhaps see the head of the family just pulling off his hat, in another half getting up from his seat; another shall, it may be, proceed so far, as to make as if he said something; but, however, these little attempts are the remains of some devotion that was formerly us'd at such times, and are proofs that religion has formerly belong'd to this part of common life.

But to such a pass are we now come, that though the custom is yet preserv'd, yet we can hardly bear with him, that seems to perform it with any degree of seriousness, and look upon it as a sign of a fanatical temper, if a man has not done as soon as he begins.

I would not be thought to plead for the necessity of *long prayers* at these times; but thus much I think may be said, that if prayer is *proper* at these times, we ought to oblige

oblige our selves to use such a form of words, as should shew, that we solemnly appeal to God for such graces and blessings as are then proper to the occasion. Otherwise the mock ceremony, instead of blessing our victuals, does but accustom us to trifle with devotion, and give us a habit of being unaffected with our prayers.

If every *head* of a family was, at the return of *every meal*, to oblige himself to make a *solemn adoration* of God, in such a decent manner, as becomes a devout mind, it would be very likely to teach him, that *swearing*, *sensuality*, *gluttony*, and *loose* discourse, were very improper at those meals, which were to

begin and end with devotion.

And if in these days of general corruption, this part of devotion is fallen into a mock ceremony, it must be imputed to this cause, that sensuality and intemperance have got too great a power over us, to suffer us to add any devotion to our meals. But thus much must be said, that when we are as pious as Jews and Heathens of all ages have been, we shall think it proper to pray at the beginning and end of our meals.

I have appeal'd to this pious custom of all ages of the world, as a proof of the reasonableness of the doctrine of this and the foregoing chapters; that is, as a proof that religion is to be the *rule* and *measure* of all the actions of *ordinary* life. For surely, if we are not to *eat*, but under such rules of devotion,

it must plainly appear, that whatever else we do, must in its proper way, be done with the same regard to the glory of God, and agreeably to the principles of a *devout* and *pious* mind.

#### CHAP. V

Persons that are free from the necessity of labour and employments, are to consider themselves as devoted to God in a higher degree

GREAT part of the world are free from the necessities of labour and employments, and have their time and fortunes in their own disposal.

But as no one is to live in his employment

according to his own humour, or for such ends as please his own fancy, but is to do all his business in such a manner, as to make it a service unto God; so those who have no particular employment, are so far from being left at greater liberty to live to themselves, to pursue their own humours, and spend their

are under greater obligations of living wholly unto God in all their actions.

The *freedom* of their state lays them under a greater *necessity* of always chusing and doing the *best* things.

time and fortunes as they please, that they

They

They are those, of whom much will be requir'd, because much is given unto them.

A slave can only live unto God in one particular way; that is, by religious patience and submission in his state of slavery.

But all ways of holy living, all instances, and all kinds of virtue, lie open to those, who are masters of themselves, their time and their fortune.

It is as much the duty, therefore, of such persons, to make a wise use of their liberty, to devote themselves to all kinds of virtue, to aspire after every thing that is holy and pious, to endeavour to be eminent in all good works, and to please God in the highest and most perfect manner; it is as much their duty to be thus wise in the conduct of themselves, and thus extensive in their endeavours after holiness, as it is the duty of a slave to be resign'd unto God in his state of slavery.

You are no labourer, or tradesman, you are neither merchant, nor soldier; consider your self, therefore, as plac'd in a state, in, some degree like that of good angels, who are sent into the world as ministring spirits, for the general good of mankind, to assist, protect and minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.

For the more you are free from the *common* necessities of *men*, the more you are to imitate the *higher* perfections of *angels*.

Had you, Serena, been obliged by the necessities of life, to wash cloaths for your main-

tenance

tenance, or to wait upon some mistress, that demanded all your labour, it would then be your duty to serve and glorify God, by such humility, obedience, and faithfulness, as

might adorn that state of life.

It would then be recommended to your care, to improve that one talent to its greatest height. That when the time came, that mankind were to be rewarded for their labours by the great Judge of quick and dead, you might be receiv'd with a well done good and faithful servant, enter thou St. Mat. xxv.

into the joy of thy Lord.

But as God has given you five talents, as he has placed you above the necessities of life, as he has left you in the hands of your self, in the happy liberty of chusing the most exalted ways of virtue, as he has enrich'd you with many gifts of fortune, and left you nothing to do, but to make the best use of variety of blessings, to make the most of a short life, to study your own perfection, the honour of God, and the good of your neighbour; so it is now your duty to imitate the greatest servants of God, to enquire how the most eminent saints have liv'd, to study all the arts and methods of perfection, and to set no bounds to your love and gratitude to the bountiful author of so many blessings.

It is now your duty to turn your five talents into five more, and to consider how your time, and leisure, and health, and fortune, may be made so many happy means of purifying your own soul, improving your fellow-creatures in the ways of virtue, and of carrying you at last to the greatest heights of eternal

glory.

As you have no mistress to serve, so let your own soul be the object of your daily care and attendance. Be sorry for its impurities, its spots and imperfections, and study all the holy arts of restoring it to its natural and primitive purity.

Delight in its service, and beg of God to adorn it with every grace and perfection.

Nourish it with good works, give it peace in solitude, get it strength in prayer, make it wise with reading, enlighten it by meditation, make it tender with love, sweeten it with humility, humble it with penance, enliven it with Psalms and Hymns, and comfort it with frequent reflections upon future glory. Keep it in the presence of God, and teach it to imitate those guardian angels, which though they attend on human affairs, and the lowest of mankind, yet always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven.

This, Serena, is your profession. For as sure as God is one God, so sure is it, that he has but one command to all mankind, whether they be bond or free, rich or poor; and that is, to act up to the excellency of that nature which he has given them, to live by reason, to walk in the light of religion, to use every thing as wisdom directs, to glorify

God

God in all his gifts, and dedicate every condition of life to his service.

This is the *one common* command of God to all mankind. If you have an employment, you are to be thus reasonable, and pious and holy in the exercise of it; if you have time and a fortune in your own power, you are oblig'd to be thus reasonable, and holy, and pious, in the use of all your time, and all your fortune.

The right religious use of every thing, and every talent, is the indispensable duty of every being that is capable of knowing right and

wrong.

For the reason why we are to do any thing, as unto God, and with regard to our duty, and relation to him, is the same reason why we are to do every thing as unto God, and with regard to our duty, and relation to him.

That which is a reason for our being wise and boly in the discharge of all our business, is the same reason for our being wise and

holy in the use of all our money.

As we have always the same natures, and are every-where the servants of the same God, as every place is equally full of his presence, and every thing is equally his gift, so we must always act according to the reason of our nature; we must do every thing as the servants of God; we must live in every place, as in his presence; we must use every thing, as that ought to be us'd, which belongs to God.

Either

Either this piety, and wisdom, and devotion is to go thro' every way of life, and to extend to the use of every thing, or it is

to go through no part of life.

If we might forget our selves, or forget God, if we might disregard our reason, and live by bumour and fancy in any thing, or at any time, or in any place, it would be as lawful to do the same in every thing, at every

time, and every place.

If therefore some People fancy, that they must be grave and solemn at Church, but may be silly and frantick at home; that they must live by some rule on the Sunday, but may spend other days by chance; that they must have some times of Prayer, but may waste the rest of their time as they please, that they must give some money in charity, but may squander away the rest as they have a mind; such People have not enough consider'd the nature of Religion, or the true reasons of Piety. For he that upon principles of reason can tell, why it is good to be wise and heavenly-minded at Church, can tell that it's always desirable, to have the same tempers in all other places. He that truly knows, why he should spend any time well, knows that it is never allowable to throw any time away. He that rightly understands the reasonableness, and excellency of Charity, will know, that it can never be excusable to waste any of our money in pride and folly, or in any needless expences.

For

For every argument that shews the wisdom and excellency of Charity, proves the wisdom of spending *all* our fortune well. Every argument that proves the wisdom and reasonableness of having times of prayer, shews the wisdom and reasonableness of losing none of our time.

If any one could shew, that we need not always act as in the divine presence, that we need not consider and use every thing, as the gift of God, that we need not always live by reason, and make Religion the rule of all our actions, the same arguments would shew, that we need never act as in the presence of God, nor make Religion and reason the measure of any of our actions. If therefore we are to live unto God at any time, or in any place, we are to live unto him at all times, and all places. we are to use any thing as the gift of God, we are to use every thing as his gift. we are to do any thing by strict rules of reason and piety, we are to do every thing in the same manner. Because reason, and wisdom, and piety are as much the best things at all times, and in all places, as they are the best things at any time, or in any place.

If it is our glory and happiness to have a rational nature, that is endued with wisdom and reason, that is capable of imitating the Divine nature, then it must be our glory and happiness, to improve our reason and wisdom, to act up to the excellency of our rational nature, and to imitate God in all our actions, to the utmost of our power. They therefore

who confine Religion to times and places, and some little rules of retirement, who think that it is being too strict and rigid to introduce religion into common life, and make it give laws to all their actions and ways of living, they who think thus, not only mistake, but they mistake the whole nature of Religion. For surely they mistake the whole nature of Religion, who can think, any part of their life is made more easy, for being free from it. They may well be said to mistake the whole nature of wisdom, who don't think it desirable, to be always wise. He has not learnt the nature of piety, who thinks it too much to be pious in all his actions. He does not sufficiently understand what reason is, who does not earnestly desire to live in every thing according to it.

If we had a Religion that consisted in absurd superstitions, that had no regard to the perfection of our nature, People might well be glad to have some part of their life excused from it. But as the Religion of the Gospel is only the refinement, and exaltation of our best faculties, as it only requires a life of the highest Reason, as it only requires us to use this world as in reason it ought to be used, to live in such tempers as are the glory of intelligent beings, to walk in such wisdom as exalts our nature, and to practise such piety, as will raise us to God; who can think it grievous, to live always in the spirit of such a Religion, to have every part of his life full of it, but he that would think it much more grievous, to be as the Angels of God in heaven?

Farther

Farther, as God is one and the same being, always acting like himself, and suitably to his own nature, so it is the duty of every being that he has created, to live according to the nature that he has given it, and *always* to act like it self.

It is therefore an immutable law of God, that all rational beings should act reasonably in all their actions; not at this time, or in that place, on upon this occasion, or in the use of some particular thing, but at all times, in all places, at all occasions, and in the use of all things. This is a law that is as unchangeable as God, and can no more cease to be, than God can cease to be a God of wisdom and order.

When therefore any being that is endued with reason, does an *unreasonable* thing at any time, or in any place, or in the use of any thing, it sins against the *great law* of its nature, abuses its self, and sins against God

the author of that nature.

They therefore who plead for *indulgences* and *vanities*, for any *foolish* fashions, *customs* and *humours* of the world, for the misuse of our *time* or *money*, plead for a rebellion against our nature, for a rebellion against God, who has given us reason for no other end, than to make it the *rule* and *measure* of all our ways of life.

When therefore you are guilty of any folly or extravagance, or include any vain temper, don't consider it as a small matter, because it may seem so, if compar'd to some other sins;

but

# to a Devout and Holy Life 77

but consider it, as it is acting contrary to your nature, and then you will see that there is nothing small, that is unreasonable. Because all unreasonable ways, are contrary to the nature of all rational beings, whether men, or Angels. Neither of which can be any longer agreeable to God, than so far as they act according to the reason and excellence of their nature.

The infirmities of human life make such food and raiment necessary for us, as Angels do not want: but then it is no more allowable for us to turn these necessities into follies, and indulge our selves in the luxury of food, or the vanities of dress, than it is allowable for Angels to act below the dignity of their proper state. For a reasonable life, and a wise use of our proper condition, is as much the duty of all men, as it is the duty of all Angels and intelligent beings. These are not speculative flights, or imaginary notions, but are plain and undeniable laws, that are founded in the nature of rational beings, who as such are obliged to live by reason, and glorify God by a continual right use of their several talents and faculties. So that tho' men are not Angels, yet they may know for what ends, and by what rules men are to live and act, by considering the state and perfection of Angels. Our blessed Saviour has plainly turn'd our thoughts this way, by making this petition a constant part of all our Prayers, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. A plain proof, that the the obedience of *men*, is to imitate the obedience of *Angels*, and that rational beings on earth, are to live unto God, as rational beings

in Heaven live unto him.

When therefore you would represent to your mind, how Christians ought to live unto God, and in what degrees of wisdom and holiness, they ought to use the things of this life, you must not look at the world, but you must look up to God, and the society of Angels, and think what wisdom and holiness is fit to prepare you for such a state of glory. You must look to all the bighest precepts of the Gospel, you must examine your self by the spirit of Christ, you must think how the wisest men in the world have liv'd, you must think how departed souls would live, if they were again to act the short part of human life, you must think what degrees of wisdom and holiness, you will wish for, when you are leaving the World.

Now all this is not over-straining the matter, or proposing to our selves, any needless perfection. It is but barely complying with the Apostle's advice, where he says, Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever

things are pure, whatsoever
Phil. iv. 8. things are of good report; if
there be any virtue, and if
there be any praise, think on these things. For
no one can come near the doctrine of this
passage, but he that proposes to himself to do

every

## to a Devout and Holy Life 79

every thing in this life as the servant of God, to live by reason in every thing that he does, and to make the wisdom and holiness of the Gospel, the rule and measure of his desiring and using every gift of God.

#### CHAP. VI

Containing the great obligations, and the great advantages of making a wise and religious use of our estates and fortunes

↑ S the holiness of Christianity consecrates all states and employments of life unto God, as it requires us to aspire after an universal obedience, doing and using every thing as the servants of God, so are we more especially oblig'd to observe this religious exactness, in the use of our estates and fortunes.

The reason of this would appear very plain, if we were only to consider, that our estate is as much the gift of God, as our eyes, or our hands, and is no more to be buried, or thrown away at pleasure, than we are to put out our eyes, or throw away our limbs, as we please.

But besides this consideration, there are several other great and important reasons, why we should be religiously exact in the

use of our estates.

First

First, Because the manner of using our money, or spending our estate, enters so far into the business of every day, and makes so great a part of our common life, that our common life must be much of the same nature, as our common way of spending our estate. If reason and religion govern us in this, then reason and religion hath got great hold of us; but if humour, pride, and fancy, are the measures of our spending our estate, then humour, pride and fancy, will have the direction of the greatest part of our life.

Secondly, Another great reason for devoting all our estate to right uses, is this, because it is capable of being used to the most excellent purposes, and is so great a means of doing good. If we waste it, we don't waste a trifle, that signifies little, but we waste that which might be made as eyes to the blind, as a husband to the widow, as a father to the orphan: We waste that, which not only enables us to minister worldly comforts to those that are in distress, but that which might purchase for our selves everlasting treasures in heaven. So that if we part with our money in foolish ways, we part with a great power of comforting our fellow creatures, and of making our selves for ever blessed.

If there be nothing so glorious as doing good, if there is nothing that makes us so like to God, then nothing can be so glorious in the use of our money, as to use it all in works of love and goodness, making our

selves

selves friends, and fathers, and benefactors, to all our fellow-creatures, imitating the divine love, and turning all our power into acts of generosity, care and kindness, to such as are in need of it.

If a man had eyes, and hands, and feet, that he could give to those that wanted them; if he should either lock them up in a chest, or please himself with some needless or ridiculous use of them, instead of giving them to his brethren that were blind and lame, should we not justly reckon him an inhuman wretch? If he should rather chuse to amuse himself with furnishing his house with those things, than to entitle himself to an eternal reward, by giving them to those that wanted eyes and hands, might we not justly reckon him mad?

Now money has very much the nature of eyes and feet; if we either lock it up in chests, or waste it in needless and ridiculous expences upon our selves, whilst the poor and the distressed want it for their necessary uses, if we consume it in the ridiculous ornaments of apparel, whilst others are starving in nakedness, we are not far from the cruelty of him that chuses rather to adorn his house with the hands and eyes, than to give them to those that want them. If we chuse to indulge our selves in such expensive enjoyments, as have no real use in them, such as satisfy no real want, rather than to entitle our selves to an eternal reward, by disposing of our money money well, we are guilty of his madness, that rather chuses to lock up eyes and hands, than to make himself for ever blessed, by giving them to those that want them.

For after we have satisfy'd our own sober and reasonable wants, all the rest of our money is but like spare eyes, or hands, it is something that we cannot keep to our selves, without being foolish in the use of it, something that can only be us'd well,

by giving it to those that want it.

Thirdly, if we waste our money, we are not only guilty of wasting a talent which God has given us, we are not only guilty of making that useless, which is so powerful a means of doing good, but we do our selves this farther harm, that we turn this useful talent into a powerful means of corrupting our selves; because so far as it is spent wrong, so far it is spent in the support of some wrong temper, in gratifying some vain and unreasonable desires, in conforming to those fashions, and pride of the world, which as christians and reasonable men, we are obliged to renounce.

As wit and fine parts cannot be trifled away, and only lost, but will expose those that have them into greater follies, if they are not strictly devoted to piety; so money, if it is not us'd strictly according to reason and religion, cannot only be trifled away, but it will betray people into greater follies, and make them live a more silly and extravagant life, than

thev

they could have done without it. If, therefore, you don't spend your money in doing good to others, you must spend it to the hurt of your self. You will act, like a man, that should refuse to give that as a cordial to a sick friend, though he could not drink it himself without inflaming his blood. For this is the case of superfluous money; if you give it to those that want it, it is a cordial; if you spend it upon your self in something that you do not want, it only inflames and disorders your mind, and makes you worse than you would be without it.

Consider again the foremention'd comparison; if the man that would not make a right use of spare *eyes* and *hands*, should by continually trying to use them himself, spoil his own eyes and hands, we might justly accuse him of still greater madness.

Now this is truly the case of riches spent upon our selves in vain and needless expences; in trying to use-them where they have no real use, nor we any real want, we only use them to our great hurt, in creating unreasonable desires, in nourishing ill tempers, in indulging our passions, and supporting a worldly, vain turn of mind. For high eating and drinking, fine cloaths, and fine houses, state and equipage, gay pleasures and diversions, do all of them naturally hurt and disorder our hearts; they are the food and nourishments of all the folly and weakness of our nature, and are certain means to make us vain and worldly in our

our tempers. They are all of them the support of something that ought not to be supported; they are contrary to that sobriety and piety of heart, which relishes divine things; they are like so many weights upon our minds, that make us less able, and less inclin'd to raise up our thoughts and affections to the things that are above.

So that money thus spent, is not merely wasted or lost, but it is spent to bad purposes, and miserable effects, to the corruption and disorder of our hearts, and to the making us less able to live up to the sublime doctrines of the Gospel. It is but like keeping money from the poor, to buy poison for our

selves.

For so much as is spent in the vanity of dress, may be reckon'd so much laid out to fix vanity in our minds. So much as is laid out for idleness and indulgence, may be reckon'd so much given to render our hearts dull and sensual. So much as is spent in state and equipage, may be reckon'd so much spent to dazzle your own eyes, and render you the idol of your own imagination. And so in every thing, when you go from reasonable wants, you only support some unreasonable temper, some turn of mind, which every good christian is called upon to renounce.

So that on all accounts, whether we consider our fortune as a talent and trust from God, or the great good that it enables us to do, or the great harm that it does to our selves, if idly

idly spent; on all these great accounts it appears, that it is absolutely necessary to make reason and religion the strict rule of using all our fortune.

Every exhortation in Scripture to be wise and reasonable, satisfying only such wants as God would have satisfy'd; every exhortation to be spiritual and heavenly, pressing after a glorious change of our nature; every exhortation to love our neighbour as our selves, to love all mankind as God has loved them, is a command to be strictly religious in the use of our money. For none of these tempers can be comply'd with, unless we be wise and reasonable, spiritual and heavenly, exercising a brotherly love, a godlike charity in the use of all our fortune. These tempers, and this use of our worldly goods, is so much the doctrine of all the new Testament, that you can't read a chapter, without being taught something of it. I shall only produce one remarkable passage of scripture, which is sufficient to justify all that I have said concerning this religious use of all our fortune.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy Angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gather'd all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit

herit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in ; naked, and ye cloathed me : I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger and ye took me not in; naked, and ye cloathed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

I have quoted this passage at length, because, if one looks at the way of the world, one would hardly think, that christians had ever read this part of Scripture. For what is there in the lives of christians, that looks as if their salvation depended upon these good works? And yet the necessity of them is here asserted in the highest manner, and pressed upon us by a lively description of the glory and terrors of the day of judgment.

Some people, even of those who may be reckon'd virtuous christians, look upon this text only as a general recommendation of occasional works of charity; whereas it shews the necessity not only of occasional charities now and then, but the necessity of such an entire charitable life, as is a continual exercise

of all such works of charity as we are able

to perform.

You own, that you have no title to salvation, if you have neglected these good works; because such persons as have neglected them, are at the last day to be placed on the left hand, and banish'd with a depart ye cursed. There is, therefore, no salvation but in the performance of these good works. Who is it, therefore, that may be said to have performed these good works? Is it he that has sometime assisted a prisoner, or relieved the poor or sick? This would be as absurd, as to say, that he had perform'd the duties of devotion, who had sometime said his prayers. Is it therefore, he that has several times done these works of charity? This can no more be said, than he can be said to be the truly just man, who had done acts of justice several times. What is the rule therefore, or measure of performing these good works? How shall a man trust that he performs them as he ought.

Now the rule is very plain and easy, and such as is common to every other virtue, or good temper, as well as to charity.—Who is the humble, or meek, or devout, or just, or faithful man? Is it he that has several times done acts of humility, meekness, devotion, justice, or fidelity? No. But it is he that lives in the habitual exercise of these virtues. In like manner, he only can be said to have performed these works of charity, who lives in the habitual exercise of them to the utmost of his power.

He

He only has perform'd the duty of divine love, who loves God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. And he only has perform'd the duty of these good works, who has done them with all his heart, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. For there is no other measure of our doing good, than our power

of doing it.

The Apostle St. Peter puts this question to our blessed Saviour, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him, 'till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not Mat. xviii. 22. unto thee, until seven times; but until seventy times seven. Not as if after this number of offences, a man might then cease to forgive; but the expression of seventy times seven, is to shew us, that we are not to bound our forgiveness by any number of offences, but are to continue forgiving the most repeated offences against us. Thus our Saviour saith in another place, If he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, Luke xvii. 4. saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him. If, therefore, a man ceases to forgive his brother, because he has forgiven him often already; if he excuses himself from forgiving this man, because he has forgiven several others; such a one breaks this law of Christ, concerning the forgiving one's brother.

### to a Devout and Holy Life 89

Now the rule of forgiving, is also the rule of giving; you are not to give, or do good to seven, but to seventy times seven. You are not to cease from giving, because you have given often to the same person, or to other persons; but must look upon your self as much obliged to continue relieving those that continue in wants, as you was obliged to relieve them once, or twice. Had it not been in your power, you had been excused from relieving any person once; but if it is in your power to relieve people often, it is as much your duty to do it often, as it is the duty of others to do it but seldom, because they are but seldom able. He that is not ready to forgive every brother, as often as he wants to be forgiven, does not forgive like a disciple of Christ. And he that is not ready to give to every brother, that wants to have some thing given him, does not give like a Disciple of Christ. For it is as necessary to give to seventy times seven, to live in the continual exercise of all good works to the utmost of our power, as it is necessary to forgive until seventy times seven, and live in the habitual exercise of this forgiving temper towards all that want it.

And the reason of all this is very plain, because there is the same goodness, the same excellency, and the same necessity of being thus charitable at one time, as at another. It is as much the best use of our money, to be always doing good with it, as it is the best use of it at any particular time; so that that which

is a reason for a charitable action, is as good a reason for a charitable life. That which is a reason for forgiving one offence, is the same reason for forgiving all offences. For such charity has nothing to recommend it to-day, but what will be the same recommendation of it to-morrow; and you cannot neglect it at one time, without being guilty of the same sin, as if you neglected it at another time.

As sure, therefore, as these works of charity are necessary to salvation, so sure is it, that we are to do them to the utmost of our power; not to-day, or to-morrow, but through the whole course of our life. If therefore, it be our duty at any time to deny our selves any needless expences, to be moderate and frugal, that we may have to give to those that want, it is as much our duty to do so at all times, that we may be farther able to do more good: For if it is at any time a sin to prefer needless vain expence to works of charity, it is so at all times: Because charity as much excels all needless and vain expences at one time, as at another. So that if it is ever necessary to our salvation, to take care of these works of charity, and to see that we make our selves in some degree capable of doing them; it is as necessary to our salvation, to take care to make our selves as capable as we can be, of performing them in all the parts of our life.

Either therefore you must so far renounce your Christianity, as to say, that you need

### to a Devout and Holy Life 91'

never perform any of these good works; or you must own, that you are to perform them all your life in as high a degree as you are able. There is no middle way to be taken, any more than there is a middle way betwixt pride and humility, or temperance and intemperance. If you do not strive to fulfil all charitable works, if you neglect any of them that are in your power, and deny assistance to those that want what you can give, let it be when it will, or where it will, you number your self amongst those that want Christian charity. Because it is as much your duty to do good with all that you have, and to live in the continual exercise of good works, as it is your duty to be temperate in all that you eat and drink.

Hence also appears the *necessity* of renouncing all those *foolish* and *unreasonable* expences, which the pride and folly of mankind has made so common and fashionable in the world. For if it is necessary to do good works as far as you are able, it must be as necessary to renounce those needless ways of spending money, which render you unable to do works of Charity.

You must therefore no more conform to these ways of the world; than you must conform to the vices of the world, you must no more spend with those that idly waste their money as their own humour leads them, than you must drink with the drunken, or indulge your self with the *Epicure*; because a course of such expences is no more consistent with a *life of charity*, than excess in drinking is consistent with

with a life of sobriety. When therefore any one tells you of the lawfulness of expensive apparel, or the innocency of pleasing your self with costly satisfactions, only imagine that the same person was to tell you, that you need not do works of charity, that Christ does not require you to do good unto your poor brethren, as unto him, and then you will see the wickedness of such advice; for to tell you, that you may live in such expences, as make it impossible for you to live in the exercise of good works, is the same thing as telling you that you need not have any care about such good works themselves.

#### CHAP. VII

How the imprudent use of an estate corrupts all the tempers of the mind, and fills the heart with poor and ridiculous passions through the whole course of life; represented in the character of Flavia

IT has already been observ'd, that a prudent and religious care is to be us'd, in the manner of spending our money or estate, because the manner of spending our estate makes so great a part of our common life, and is so much the business of every day, that according as we are wise, or imprudent, in this respect, the whole course of our lives, will be render'd either very wise, or very full of folly.

Persons that are well affected to Religion, that receive instructions of piety with pleasure and satisfaction, often wonder how it comes to pass, that they make no greater progress in that

Religion which they so much admire.

Now the reason of it is this; it is because Religion lives only in their head, but something else has possession of their hearts; and therefore they continue from year to year mere admirers, and praisers of piety, without ever coming up to the reality and perfection of its precepts.

If it be ask'd, why Religion does not get possession of their hearts, the reason is this. It is not because they live in gross sins, or debaucheries, for their regard to Religion pre-

serves them from such disorders.

But it is because their *hearts* are constantly *employ'd*, *perverted*, and kept in a wrong state, by the *indiscreet use* of such things as are *law*-

ful to be us'd.

The use and enjoyment of their estates is lawful, and therefore it never comes into their heads to imagine any great danger from that quarter. They never reflect, that there is a vain, and imprudent use of their estates, which though it does not destroy like gross sins, yet so disorders the heart, and supports it in such sensuality and dulness, such pride and vanity, as makes it incapable of receiving the life and spirit of Piety.

For our souls may receive an infinite hurt, and be render'd incapable of all virtue, merely by the use of *innocent* and *lawful* things.

What is more innocent than rest and retirement? And yet what more dangerous, than sloth and idleness? What is more lawful than eating and drinking? And yet what more destructive of all virtue, what more fruitful of all vice, than sensuality and indulgence?

How lawful and praise-worthy is the care of a family? And yet how certainly are many people render'd incapable of all virtue, by a

worldly and solicitous temper?

Now it is for want of religious exactness in the use of these innocent and lawful things, that Religion cannot get possession of our hearts. And it is in the right and prudent management of our selves, as to these things, that all the art of holy living chiefly consists.

Gross sins are plainly seen, and easily avoided by persons that profess Religion. But the indiscreet and dangerous use of innocent and lawful things, as it does not shock and offend our consciences, so it is difficult to make people

at all sensible of the danger of it.

A Gentleman that expends all his estate in sports, and a woman that lays out all her fortune upon her self, can hardly be perswaded, that the spirit of Religion cannot subsist in such a way of life.

These persons, as has been observ'd, may live free from debaucheries, they may be friends of Religion, so far as to *praise* and

speak well of it, and admire it in their imaginations; but it cannot govern their hearts, and be the spirit of their actions, till they change their way of life, and let Religion give laws to the use and spending of their estates.

For a Woman that loves dress, that thinks no expence too great to bestow upon the adorning of her person, cannot stop there. For that temper draws a thousand other follies along with it, and will render the whole course of her life, her business, her conversation, her hopes, her fears, her taste, her pleasures, and diversions, all suitable to it.

Flavia and Miranda are two maiden sisters, that have each of them two hundred pounds a year. They buried their parents twenty years ago, and have since that time spent their

estate as they pleased.

Flavia has been the wonder of all her friends, for her excellent management, in making so surprizing a figure in so moderate a fortune. Several Ladies that have twice her fortune, are not able to be always so genteel, and so constant at all places of pleasure and expence. She has every thing that is in the fashion, and is in every place where there is any diversion. Flavia is very orthodox, she talks warmly against hereticks and schismaticks, is generally at Church, and often at the sacrament. She once commended a sermon that was against the pride and vanity of dress, and thought it was very just against Lucinda, whom she takes to be a great deal finer than she need to be. If any one asks asks Flavia to do something in charity, if she likes the person who makes the proposal, or happens to be in a right temper, she will toss him half a crown or a crown, and tell him, if he knew what a long Milliner's bill she had just received, he would think it a great deal for her to give. A quarter of a year after this, she hears a sermon upon the necessity of charity; she thinks the man preaches well, that it is a very proper subject, that people want much to be put in mind of it; but she applies nothing to herself, because she remembers that she gave a crown some time ago, when she could so ill spare it.

As for poor people themselves, she will admit of no complaints from them; she is very positive they are all cheats and lyars, and will say any thing to get relief, and therefore it must be a sin to encourage them

in their evil ways.

You would think *Flavia* had the tenderest conscience in the world, if you was to see, how *scrupulous* and apprehensive she is of the

guilt and danger of giving amiss.

She buys all books of wit and humour, and has made an expensive collection of all our *English Poets*. For she says, one cannot have a true taste of any of them, without being very conversant with them all.

She will sometimes read a book of Piety, if it is a short one, if it is much commended for stile and language, and she can tell where to

borrow it.

Flavia is very idle, and yet very fond of fine work: this makes her often sit working in bed until noon, and be told many a long story before she is up; so that I need not tell you, that her morning devotions are not

always rightly performed.

Flavia would be a miracle of Piety, if she was but half so careful of her soul, as she is of her body. The rising of a pimple in her face, the sting of a gnat, will make her keep her room two or three days, and she thinks they are very rash people, that don't take care of things in time. This makes her so over-careful of her health, that she never thinks she is well enough; and so over indulgent, that she never can be really well. So that it costs her a great deal in sleeping-draughts and waking-draughts, in spirits for the head, in drops for the nerves, in cordials for the stomach, and in saffron for her tea.

If you visit Flavia on the Sunday, you will always meet good company, you will know what is doing in the world, you will hear the last lampoon, be told who wrote it, and who is meant by every name that is in it. You will hear what plays were acted that week, which is the finest song in the opera, who was intolerable at the last assembly, and what games are most in fashion. Flavia thinks they are Atheists that play at cards on the Sunday, but she will tell you the nicety of all the games, what cards she held, how she play'd them, and the history of all that happened at play, as soon as she

comes from Church. If you would know who is rude and ill-natur'd, who is vain and foppish, who lives too high, and who is in debt. If you would know what is the quarrel at a certain house, or who and who are in love. If you would know how late Belinda comes home at night, what cloaths she has bought, how she loves compliments, and what a long story she told at such a place. If you would know how cross Lucius is to his wife, what illnatur'd things he says to her, when no body hears him; if you would know how they hate one another in their hearts, tho' they appear so kind in publick; you must visit Flavia on the Sunday. But still she has so great a regard for the holiness of the Sunday, that she has turned a poor old widow out of her house, as a prophane wretch, for having been found once mending her cloaths on the Sunday night.

Thus lives Flavia; and if she lives ten years longer, she will have spent about fifteen hundred and sixty Sundays after this manner. She will have wore about two hundred different suits of cloaths. Out of this thirty years of her life, fifteen of them will have been disposed of in bed; and of the remaining fifteen, about fourteen of them will have been consumed in eating, drinking, dressing, visiting, conversation, reading and hearing Plays and Romances, at Operas, Assemblies, Balls and Diversions. For you may reckon all the time that she is up, thus spent, except about an hour and half, that is disposed of at Church, most

most Sundays in the year. With great management, and under mighty rules of oeconomy, she will have spent sixty hundred pounds upon herself, bating only some shillings, crowns, or half-crowns, that have gone from her in accidental charities.

I shall not take upon me to say, that it is impossible for *Flavia* to be saved; but thus much must be said, that she has no grounds from Scripture to think she is in the way of salvation. For her whole life is in direct opposition to all those *tempers* and *practices*, which the Gospel has made necessary to salvation.

If you was to hear her say, that she had lived all her life like Anna the Prophetess, who departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day, you would look upon her as very extravagant; and yet this would be no greater an extravagance, than for her to say, that she had been striving to enter in at the strait gate, or making any one doctrine of the Gospel, a rule of her life.

She may as well say, that she lived with our Saviour when he was upon earth, as that she has lived in imitation of him, or made it any part of her care to live in such tempers, as he required of all those that would be his disciples. She may as truly say, that she has every day washed the saints' feet, as that she has lived in christian humility and poverty of spirit; and as reasonably think, that she has taught a Charity-school, as that she has lived in works of charity. She has as much reason to think

think, that she has been a centinel in an army, as that she has lived in watching, and self-denial. And it may as fairly be said, that she lived by the labour of her hands, as that she had given all diligence to make her calling and election sure.

And here it is to be well observed, that the poor, vain turn of mind, the irreligion, the folly and vanity of this whole life of Flavia, is all owing to the manner of using her estate. It is this that has formed her spirit, that has given life to every idle temper, that has supported every trifling passion, and kept her from all thoughts of a prudent, useful, and devout life.

When her parents dy'd, she had no thought about her two hundred pounds a year, but that she had so much money to do what she would with, to spend upon herself, and purchase the pleasures and gratifications of all

her passions.

And it is this setting out, this false judgment, and indiscreet use of her fortune, that has filled her whole life with the same indiscretion, and kept her from thinking of what is right, and wise and pious in every thing else.

If you have seen her delighted in plays and romances, in scandal and backbiting, easily flatter'd, and soon affronted. If you have seen her devoted to pleasures and diversions, a slave to every passion in its turn, nice in every thing that concerned her body or dress, careless of

every thing that might benefit her soul, always wanting some new entertainment, and ready for every bappy invention in shew or dress, it was because she had purchased all these tempers with the yearly revenue of her fortune.

She might have been humble, serious, devout, a lover of good books, an admirer of prayer and retirement, careful of her time, diligent in good works, full of charity and the love of God, but that the imprudent use of her estate forc'd all the contrary tempers upon her.

And it was no wonder, that she shou'd turn her time, her mind, her health and strength to the same uses that she turn'd her fortune. It is owing to her being wrong in so great an article of life, that you can see nothing wise, or reasonable, or pious in any other part of it.

Now though the irregular trifling spirit of this *character* belongs, I hope, but to few people, yet many may here learn some instruction from it, and perhaps see something

of their own spirit in it.

For as *Flavia* seems to be undone by the unreasonable use of her fortune, so the *lowness* of most people's virtue, the *imperfections* of their piety, and the disorders of their *passions*, is generally owing to their imprudent use and enjoyment of lawful and innocent things.

More people are kept from a true sense and taste of Religion, by a regular kind of sensuality and indulgence, than by gross drunkenness. More men live regardless of the great

duties

duties of piety, through too great a concern for worldly goods, than through direct injustice.

This man would perhaps be devout, if he was not so great a Virtuoso. Another is deaf to all the motives to piety, by indulging an

idle, slothful temper.

Could you cure This man of his great curiosity and inquisitive temper, or That of his false satisfaction and thirst after learning, you need do no more to make them both become men of great piety.

If This woman would make fewer visits, or That not be always talking, they would neither of them find it half so hard to be affected

with Religion.

For all these things are only little, when they are compared to great sins; and though they are little in that respect, yet they are great, as they are impediments and bindrances

of a pious spirit.

For as consideration is the only eye of the soul, as the truths of Religion can be seen by nothing else, so whatever raises a levity of mind, a trifling spirit, renders the soul incapable of seeing, apprehending, and relishing the

doctrines of piety.

Would we therefore make a real progress in Religion, we must not only abhor gross and notorious sins, but we must regulate the innocent and lawful parts of our behaviour, and put the most common and allow'd actions of life under the rules of discretion and piety.

#### CHAP. VIII

How the wise and pious Use of an Estate naturally carrieth us to great perfection in all the virtues of the Christian Life; represented in the character of Miranda

A NY one pious regularity of any one part of our life, is of great advantage, not only on its own account, but as it uses us to live by rule, and think of the government of ourselves.

A man of business, that has brought one part of his affairs under certain rules, is in a fair way to take the same care of the rest.

So he that has brought any one part of his life under the rules of religion, may thence be taught to extend the same order and regularity into other parts of his life.

If any one is so wise as to think his time too precious to be disposed of by chance, and left to be devoured by any thing that happens in his way. If he lays himself under a necessity of observing how every day goes through his hands, and obliges himself to a certain order of time in his business, his retirements, and devotions, it is hardly to be imagined, how soon such a conduct would reform, improve, and perfect the whole course of his life.

He

He that once thus knows the value, and reaps the advantage of a well-order'd time, will not long be a stranger to the value of any thing else that is of any real concern to him.

A rule that relates even to the smallest part of our life, is of great benefit to us, merely as

it is a rule.

For, as the *Proverb* saith, *He that has begun well*, *has half done*: So he that has begun to live by rule, has gone a great way towards the perfection of his life.

By rule, must here be constantly understood, a religious rule, observed upon a principle of

duty to God.

For if a man should oblige himself to be moderate in his *meals*, only in regard to his *stomach*; or abstain from *drinking*, only to avoid the *bead-ach*; or be moderate in his *sleep*, through fear of a *lethargy*, he might be exact in these rules, without being at all the better man for them.

But when he is moderate and regular in any of these things, out of a sense of *Christian sobriety* and *self-denial*, that he may offer unto God a more reasonable and holy life, then it is that the *smallest rule* of this kind, is natur-

ally the beginning of great piety.

For the smallest rule in these matters is of great benefit, as it teaches us some part of the government of our selves, as it keeps up a *tenderness* of mind, as it presents God often to our thoughts, and brings a sense of religion into the ordinary actions of our common life.

If a man, whenever he was in company, where any one swore, talk'd lewdly, or spoke evil of his neighbour, should make it a rule to himself, either gently to reprove him, or if that was not proper, then to leave the company as decently as he could; he would find that this little rule, like a little leaven hid in a great quantity of meal, would spread and extend it self through the whole form of his life.

If another should oblige himself to abstain on the Lords-day from many innocent and lawful things, as travelling, visiting, common conversation, and discoursing upon worldly matters, as trade, news, and the like; if he should devote the day, besides the publick worship, to greater retirement, reading, devotion, instruction, and works of Charity: Though it may seem but a small thing, or a needless nicety, to require a man to abstain from such things, as may be done without sin, yet whoever would try the benefit of so little a rule, would perhaps thereby find such a change made in his spirit, and such a taste of piety raised in his mind, as he was an entire stranger to before.

It would be easy to shew in many other instances, how little and small matters, are the first steps, and natural beginnings of great

perfection.

But the two things which of all others, most want to be under a strict rule, and which are the greatest blessings both to our selves and others, when they are rightly us'd, are our *time*, and our *money*. These talents are continual means and opportunities of doing

good.

He that is piously strict, and exact in the wise management of either of these, cannot be long ignorant of the right use of the other. And he that is happy in the religious care and disposal of them both, is already ascended several steps upon the *ladder* of

Christian perfection.

Miranda, (the sister of Flavia) is a sober reasonable Christian; as soon as she was mistress of her time and fortune, it was her first thought, how she might best fulfil every thing that God requir'd of her in the use of them, and how she might make the best and happiest use of this short life. She depends upon the truth of what our blessed Lord hath said, that there is but one thing needful, and therefore makes her whole life but one continual labour after it. She has but one reason for doing or not doing, for liking or not liking any thing, and that is the will of God. She is not so weak, as to pretend to add, what is call'd the fine lady, to the true Christian; Miranda thinks too well, to be taken with the sound of such silly words; she has renounc'd the world, to follow Christ in the exercise of humility, charity, devotion, abstinence, and heavenly affection; and that is Miranda's fine breeding.

Whilst

Whilst she was under her mother, she was forced to be genteel, to live in ceremony, to sit up late at nights, to be in the folly of every fashion, and always visiting on Sundays. To go patch'd, and loaded with a burden of finery, to the holy Sacrament; to be in every polite conversation, to hear prophaneness at the play-house, and wanton songs and love intrigues at the opera, to dance at publick places, that fops and rakes might admire the fineness of her shape, and the beauty of her motions. The remembrance of this way of life, makes her exceeding careful to atone for it, by a

contrary behaviour.

Miranda does not divide her duty between God, her neighbour, and her self; but she considers all as due to God, and so does every thing in his name, and for his sake. This makes her consider her fortune, as the gift of God, that is to be used as every thing is, that belongs to God, for the wise and reasonable ends of a Christian and holy life. Her fortune therefore is divided betwixt her self, and several other poor People, and she has only her part of relief from it. She thinks it the same folly to indulge her self in needless, vain expences, as to give to other People to spend in the same way. Therefore as she will not give a poor man money to go see a Puppetshew, neither will she allow her self any to spend in the same manner; thinking it very proper to be as wise her self, as she expects poor men should should be. For it is a folly and a crime in a poor man, says Miranda, to waste what is given him, in foolish trifles, whilst he wants meat, drink and cloaths.

And is it less folly, or a less crime in me to spend that money in silly diversions, which might be so much better spent in imitation of the divine goodness, in works of kindness and charity towards my fellow creatures, and fellow Christians? If a poor man's own necessities are a reason why he should not waste any of his money idly, surely the necessities of the poor, the excellency of Charity, which is receiv'd as done to Christ himself, is a much greater reason, why no one should ever waste any of his money. For if he does so, he does not only do like the poor man, only waste that which he wants himself, but he wastes that which is wanted for the most noble use, and which Christ himself is ready to receive at his hands. And if we are angry at a poor man, and look upon him as a wretch, when he throws away that which should buy his own bread; how must we appear in the sight of God, if we make a wanton idle use of that, which should buy bread and cloaths for the hungry and naked brethren, who are as near and dear to God, as we are, and fellow heirs of the same state of future Glory? This is the spirit of Miranda, and thus she uses the gifts of God; she is only one of a certain number of poor People, that are relieved out of her

her fortune, and she only differs from them

in the blessedness of giving.

Excepting her victuals, she never spent near ten pound a year upon her self. If you was to see her, you would wonder what poor body it was, that was so surprizingly neat and clean. She has but one rule that she observes in her dress, to be always clean, and in the cheapest things. Every thing about her resembles the purity of her soul, and she is always clean without, because she is always pure within.

Every morning sees her *early* at her Prayers, she rejoices in the beginning of every day, because it begins all her pious rules of holy living, and brings the fresh pleasure of repeating them. She seems to be as a *guardian Angel* to those that dwell about her, with her watchings and prayers blessing the place where she dwells, and making intercession with God

for those that are asleep.

Her devotions have had some intervals, and God has heard several of her private Prayers, before the light is suffer'd to enter into her sister's room. *Miranda* does not know what it is to have a dull half-day; the returns of her hours of Prayer, and her religious exercises, come too often to let any considerable part of it lye heavy upon her hands.

When you see her at work, you see the same wisdom that governs all her other actions, she is either doing something that is necessary for her self, or necessary for others,

who

who want to be assisted. There is scarce a poor family in the neighbourhood, but wears something or other that has had the labour of her hands. Her wise and pious mind neither wants the amusement, nor can bear with the folly of idle and impertinent work. She can admit of no such folly as this in the day, because she is to answer for all her actions at night. When there is no wisdom to be observ'd in the employment of her hands, when there is no useful or charitable work to be done, Miranda will work no more. At her table she lives strictly by this rule of holy Scripture, whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God. This makes her begin and end every meal, as she begins and ends every day, with acts of devotion: She eats and drinks only for the sake of living, and with so regular an abstinence, that every meal is an exercise of self-denial, and she humbles her body, every time that she is forc'd to feed it. If Miranda was to run a race for her life, she would submit to a diet that was proper for it. But as the race which is set before her, is a race of holiness, purity, and heavenly affection, which she is to finish in a corrupt, disorder'd body of earthly passions, so her every day diet has only this one end, to make her body fitter for this spiritual race. She does not weigh her meat in a pair of scales, but she weighs it in a much better balance; so much as gives a proper strength to her body, and renders it able

able and willing to obey the soul, to join in Psalms and Prayers, and lift up eyes and hands towards Heaven with greater readiness, so much is *Miranda's meal*. So that *Miranda* will never have her eyes swell with fatness, or pant under a heavy load of flesh,

'till she has changed her religion.

The holy Scriptures, especially of the new Testament, are her daily study; these she reads with a watchful attention, constantly casting an eye upon her self, and trying her self, by every doctrine that is there. When she has the new Testament in her hand, she supposes her self at the feet of our Saviour and his Apostles, and makes every thing that she learns of them, so many laws of her life. She receives their sacred words with as much attention, and reverence, as if she saw their persons, and knew that they were just come from Heaven, on purpose to teach her the way that leads to it.

She thinks, that the trying of her self every day by the doctrines of Scripture, is the only possible way to be ready for her trial at the last day. She is sometimes afraid that she lays out too much money in books, because she cannot forbear buying all practical books of any note; especially such as enter into the beart of religion, and describe the inward holiness of the christian life. But of all human writings, the lives of pious persons, and eminent saints, are her greatest delight. In these she searches as for hidden treasure, hoping to

find some secret of holy living, some uncommon degree of piety, which she may make her own. By this means *Miranda* has her head and her heart so stor'd with all the principles of wisdom and holiness, she is so full of the one main business of life, that she finds it difficult to converse upon any other subject; and if you are in her company, when she thinks it proper to talk, you must be made wiser and better, whether you will or no.

To relate her charity, would be to relate the history of every day for twenty years; for so long has all her fortune been spent that way. She has set up near twenty poor tradesmen that had fail'd in their business, and saved as many from failing. She has educated several poor children, that were pick'd up in the streets, and put them in a way of an honest employment. As soon as any labourer is confin'd at home with sickness, she sends him, till he recovers, twice the value of his wages, that he may have one part to give to his family, as usual, and the other to provide things convenient for his sickness.

If a family seems too large to be supported by the labour of those that can work in it, she pays their rent, and gives them something yearly towards their cloathing. By this means there are several poor families that live in a comfortable manner, and are from year to year blessing her in their prayers.

If there is any poor man or woman, that is more than ordinarily wicked and reprobate,

Miranda

Miranda has her eye upon them, she watches their time of need and adversity; and if she can discover that they are in any great streights or affliction, she gives them speedy relief. She has this care for this sort of people, because she once saved a very profligate person from being carry'd to prison, who immediately became a true penitent.

There is nothing in the character of *Miranda* more to be admir'd, than this temper. For this tenderness of affection towards the most abandon'd sinners, is the highest instance of a divine and godlike soul.

Miranda once passed by a house, where the man and his wife were cursing and swearing at one another in a most dreadful manner, and three children crying about them; this sight so much affected her compassionate mind, that she went the next day, and bought the three children, that they might not be ruin'd by living with such wicked parents; they now live with Miranda, are blessed with her care and prayers, and all the good works which she can do for them. They hear her talk, they see her live, they join with her in Psalms and Prayers. The eldest of them has already converted his parents from their wicked life, and shews a turn of mind so remarkably pious, that Miranda intends him for holy orders; that being thus sav'd himself, he may be zealous in the salvation of souls, and do to other miserable objects, as she has done to him.

Miranda is a constant relief to poor people in their misfortunes and accidents; there are sometimes little misfortunes that happen to them, which of themselves they could never be able to overcome. The death of a cow, or a horse, or some little robbery, would keep them in distress all their lives. She does not suffer them to grieve under such accidents as these. She immediately gives them the full value of their loss, and makes use of it as a means of raising their minds towards God.

She has a great tenderness for old people that are grown past their labour. The parish allowance to such people, is very seldom a comfortable maintenance. For this reason, they are the constant objects of her care; she adds so much to their allowance, as somewhat exceeds the wages they got when they were young. This she does to comfort the infirmities of their age, that being free from trouble and distress, they may serve God in peace and tranquility of mind. She has generally a large number of this kind, who by her charities and exhortations to holiness, spend their last days in great piety and devotion.

Miranda never wants compassion, even to common beggars; especially towards those that are old or sick, or full of sores, that want eyes or limbs. She hears their complaints with tenderness, gives them some proof of her kindness, and never rejects them with hard, or reproachful language, for fear of adding affliction to her fellow creatures

If a poor old traveller tells her, that he has neither *strength*, nor *food*, nor *money* left, she never bids him go to the place from whence he came; or tells him, that she cannot relieve him, because he may be a *cheat*, or she does not know him; but she relieves him for that reason, because he is a *stranger*, and *unknown* to her. For it is the most noble part of charity, to be kind and tender to those whom we never saw before, and perhaps never may see again in this life. *I was a stranger*, and ye took me in, saith our blessed Saviour; but who can perform this duty, that will not relieve persons that are unknown to him?

Miranda considers, that Lazarus was a common beggar, that he was the care of Angels, and carry'd into Abraham's bosom. She considers, that our blessed Saviour, and his Apostles, were kind to beggars; that they spoke comfortably to them, healed their diseases, and restor'd eyes and limbs to the lame and blind. That Peter said to the beggar that wanted an alms from him, silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. Miranda, therefore, never treats beggars with disregard and aversion, but she imitates the kindness of our Saviour and his Apostles towards them; and though she cannot, like them, work miracles for their relief, yet she relieves them with that power that she hath; and may say with the Apostle, such as I have give I thee, in the name of Jesus Christ.

It may be, says Miranda, that I may often give to those that do not deserve it, or that will make an ill use of my alms. But what then? Is not this the very method of divine goodness? Does not God make his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good? Is not this the very goodness that is recommended to us in Scripture, that by imitating of it, we may be children of our Father which is in Heaven. who sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust? And shall I with-hold a little money, or food, from my fellow creature, for fear he should not be good enough to receive it of me? Do I beg of God to deal with me, not according to my merit, but according to his own great goodness; and shall I be so absurd, as to with-hold my charity from a poor brother, because he may perhaps not deserve it? shall I use a measure towards him, which I pray God never to use towards me?

Besides, where has the Scripture made *merit* the rule or measure of charity? On the contrary, the Scripture saith, *if thy enemy hunger*,

feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.

Now this plainly teaches us, that the merit of persons is to be no rule of our charity, but that we are to do acts of kindness to those that least of all deserve it. For if I am to love and do good to my worst enemies; if I am to be charitable to them, notwithstanding all their spight and malice, surely merit is no measure of charity. If I am not to withhold my charity from such bad people, and

who are at the same time my enemies, surely I am not to deny alms to poor beggars, whom I neither know to be bad people, nor any

way my enemies.

You will perhaps say, that by this means I encourage people to be beggars. But the same thoughtless objection may be made against all kinds of charities, for they may encourage people to depend upon them. same may be said against forgiving our enemies, for it may encourage people to do us hurt. The same may be said, even against the goodness of God, that by pouring his blessings on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust, evil and unjust men are encourag'd in their wicked ways. The same may be said against cloathing the naked, or giving medicines to the sick, for that may encourage people to neglect themselves, and be careless of their health. But when the love of God dwelleth in you; when it has enlarged your heart, and filled you with bowels of mercy and compassion, you will make no more such objections as these.

When you are at any time turning away the poor, the old, the sick and helpless traveller, the lame, or the blind, ask your self this question; do I sincerely wish these poor creatures may be as happy as Lazarus, that was carry'd by Angels into Abraham's bosom? Do I sincerely desire that God would make them fellow-heirs with me in eternal Glory? Now if you search into your soul, you will find

that there is none of these motions there, that you are wishing nothing of this. For it is impossible for any one heartily to wish a poor creature so great a happiness, and yet not have a heart to give him a small alms. For this reason, says Miranda, as far as I can, I give to all, because I pray to God to forgive all; and I cannot refuse an alms to those, whom I pray God to bless, whom I wish to be partakers of eternal glory; but am glad to shew some degree of love to such, as I hope, will be the objects of the infinite love of God. And if, as our Saviour has assur'd us, it be more blessed to give than to receive, we ought to look upon those that ask our alms, as so many friends and benefactors, that come to do us a greater good than they can receive, that come to exalt our virtue, to be witnesses of our charity, to be monuments of our love, to be our advocates with God, to be to us in Christ's stead, to appear for us at the day of - judgment, and to help us to a blessedness greater than our alms can bestow on them.

This is the spirit, and this is the life of the devout *Miranda*; and if she lives ten years longer, she will have spent sixty bundred pounds in charity, for that which she allows her self, may fairly be reckon'd amongst her

alms.

When she dies, she must shine amongst Apostles, and Saints, and Martyrs, she must stand amongst the first servants of God, and be glorious

rious amongst those that have fought the good fight, and finish'd their course with joy.

#### CHAP. IX

Containing some reflections upon the life of Miranda, and shewing how it may, and ought to be imitated by all her sex

NOW this life of Miranda, which I heartily recommend to the imitation of her sex, however contrary it may seem to the way and fashion of the world, is yet suitable to the true spirit, and founded upon the plainest doctrines of christianity.

To live as she does, is as truly suitable to the Gospel of Christ, as to be *baptiz'd*, or

receive the Sacrament.

Her spirit is that, which animated the Saints of former ages; and it is because they liv'd as she does, that we now celebrate their memories, and praise God for their examples.

There is nothing that is whimsical, trifling, or unreasonable in her character; but every thing there describ'd, is a right and proper

instance of a solid and real piety.

It is as easy to shew, that it is whimsical to go to church, or to say one's prayers, as that it is whimsical to observe any of these rules of life. For all Miranda's rules of living unto God, of spending her time and fortune, of eating

eating, working, dressing, and conversing, are as substantial parts of a reasonable and holy

life, as devotion and prayer.

For there is nothing to be said, for the wisdom of sobriety, the wisdom of devotion, the wisdom of charity, or the wisdom of humility, but what is as good an argument for the wise and reasonable use of apparel.

Neither can any thing be said against the folly of luxury, the folly of sensuality, the folly of extravagance, the folly of prodigality, the folly of ambition, of idleness, or indulgence, but what must be said against the folly of dress. For religion is as deeply concerned in the one, as in the other.

If you may be vain in one thing, you may be vain in every thing; for one kind of vanity only differs from another, as one kind of intemperance differs from another.

If you spend your fortune in the needless vain finery of dress, you cannot condemn prodigality, or extravagance, or luxury, without

condemning your self.

If you fancy that it is your only folly, and that therefore there can be no great matter in it; you are like those that think they are only guilty of the folly of covetousness, or the folly of ambition. Now though some people may live so plausible a life, as to appear chargeable with no other fault, than that of covetousness or ambition; yet the case is not as it appears, for covetousness or ambition cannot subsist in a heart that is in other respects rightly devoted to God.

In like manner, though some people may spend most that they have in needless expensive ornaments of dress, and yet seem to be in every other respect truly pious, yet it is certainly false; for it is as impossible for a mind that is in a true state of religion, to be vain in the use of cloaths, as to be vain in the use of alms, or devotions. Now to convince you of this from your own reflections, let us suppose that some eminent saint, as for instance, that the holy Virgin Mary was sent into the world, to be again in a state of trial for a few years, and that you was going to her, to be edify'd by her great piety. Would you expect. to find her dress'd out and adorn'd in fine and expensive cloaths? No. You would know in your own mind, that it was as impossible, as to find her learning to dance. Do but add saint, or holy, to any person, either man, or woman, and your own mind tells you immediately, that such a character cannot admit of the vanity of fine apparel. A saint genteely dress'd, is as great nonsense, as an Apostle in an embroider'd suit; every one's own natural sense convinces him of the inconsistency of these things.

Now what is the reason, that when you think of a saint, or eminent servant of God, you cannot admit of the vanity of apparel? Is it not because it is inconsistent with such a right state of heart, such true and exalted piety? And is not this therefore, a demonstration, that where such vanity is admitted,

there a right state of heart, true and exalted piety must needs be wanted? For as certainly as the holy *Virgin Mary* could not indulge her self, or conform to the vanity of the world in *dress* and *figure*; so certain is it, that none can indulge themselves in this vanity, but those who want her piety of heart; and consequently it must be own'd, that all needless and expensive finery of dress, is the effect of a disorder'd heart, that is not governed by the true spirit of religion.

Covetousness is not a crime, because there is any harm in gold or silver, but because it supposes a foolish and unreasonable state of mind, that is fallen from its true good, and sunk into such a poor and wretched satisfaction.

In like manner, the expensive finery of dress is not a crime, because there is any thing good or evil in cloaths, but because the expensive ornaments of cloathing shews a foolish and unreasonable state of heart, that is fallen from right notions of human nature, that abuses the end of cloathing, and turns the necessities of life, into so many instances of pride and folly.

All the world agree in condemning remarkable fops. Now what is the reason of it? Is it because there is any thing sinful in their particular dress, or affected manners? No: but it is because all people know, that it shews the state of a man's mind, and that it is impossible for so ridiculous an outside to have any thing wise, or reasonable, or good within.

And indeed to suppose a fop of great piety, is as much nonsense, as to suppose a coward of great courage. So that all the world agree in owning, that the use and manner of cloaths is a mark of the state of a man's mind, and consequently that it is a thing highly essential to religion. But then it should be well considered, that as it is not only the sot that is guilty of intemperance, but every one that transgresses the right and religious measures of eating and drinking; so it should be considered, that it is not only the fop that is guilty of the vanity and abuse of dress, but every one that departs from the reasonable and religious ends of cloathing.

As therefore every argument against sottishness, is as good an argument against all kinds of intemperance; so every argument against the vanity of fops, is as good an argument against all vanity and abuse of dress. For they are all of the same kind, and only differ, as one degree of intemperance may differ from another. She that only paints a little, may as justly accuse another, because she paints a great deal; as she that uses but a common finery of dress, accuse another that is exces-

sive in her finery.

For as in the matter of temperance, there is no rule, but the sobriety, that is according to the doctrines and spirit of our religion; so in the matter of apparel, there is no rule to be observed, but such a right use of cloaths, as is strictly according to the doctrines and spirit

of our religion. To pretend to make the way of the world our measure in these things, is as weak and absurd, as to make the way of the world the measure of our sobriety, abstinence, or humility. It is a pretence that is exceedingly absurd in the mouths of Christians, who are to be so far from conforming to the fashions of this life, that to have overcome the world, is made an essential mark of

Christianity.

This therefore is the way that you are to judge of the crime of vain apparel: You are to consider it as an offence against the proper use of cloaths, as covetousness is an offence against the proper use of money; you are to consider it as an indulgence of proud and unreasonable tempers, as an offence against the humility and sobriety of the Christian spirit; you are to consider it as an offence against all those doctrines that require you to do all to the glory of God, that require you to make a right use of your talents; you are to consider it as an offence against all those texts of Scripture, that command you to love your neighbour as yourself, to feed the hungry, to cloath the naked, and do all works of charity that you are able: so that you must not deceive yourself with saying, Where can be the harm of cloaths? for the covetous man might as well say, Where can be the harm of gold or silver? but you must consider, that it is a great deal of harm to want that wise, and reasonable, and humble state of heart, which is accord-

according to the spirit of religion, and which no one can have in the manner that he ought to have it, who indulges himself either in the vanity of dress, or the desire of riches.

There is therefore nothing right in the use of cloaths, or in the use of any thing else in the world, but the plainness and simplicity of the Gospel. Every other use of things (however polite and fashionable in the world) distracts and disorders the heart, and is inconsistent with that inward state of piety, that purity of heart, that wisdom of mind and regularity of affection, which Christianity requireth.

If you would be a good Christian, there is but one way, you must *live* wholly unto God; and if you would live wholly unto God, you must live according to the wisdom that comes from God; you must act according to right judgments of the nature and value of things; you must live in the exercise of holy and heavenly affections, and use all the gifts of

God to his praise and glory.

Some persons perhaps, who admire the purity and perfection of this life of *Miranda*, may say, How can it be propos'd as a common example? How can we who are marry'd, or we who are under the direction of our parents, imitate such a life?

It is answered, Just as you may imitate the life of our blessed Saviour and his apostles. The circumstances of our Saviour's life, and the state and condition of his apostles, was

more different from yours than that of Miranda's is; and yet their life, the purity and perfection of their behaviour, is the common example that is proposed to all Christians.

It is their spirit therefore, their piety, their love of God, that you are to imitate, and

not the particular form of their life.

Act under God as they did, direct your common actions to that end which they did, glorify your proper state with such love of God, such charity to your neighbour, such humility and self-denial, as they did; and then, though you are only teaching your own children, and St. Paul is converting whole nations, yet you are following his steps, and acting after his example.

Don't think therefore that you can't, or need not be like Miranda, because you are not in her state of life; for as the same spirit and temper would have made Miranda a saint, though she had been forc'd to labour for a maintenance, so if you will but aspire after her spirit and temper, every form and condition of life will furnish you with sufficient means

of employing it.

Miranda is what she is, because she does every thing in the name, and with regard to her duty to God; and when you do the same, you will be exactly like her, though you are never so different from her in the outward state of your life.

You are marry'd, you say; therefore you have not your time and fortune in your power as she has. Tt.

It is very true; and therefore you cannot spend so much time, nor so much money, in the manner that she does.

But now *Miranda*'s perfection does not consist in this, that she spends so much time, or so much money in such a manner, but that she is careful to make the best use of all that time, and all that fortune, which God has put into her hands. Do you therefore make the best use of all that time and money which is in your disposal, and then you are like *Miranda*.

If she has two hundred pounds a year, and you have only two mites, have you not the more reason to be exceeding exact in the wisest use of it? If she has a great deal of time, and you have but a little, ought you not to be the more watchful and circumspect, lest that little should be lost?

You say, if you was to imitate the *cleanly* plainness and *cheapness* of her dress, you should offend your *husbands*.

First, Be very sure that this is true,

before you make it an excuse.

Secondly, If your husbands do really require you to patch your faces, to expose your breasts naked, and to be fine and expensive in all your apparel, then take these two resolutions:

First, To forbear from all this, as soon

as your husbands will permit you.

Secondly, To use your utmost endeavours to recommend your selves to their affections by such solid virtues, as may correct the vanity of their

their minds, and teach them to love you for such qualities, as will make you amiable in

the sight of God and his holy angels.

As to this doctrine concerning the plainness and modesty of dress, it may perhaps be thought by some to be sufficiently confuted by asking, Whether all persons are to be cloathed in the same manner?

These questions are generally put by those, who had rather perplex the plainest truths,

than be obliged to follow them.

Let it be supposed, that I had recommended an universal plainness of diet. Is it not a thing sufficiently reasonable to be universally recommended? But would it thence follow, that the nobleman and the labourer were to live upon the same food?

Suppose I had pressed an universal temperance, does not religion enough justify such a doctrine? But would it therefore follow, that all people were to drink the same liquors,

and in the same quantity?

In like manner, though *plainness* and *sobriety* of dress is recommended to *all*, yet it does by no means follow, that all are to be cloathed in the *same manner*.

Now what is the particular rule with regard to temperance? How shall particular persons that use different liquors, and in different quantities, preserve their temperance?

Is not this the rule? Are they not to guard against indulgence, to make their use of liquors a matter of conscience, and allow of no refresh-

ments

ments, but such as are consistent with the strictest rules of Christian sobriety?

Now transfer this *rule* to the matter of *apparel*, and all questions about it are answer'd.

Let every one but guard against the vanity of dress, let them but make their use of cloaths a matter of conscience, let them but desire to make the best use of their money, and then every one has a rule that is sufficient to direct them in every state of life. This rule will no more let the great be vain in their dress, than intemperate in their liquors; and yet will leave it as lawful to have some difference in their apparel, as to have some difference in their drink.

But now will you say, that you may use the *finest*, *richest wines*, when and as you please, that you may be as *expensive* in them as you have a mind, because *different liquors* are allow'd? If not, how can it be said, that you may use *cloaths* as you please, and wear the *richest* things you can get, because the *bare difference* of cloaths is lawful?

For as the lawfulness of different liquors leaves no room, nor any excuse for the smallest degrees of intemperance in drinking, so the lawfulness of different apparel leaves no room, nor any excuse for the smallest degrees of

vanity in dress.

To ask what is vanity in dress, is no more a puzzling question, than to ask, what is intemperance in drinking. And though Religion does not here state the particular measure

for all individuals, yet it gives such *general* rules, as are a sufficient direction in every state of life.

He that lets Religion teach him, that the end of drinking is only so far to refresh our spirits, as to keep us in good health, and make soul and body fitter for all the offices of a holy and pious life, and that he is to desire to glorify God by a right use of this liberty, will always know what intemperance is, in his particular state.

So he that lets Religion teach him, that the end of cloathing is only to hide our shame and nakedness, and to secure our bodies from the injuries of weather, and that he is to desire to glorify God by a sober and wise use of this necessity, will always know what vanity

of dress is, in his particular state.

And he that thinks it a needless nicety, to talk of the religious use of apparel, has as much reason to think it a needless nicety, to talk of the religious use of liquors. For luxury and indulgence in dress, is as great an abuse, as Juxury and indulgence in eating and drinking. And there is no avoiding either of them, but by making religion the strict measure of our allowance in both cases. And there is nothing in Religion to excite a man to this pious exactness in one case, but what is as good a motive to the same exactness in the other.

Farther, as all things that are lawful, are not therefore expedient, so there are some things lawful

lawful in the use of *liquors* and *apparel*, which by abstaining from them for *pious* ends, may be made means of great perfection.

Thus for instance, if a man should deny himself such use of liquors as is *lawful*, if he should refrain from such *expence* in his drink as might be allow'd without sin; if he should do this, not only for the sake of a more *pious self-denial*, but that he might be able to relieve and refresh the helpless poor, and sick.

If another should abstain from the use of that which is *lawful* in *dress*, if he should be more *frugal* and *mean* in his habit, than the necessities of religion *absolutely* require; if he should do this not only as a means of a *better humility*, but that he may be more able to *cloath* other People; these persons might be said to do that which was highly suitable to the *true spirit*, though not *absolutely* requir'd by the *letter* of the law of Christ.

For if those who give a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ, shall not lose their reward, how dear must they be to Christ, who often give themselves water, that they may be able to give wine to the sick and languishing

members of Christ's body!

But to return. All that has been here said to marry'd women, may serve for the same instruction to such as are still under the direction of their *Parents*.

Now

Now though the obedience which is due to parents, does not oblige them to carry their virtues no higher than their parents require them; yet their obedience requires them to submit to their direction in all things

not contrary to the laws of God.

If therefore, your parents require you to live more in the *fashion* and *conversation* of the world, or to be more *expensive* in your dress and person, or to dispose of your time otherwise than suits with your desires after *greater perfection*, you must submit, and bear it as your *cross*, till you are at liberty to follow the higher counsels of Christ, and have it in your power to chuse the best ways of raising your virtue to its greatest height.

Now although whilst you are in this state, you may be oblig'd to forego some means of improving your virtue, yet there are some others to be found in it, that are not to be

had in a life of more liberty.

For if in this state, where obedience is so great a virtue, you comply in all things lawful, out of a pious, tender sense of duty, then those things which you thus perform, are instead of being hindrances of your virtue, turn'd into means of improving it.

What you lose by being restrain'd from such things, as you would chuse to observe, you gain by that excellent virtue of obedience, in humbly complying against your

temper.

Now what is here granted, is only in things lawful; and therefore the diversion of our English stage is here excepted; being elsewhere prov'd, as I think, to be absolutely unlawful.

Thus much to shew, how persons under the direction of others, may imitate the wise

and pious life of Miranda.

But as for those who are altogether in their own hands, if the liberty of their state makes them covet the best gifts, if it carries them to chuse the most excellent ways, if they having all in their own power, should turn the whole form of their life into a regular exercise of the highest virtues, happy are they who have so learned Christ!

All persons cannot receive this saying. They that are able to receive it, let them receive it, and bless that Spirit of God which has put such good motions into their hearts.

God may be serv'd, and glorified in every state of life. But as there are some states of life more desirable than others, that more purify our natures, that more improve our virtues, and dedicate us unto God in a higher manner, so those who are at liberty to chuse for themselves, seem to be called by God to be more eminently devoted to his service.

Ever since the beginning of Christianity, there hath been two orders, or ranks of

People amongst good Christians.

The

The one that fear'd and serv'd God in the common offices and business of a secular,

worldly life.

The other renouncing the common business, and common enjoyments of life, as riches, marriage, honours, and pleasures, devoted themselves to voluntary poverty, virginity, devotion, and retirement, that by this means they might live wholly unto God in the daily exercise of a divine and heavenly life.

This testimony I have from the famous ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, who liv'd at the time of the first general council, when the faith of our nicene Creed was establish'd, when the Church was in its greatest glory and purity, when its Bishops were so many holy fathers,

and eminent saints.

"Therefore saith he, there hath been in"stituted in the Church of Christ, two ways,
"or manners of living. The one rais'd above
"the ordinary state of nature, and common
"ways of living, rejects wedlock, possessions,
"and worldly goods, and being wholly separ"ate and remov'd from the ordinary con"versation of common life, is appropriated
"and devoted solely to the worship and
"service of God, through an exceeding degree
"of heavenly love.

"They who are of this order of people, seem dead to the life of this world, and having their bodies only upon earth, are in their minds, and contemplations dwelling in heaven. From whence, like so many hea-

"venly inhabitants they look down upon human life, making intercessions and oblations "to Almighty God for the whole race of "mankind. And this not with the blood of beasts, or the fat, or smoak, and burning of bodies, but with the highest exercises of "true piety, with cleans'd and purified hearts, and with an whole form of life strictly dewoted to virtue. These are their sacrifices, which they continually offering unto God, implore his mercy and favour for them"selves, and their fellow creatures.

"Christianity receives this as the perfect

" manner of life.

"The other is of a lower form, and suiting "it self more to the condition of human "nature, admits of *chaste wedlock*, the care of children and family, of trade and business, and goes through all the employments of life under a sense of piety, and fear of God.

"Now they who have chosen this manner of life, have their set times for retirement and spiritual exercises, and particular days are set apart for their hearing Euseb. Dom. and learning the word of God. Evan. 1. 1.

"And this order of people are c. 8.

" consider'd, as in the *second state* of piety." Thus this learned historian.

If therefore persons of either sex, mov'd with the life of *Miranda*, and desirous of perfection, should unite themselves into little societies, professing voluntary poverty, virgini-

ty, retirement and devotion, living upon bare necessaries, that some might be reliev'd by their charities, and all be blessed with their prayers, and benefited by their example: Or if for want of this, they should practise the same manner of life, in as high a degree as they could by themselves: such persons would be so far from being chargeable with any superstition, or blind devotion, that they might be justly said to restore that piety, which was the boast and glory of the Church, when its greatest saints were alive.

Now as this learned historian observes, that it was an exceeding great degree of heavenly love, that carried these persons, so much above the common ways of life, to such an eminent state of holiness; so it is not to be wondered at, that the Religion of Jesus Christ, should fill the hearts of many Christians with this high degree of love.

For a Religion that opens such a scene of Glory, that discovers things so infinitely above all the world, that so triumphs over death, that assures us of such mansions of bliss, where we shall so soon be as the *Angels* of God in Heaven; what wonder is it, if such a Religion, such truths and expectations, should in some holy souls, destroy all earthly desires, and make the ardent love of heavenly things, be the one continual passion of their hearts?

If the Religion of Christians is founded upon the infinite *bumiliation*, the cruel *mockings* and *scourgings*, the prodigious *sufferings*, the poor, persecuted life, and painful death of a crucified Son of God; what wonder is it, if many bumble adorers of this profound mystery, many affectionate lovers of a crucified Lord, should renounce their share of worldly pleasures, and give themselves up to a continual course of mortification and self-denial: That thus suffering with Christ here, they may reign with him hereafter?

If truth it self hath assur'd us, that there is but one thing needful, what wonder is it, that there should be some amongst Christians so full of faith, as to believe this in the highest sense of the words, and to desire such a separation from the world, that their care and attention to the one thing needful

may not be interrupted?

If our blessed Lord hath said, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven:

And come and follow me: What wonder is it, that there should be amongst Christians, some such zealous followers of Christ, so intent upon heavenly treasure, so desirous of perfection, that they should renounce the enjoyment of their estates, chuse a voluntary poverty, and relieve all the poor that they are able?

If the chosen vessel, St. Paul, hath said, He that is unmarry'd careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: And that there is this difference also between a wife and a virgin; the unmarry'd woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be ho-

lу

ly both in body and Spirit: What wonder is it, if the purity and perfection of the virgin state, hath been the praise and glory of the Church

in its first and purest ages?

That there hath always been some so desirons of pleasing God, so zealous after every degree of purity and perfection, so glad of every means of improving their virtue, that they have renounc'd the comforts and enjoyments of wedlock, to trim their lamps, to purify their souls, and wait upon God in

a state of perpetual virginity?

And if now in these our days, we want examples of these several degrees of perfection, if neither Clergy, nor laity are enough of this spirit; if we are so far departed from it, that a man seems, like St. Paul at Athens, a setter forth of strange doctrines, when he recommends self-denial, renunciation of the world, regular devotion, retirement, virginity, and voluntary poverty, 'tis because we are fallen into an age, where the love not only of many, but of most, is waxed cold.

I have made this little appeal to: Antiquity, and quoted these few passages of Scripture, to support some uncommon practices in the life of Miranda; and to shew, that her highest rules of holy living, her devotion, self-denial, renunciation of the world, her charity, virginity, and voluntary poverty, are founded in the sublimest counsels of Christ and his Apostles, suitable to the high expectations of another life, proper instances of a heavenly love, and

all follow'd by the *greatest saints* of the best and purest ages of the Church.

He that bath ears to hear, let him hear.

#### CHAPTER X

Shewing how all orders and ranks of men and women of all ages, are obliged to devote themselves unto God

Have in the foregoing Chapters gone through the several great instances of Christian devotion, and shewn that all the parts of our common life, our *employments*, our *talents* and gifts of *fortune*, are all to be made holy and acceptable unto God, by a wise and religious use of every thing, and by directing our actions and designs to such ends, as are suitable to the honour and glory of God.

I shall now shew, that this regularity of devotion, this holiness of common life, this religious use of every thing that we have, is a devotion that is the duty of all orders of

Christian people.

Fulvius has had a learned education, and taken his degrees in the University, he came from thence, that he might be free from any rules of life. He takes no employment upon him, nor enters into any business, because he thinks that every employment or business, calls

calls people to the careful performance and just discharge of its several duties. When he is grave, he will tell you that he did not enter into holy orders, because he looks upon it to be a state, that requires great holiness of life, and that it does not suit his temper to be so good. He will tell you that he never intends to marry, because he cannot oblige himself to that regularity of life, and good behaviour, which he takes to be the duty of those that are at the head of a family. He refused to be Godfather to his nephew, because he will have no trust of any kind to answer for.

Fulvius thinks that he is conscientious in this conduct, and is therefore content with the most *idle*, *impertinent* and *careless* life.

He has no Religion, no Devotion, no pretences to Piety. He lives by no rules, and thinks all is very well, because he is neither a priest, nor a father, nor a guardian, nor has any employment or family to look after.

But Fulvius, you are a rational creature, and as such, are as much obliged to live according to reason and order, as a priest is obliged to attend at the altar, or a guardian to be faithful to his trust; if you live contrary to reason, you don't commit a small crime, you don't break a small trust; but you break the law of your nature, you rebel against God who gave you that nature, and put your self amongst those whom the God of reason and order will punish as apostates and deserters.

Though you have no employment, yet as you are baptiz'd into the profession of Christ's religion, you are as much oblig'd to live, according to the holiness of the christian spirit and perform all the promises made at your baptism, as any man is oblig'd to be honest and faithful in his calling. If you abuse this great calling, you are not false in a small matter, but you abuse the precious blood of Christ; you crucify the Son of God afresh; you neglect the highest instances of divine goodness; you disgrace the church of God; you blemish the body of Christ; you abuse the means of Grace, and the promises of Glory; and it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for vou.

It is therefore great folly, for any one to think himself at liberty to live as he pleases, because he is not in such a state of life as some others are: For if there is any thing dreadful in the abuse of any trust; if there is any thing to be feared for the neglect of any calling, there is nothing more to be fear'd than the wrong use of our reason, nor any thing more to be dreaded, than the neglect of our christian calling; which is not to serve the little uses of a short life, but to redeem souls unto God, to fill Heaven with saints, and finish a kingdom of eternal glory unto God.

No man therefore, must think himself excused from the *exactness* of piety and morality, because he has chosen to be *idle* and *in-*

dependent

dependent in the world; for the necessities of a reasonable and holy life, are not founded in the several conditions and employments of this life, but in the immutable nature of God, and the nature of man. A man is not to be reasonable and holy, because he is a priest, or a father of a family; but he is to be a pious priest, and a good father, because piety and goodness are the laws of human nature. Could any man please God, without living according to reason and order, there would be nothing displeasing to God, in an idle priest, or a reprobate father. He therefore, that abuses his reason, is like him that abuses the priesthood; and he that neglects the holiness of the christian life, is as the man that disregards the most important trust.

If a man was to chuse to put out his eyes, rather than enjoy the light, and see the works of God, if he should voluntarily kill himself, by refusing to eat and drink, every one would own, that such a one was a rebel against God, that justly deserved his highest indignation. You would not say, that this was only sinful in a priest, or a master of a

family, but in every man as such.

Now wherein does the sinfulness of this behaviour consist? Does it not consist in this, that he abuses his *nature*, and refuses to act that part for which God had created him? But if this be true, then all persons that abuse their *reason*, that act a different part from that for which God created them, are like this man,

rebels

rebels against God, and on the same account subject to his wrath.

Let us suppose that this man, instead of putting out his eyes, had only employ'd them in looking at *ridiculous things*, or shut them up in *sleep*; that instead of *starving* himself to death, by not eating at all, he should turn every meal into a *feast*, and eat and drink like an *Epicure*; could he be said to have liv'd more to the glory of God? could he any more be said to act the part for which God had created him, than if he had put out his eyes, and starved himself to death?

Now do but suppose a man acting unreasonably; do but suppose him extinguishing his *reason*, instead of putting out his *eyes*; and living in a course of folly and impertinence, instead of starving himself to death; and then you have found out as *great a rebel* against God.

For he that puts out his eyes, or murders himself, has only this guilt, that he abuses the powers that God has given him; that he refuses to act that part for which he was created, and puts himself into a state that is contrary to the divine will. And surely this is the guilt of every one that lives an unreasonable, unholy, and foolish life.

As therefore, no particular state, or private life, is an excuse for the abuse of our *bodies*, or *self-murder*, so no particular state, or private life, is an excuse for the abuse of our reason, or the neglect of the holiness of the christian religion. For surely it is as much

the

the will of God that we should make the best use of our rational faculties, that we should conform to the purity and holiness of christianity, as it is the will of God, that we should use our eyes, and eat and drink for

the preservation of our lives.

"I'ill therefore, a man can shew, that he sincerely endeavours to live according to the will of God, to be that which God requires him to be; 'till he can shew, that he is striving to live according to the holiness of the christian religion; whosoever he be, or wheresoever he be, he has all that to answer for, that they have, who refuse to live, who abuse the greatest trusts, and neglect the

highest calling in the world.

Every body acknowledges, that all orders of men are to be equally and exactly honest and faithful; there is no exception to be made in these duties, for any private or particular state of life. Now if we would but attend to the reason and nature of things; if we would but consider the nature of God, and the nature of man, we should find the same necessity for every other right use of our reason, for every grace, or religious temper of the christian life: We should find it as absurd to suppose, that one man must be exact in piety, and another need not, as to suppose that one man must be exact in honesty, but another need not. For christian humility, sobriety, devotion, and piety, are as great and necessary parts of a reasonable life, as justice and honesty. And

And on the other hand, pride, sensuality, and covetousness, are as great disorders of the soul, are as high an abuse of our reason, and as contrary to God, as cheating and disbonesty.

Theft and dishonesty seem indeed, to vulgar eyes, to be greater sins, because they are so hurtful to civil society, and are so severely

punish'd by human laws.

But if we consider mankind in a higher view, as God's order or society of rational beings, that are to glorify him by the right use of their reason, and by acting conformably to the order of their nature, we shall find, that every temper that is equally contrary to reason and order, that opposes God's ends and designs, and disorders the beauty and glory of the rational world, is equally sinful in man, and equally odious to God. This would shew us, that the sin of sensuality is like the sin of dishonesty, and renders us as great objects of the divine displeasure.

Again, if we consider mankind in a farther view, as a redeemed order of fallen spirits, that are baptiz'd into a fellowship with the Son of God; to be temples of the holy Ghost; to live according to his holy inspirations; to offer to God the reasonable sacrifice of an humble, pious, and thankful life; to purify themselves from the disorders of their fall; to make a right use of the means of grace, in order to be sons of eternal glory: If we look at mankind in this true light, then

we shall find, that all tempers that are contrary to this holy society, that are abuses of this infinite mercy; all actions that make us unlike to Christ, that disgrace his body, that abuse the means of grace, and oppose our hopes of glory, have every thing in them, that can make us for ever odious unto God. So that though *pride* and *sensuality*, and other vices of the like kind, do not hurt civil society, as *cheating* and *dishonesty* do; yet they hurt that society, and oppose those ends, which are greater and more glorious in the eyes of God, than all the societies that relate to this world.

Nothing therefore, can be more false, than to imagine, that because we are private persons, that have taken upon us no charge or employment of life, that therefore we may live more at large, indulge our appetites, and be less careful of the duties of piety and holiness; for it is as good an excuse for cheating and dishonesty. Because he that abuses his reason, that indulges himself in lust and sensuality, and neglects to act the wise and reasonable part of a true christian, has every thing in his life to render him hateful to God, that is to be found in cheating and dishonesty.

If therefore, you rather chuse to be an *idle Epicure*, than to be *unfaithful*; if you rather chuse to live in *lust* and *sensuality*, than to injure your neighbour in his goods, you have made no better a provision for the favour

of

of God, than he that rather chuses to rob a

house, than to rob a church.

For the abusing of our own nature, is as great a disobedience against God, as the injuring our neighbour; and he that wants piety towards God, has done as much to damn himself, as he that wants honesty towards men. Every argument therefore, that proves it necessary for all men, in all stations of life, to be truly honest, proves it equally necessary for all men, in all stations of life, to be truly holy and pious, and do all things in such a manner, as is suitable to the glory of God.

Again, another argument to prove that all orders of men are obliged to be thus holy and devout in the common course of their lives, in the use of every thing that they enjoy, may be taken from our obligation to prayer.

It is granted, that *prayer* is a duty that belongs to all states and conditions of men; now if we enquire into the reason of this, why no state of life is to be excused from prayer, we shall find it as good a reason, why every state of life is to be made a state of prices and believes in all its parts.

piety and holiness in all its parts.

For the reason why we are to pray unto God, and praise him with Hymns, and Psalms of Thanksgiving, is this, because we are to live wholly unto God, and glorify him all possible ways. It is not because the praises of words, or forms of thanksgiving, are more particularly parts of piety, or more the worship of God than other things; but it

is because they are possible ways of expressing our dependance, our obedience and devotion to God. Now if this be the reason of verbal praises and thanksgivings to God, because we are to live unto God all possible ways, then it plainly follows, that we are equally obliged to worship and glorify God in all other actions that can be turned into acts of piety and obedience to him. And as actions are of much more significancy than words, it must be a much more acceptable worship of God, to glorify him in all the actions of our common life, than with any little form of words at any particular times.

Thus, if God is to be worshipped with forms of thanksgivings, he that makes it a rule to be content and thankful in every part and accident of his life, because it comes from God, praises God in a much higher manner, than he that has some set time for singing of Psalms. He that dares not to say an ill-natur'd word, or do an unreasonable thing, because he considers God as everywhere present, performs a better devotion than he that dares not miss the church. live in the world as a stranger and a pilgrim, using all its enjoyments as if we used them not, making all our actions so many steps towards a better life, is offering a better sacrifice to God, than any forms of holy and heavenly prayers.

To be humble in all our actions, to avoid every appearance of pride and vanity, to be

meek and lowly in our words, actions, dress, behaviour and designs, in imitation of our blessed Saviour, is worshipping God in a higher manner, than they who have only times to fall low on their knees in devotions. He that contents himself with necessaries, that he may give the remainder to those that want it; that dares not to spend any money foolishly, because he considers it as a talent from God, which must be used according to his will, praises God with something that is more

glorious than songs of praise.

He that has appointed times for the use of wise and pious prayers, performs a proper instance of devotion; but he that allows himself no times, nor any places, nor any actions, but such as are strictly conformable to wisdom and holiness, worships the divine nature with the most true and substantial devotion. For who does not know, that it is better to be pure and holy, than to talk about purity and holiness? Nay, who does not know, that a man is to be reckon'd no farther pure, or holy, or just, than as he is pure, and holy, and just in the common course of his life? But if this be plain, then it is also plain, that it is better to be holy, than to have holy prayers.

Prayers therefore are so far from being a sufficient devotion, that they are the smallest parts of it. We are to praise God with words and prayers, because it is a possible way of glorifying God, who has given us such faculties, as may be so used. But then as words

are but small things in themselves, as times of prayer are but little, if compar'd with the rest of our lives; so that devotion which consists in times and forms of prayer, is but a very small thing, if compared to that devotion which is to appear in every other part and circumstance of our lives.

Again; as it is an easy thing to worship God with forms of words, and to observe times of offering them unto him, so it is the

smallest kind of piety.

· And on the other hand, as it is more difficult to worship God with our substance, to honour him with the right use of our time, to offer to him the continual sacrifice of selfdenial and mortification; as it requires more piety to eat and drink only for such ends as may glorify God, to undertake no labour, nor allow of any diversion, but where we can act in the name of God; as it is more difficult to sacrifice all our corrupt tempers, correct all our passions, and make piety to God the rule and measure of all the actions of our common life: so the devotion of this kind is a much more acceptable service unto God, than those words of devotion which we offer to him either in Church, or in our closet.

Every sober reader will easily perceive, that I don't intend to lessen the true and great value of Prayers, either publick or private; but only to shew him, that they are certainly but a very slender part of devotion, when

compared to a devout life.

Т٥

To see this in a yet clearer light, let us suppose a person to have appointed times for praising God with Psalms and Hymns, and to be strict in the observation of them; let it be supposed also, that in his common life he is restless and uneasy, full of murmurings and complaints at every thing, never pleased but by chance, as his temper happens to carry him, but murmuring and repining at the very seasons, and having something to dislike in every thing that happens to him. Now can you conceive any thing more absurd and unreasonable, than such a character as this? Is such a one to be reckon'd thankful to God, because he has forms of praise which he offers to him? Nay, is it not certain, that such forms of praise must be so far from being an acceptable devotion to God, that they must be abhorr'd as an abomination? Now the absurdity which you see in this instance, is the same in any other part of our life; if our common life hath any contrariety to our prayers, it is the same abomination, as songs of thanksgiving in the mouths of murmurers.

Bended knees, whilst you are cloathed with pride; heavenly petitions, whilst you are hoarding up treasures upon earth; holy devotions, whilst you live in the follies of the world; prayers of meekness and charity, whilst your heart is the seat of spight and resentment; hours of prayer, whilst you give up days and years to idle diversions, impertinent visits, and foolish pleasures; are as absurd, un-

acceptable

acceptable service to God, as forms of thanksgiving from a person that lives in repinings and discontent.

So that unless the common course of our lives be according to the common spirit of our prayers, our prayers are so far from being a real or sufficient degree of devotion, that they become an empty lip-labour, or, what is

worse, a notorious hypocrisy.

Seeing therefore we are to make the spirit and temper of our prayers the common spirit and temper of our lives, this may serve to convince us, that all orders of people are to labour and aspire after the same utmost perfection of the Christian life. For as all Christians are to use the same holy and heavenly devotions, as they are all with the same earnestness to pray for the spirit of God; so is it a sufficient proof, that all orders of people are, to the utmost of their power, to make their life agreeable to that one spirit, for which they are all to pray.

As certain therefore as the same holiness of prayers requires the same holiness of life, so certain is it, that all Christians are called to

the same holiness of life.

A soldier, or a tradesman, is not called to minister at the altar, or preach the Gospel; but every soldier or tradesman is as much obliged to be devout, humble, holy, and heavenly-minded in all the parts of his common life, as a clergyman is obliged to be zealous, faithful

faithful, and laborious in all the parts of his profession.

And all this for this one plain reason, because all people are to pray for the same holiness, wisdom, and divine tempers, and to make themselves as fit as they can for the same heaven.

All men therefore, as men, have one and the same important business, to act up to the excellency of their rational nature, and to make reason and order the law of all their designs, and actions. All Christians, as Christians, have one and the same calling, to live according to the excellency of the Christian spirit, and to make the sublime precepts of the Gospel, the rule and measure of all their tempers in common life. The one thing needful to one, is the one thing needful to all.

The merchant is no longer to hoard up treasures upon earth; the soldier is no longer to fight for glory; the great scholar is no longer to pride himself in the depths of science; but they must all with one spirit count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus

The *fine lady* must teach her eyes to weep, and be cloathed with humility. The *polite gentleman* must exchange the gay thoughts of wit and fancy, for a *broken and a contrite beart*. The man of *quality* must so far renounce the dignity of his birth, as to think himself miserable till he is *born again*. Ser-

vants must consider their service as done unto God. Masters must consider their servants as their brethren in Christ, that are to be treated as their fellow-members of the

mystical body of Christ.

Young Ladies must either devote themselves to piety, prayer, self-denial, and all good works, in a virgin state of life; or else marry to be holy, sober, and prudent in the care of a family, bringing up their children in piety, humility, and devotion, and abounding in all other good works, to the utmost of their state and capacity. They have no choice of any thing else, but must devote themselves to God in one of these states. They may chuse a marry'd, or a single life; but it is not left to their choice, whether they will make either state, a state of holiness, humility, devotion, and all other duties of the Christian life. It is no more left in their power, because they have fortunes, or are born of rich parents, to divide themselves betwixt God and the world, or take such pleasures as their fortune will afford them, than it is allowable for them to be sometimes chaste and modest, and sometimes not.

They are not to consider, how much religion may secure them a fair character, or how they may add devotion to an impertinent, vain, and giddy life; but must look into the spirit and temper of their prayers, into the nature, and end of Christianity, and then they will find, that whether marry'd or unmarry'd, they have

have but one business upon their hands; to be wise and pious, and holy, not in little modes and forms of worship, but in the whole turn of their minds, in the whole form of all their behaviour, and in the daily course of their common life.

Toung Gentlemen must consider, what our blessed Saviour said to the young Gentleman in the Gospel, he bid him sell all that he had, and give to the poor. Now tho' this text should not oblige all people to sell all, yet it certainly obliges all kinds of people to employ all their estates in such wise and reasonable and charitable ways, as may sufficiently shew that all that they have is devoted to God, and that no part of it is kept from the poor, to be spent in needless, vain, and foolish expences.

If therefore young Gentlemen propose to themselves a life of pleasure and indulgence, if they spend their estates in high living, in luxury and intemperance, in state and equipage, in pleasures and diversions, in sports and gaming, and such like wanton gratifications of their foolish passions, they have as much reason to look upon themselves to be Angels,

as to be disciples of Christ.

Let them be assur'd, that it is the one only business of a *Christian Gentleman*, to distinguish himself by good works, to be eminent in the most sublime virtues of the Gospel, to bear with the ignorance and weakness of the vulgar, to be a friend and patron to all that dwell

about

about him, to live in the utmost heights of wisdom and holiness, and shew thro' the whole course of his life a true religious greatness of mind. They must aspire after such a gentility, as they might have learnt from seeing the blessed Jesus, and shew no other spirit of a gentleman, but such as they might have got by living with the holy Apostles. They must learn to love God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength, and their neighbour as themselves; and then they have all the greatness and distinction that they can have here, and are fit for an eternal happiness in heaven hereafter.

Thus in all orders and conditions, either of men or women, this is the one common holiness, which is to be the common life of all Christians.

The Merchant is not to leave devotion to the Clergyman, nor the Clergyman to leave humility to the labourer; women of fortune are not to leave it to the poor of their sex, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, to adorn themselves in modest apparel, shamefacedness and sobriety; nor poor women leave it to the rich to attend at the worship and service of God. Great men must be eminent for true poverty of spirit, and people of a low and afflicted state must greatly rejoyce in God.

The man of *strength* and *power* is to forgive and pray for his enemies, and the *inno*cent sufferer that is chain'd in prison, must with Paul and Silas, at midnight sing praises to God. For God is to be glorified, holiness

is to be practised, and the spirit of Religion is to be the common spirit of every Christian

in every state and condition of life.

For the Son of God did not come from above, to add an external form of worship to the several ways of life that are in the world; and so to leave people to live as they did before. in such tempers and enjoyments as the fashion and spirit of the world approves. But as he came down from heaven, altogether divine and heavenly in his own nature, so it was to call mankind to a divine and heavenly life; to the highest change of their whole nature and temper; to be born again of the holy spirit; to walk in the wisdom and light and love of God; and be like him to the utmost of their power; to renounce all the most plausible ways of the world, whether of greatness, business, or pleasure; to a mortification of all their most agreeable passions; and to live in such wisdom, and purity and holiness, as might fit them to be glorious in the enjoyment of God to all eternity.

Whatever therefore is foolish, ridiculous, vain, or earthly, or sensual in the life of a Christian, is something that ought not to be there, that is a spot and a defilement that must be washed away with tears of repentance. But if any thing of this kind runs thro' the course of our whole life, if we allow our se'ves in things that are either vain, foolish, or

sensual, we renounce our profession.

For as sure as Jesus Christ was wisdom and holiness, as sure as he came to make us like himself himself, and to be baptiz'd into his spirit, so sure is it, that none can be said to keep to their Christian profession, but they who to the utmost of their power, live a wise and holy and heavenly life. This and this alone is Christianity, an universal holiness in every part of life, a heavenly wisdom in all our actions, not conforming to the spirit and temper of the world, but turning all worldly enjoyments into means of piety and devotion to God.

But now if this devout state of heart, if these habits of inward holiness be true Religion, then true Religion is equally the duty and happiness of all orders of men; for there is nothing to recommend it to one, that is not the same recommendation of it to all states

of people.

If it be the happiness and glory of a Bishop to live in this devout spirit, full of these holy tempers, doing every thing as unto God, it is as much the glory and happiness of all men and women, whether young or old, to live in the same spirit. And whoever can find any reasons, why an antient Bishop should be intent upon divine things, turning all his life into the highest exercises of piety, wisdom, and devotion, will find them so many reasons, why he should to the utmost of his power, do the same himself.

If you say that a *Bishop* must be an eminent example of Christian holiness, because of his high and sacred calling, you say right. But

if you say that it is more to his advantage to be exemplary, than it is yours, you greatly mistake. For there is nothing to make the highest degrees of holiness desirable to a Bishop, but what makes them equally desirable to every young person of every family.

For an exalted piety, high devotion, and the religious use of every thing, is as much the glory and happiness of one state of life,

as it is of another.

Do but fancy in your mind what a spirit of piety you would have in the best Bishop in the world, how you would have him love God, how you would have him imitate the life of our Saviour and his Apostles, how you would have him live above the world, shining in all the instances of a heavenly life, and then you have found out that spirit, which you ought

to make the spirit of your own life.

I desire every reader to dwell a while upon this reflection, and perhaps he will find more conviction from it, than he imagines. Every one can tell how good and pious he would have some people to be; every one knows how wise and reasonable a thing it is in a Bishop, to be entirely above the world, and be an eminent example of Christian perfection: As soon as you think of a wise and antient Bishop, you fancy some exalted degree of piety, a living example of all those holy tempers, which you find describ'd in the Gospel.

Now

Now if you ask your self, what is the happiest thing for a young Clergyman to do? You must be forc'd to answer, that nothing can be so happy and glorious for him, as to

be like that excellent, holy Bishop.

If you go on, and ask what is the happiest thing, for any young Gentleman or his sisters to do? The answer must be the same; that nothing can be so happy or glorious for them, as to live in such habits of piety, in such exercises of a divine life, as this good old Bishop does. For every thing that is great and glorious in Religion, is as much the true glory of every man or woman, as it is the glory of any Bishop. If high degrees of divine love, if fervent charity, if spotless purity, if heavenly affection, if constant mortification, if frequent devotion be the best and happiest way of life for any Christian; it is so for every Christian.

Consider again; if you was to see a Bishop in the whole course of his life, living below his character, conforming to all the foolish tempers of the world, and govern'd by the same cares and fears which govern vain and worldly men, what would you think of him? Would you think that he was only guilty of a small mistake? No. You would condemn him, as erring in that which is not only the most, but the only important matter that relates to him. Stay a while in this consideration, till your mind is fully convinc'd, how miser-

able

able a mistake it is in a Bishop to live a

careless, worldly life.

Whilst you are thinking in this manner, turn your thoughts towards some of your acquaintance, your brother or sister, or any young person. Now if you see the common course of their lives to be not according to the doctrines of the Gospel, if you see that their way of life cannot be said to be a sincere endeavour to enter in at the straight gate, you see something that you are to condemn in the same degree, and for the same reasons. They don't commit a small mistake, but are wrong in that which is their all, and mistake their true happiness, as much as that Bishop does, who neglects the high duties of his calling. Apply this reasoning to your self; if you find your self living an idle, indulgent, vain life, chusing rather to gratify your passions, than to live up to the doctrines of Christianity, and practise the plain precepts of our blessed Lord, you have all that blindness and unreasonableness to charge upon your self, that you can charge upon any irregular Bishop.

For all the virtues of the Christian life, its perfect purity, its heavenly tempers, are as much the sole rule of your life, as the sole rule of the life of a Bishop. If you neglect these holy tempers, if you don't eagerly aspire after them, if

you do not shew your self a visible example of them, you are as much fallen from your true happiness, you are as great an *enemy* to your self, and have made as bad a choice, as that Bishop that chuses rather to enrich his family, than to be like an Apostle. For there is no reason, why you should think the highest holiness, the most heavenly tempers, to be the duty and happiness of a Bishop; but what is as good a reason, why you should think the same tempers, to be the duty and happiness of all Christians. And as the wisest Bishop in the world, is he who lives in the greatest heights of holiness, who is most exemplary in all the exercises of a divine life, so the wisest youth, the wisest woman, whether marry'd, or unmarry'd, is she, that lives in the highest degrees of Christian holiness, and all the exercises of a divine and heavenly life.

#### CHAP. XI

Shewing how great devotion fills our lives with the greatest peace and happiness, that can be enjoy'd in this world

SOME people perhaps object, that all these rules of holy living unto God in all that we do, are too great a restraint upon human life; that it will be made too anxious a state, by thus introducing a regard to God in all our actions. And that by depriving our selves of so many seemingly innocent pleasures, we shall render our lives dull, uneasy, and melancholy.

#### To which it may be answer'd:

First, That these rules are prescrib'd for, and will certainly procure a quite contrary end. That instead of making our lives dull and melancholy, they will render them full of content and strong satisfactions. That by these rules we only change the childish satisfactions of our vain and sickly passions, for the solid enjoyments, and real happiness of a sound mind.

Secondly, That as there is no foundation for comfort in the enjoyments of this life, but in the assurance that a wise and good God governeth verneth the world, so the more we find out God in every thing, the more we apply to him in every place, the more we look up to him in all our actions, the more we conform to his will, the more we act according to his wisdom, and imitate his goodness, by so much the more do we enjoy God, partake of the divine nature, and heighten and increase all that is happy and comfortable in human life.

Thirdly, He that is endeavouring to subdue and root out of his mind all those passions of pride, envy, and ambition, which religion opposes, is doing more to make himself happy, even in this life, than he that is contriving means to indulge them.

For these passions are the causes of all the disquiets and vexations of human life: They are the dropsies and fevers of our minds, vexing them with false appetites, and restless cravings after such things as we do not want, and spoiling our taste for those things which are our proper good.

Do but imagine that you some where or other saw a man, that propos'd reason as the rule of all his actions, that had no desires but after such things as nature wants, and religion approves, that was as pure from all the motions of pride, envy, and covetousness, as from thoughts of murder; that in this freedom from worldly passions, he had a soul full of divine

divine love, wishing and praying that all men may have what they want of worldly things, and be partakers of eternal glory in the life to come.

Do but fancy a man living in this manner, and your own conscience will immediately tell you, that he is the happiest man in the world, and that it is not in the power of the richest fancy to invent any higher happiness in

the present state of life.

And on the other hand, if you suppose him to be in any degree less perfect; if you suppose him but subject to one foolish fondness, or vain passion, your own conscience will again tell you, that he so far lessens his own happiness, and robs himself of the true enjoyment of his other virtues. So true is it, that the more we live by the rules of religion, the more peaceful and happy do we render our lives.

Again, as it thus appears, that real happiness is only to be had from the greatest degrees of piety, the greatest denials of our passions, and the strictest rules of religion, so the same truth will appear from a consideration of human misery. If we look into the world, and view the disquiets and troubles of human life, we shall find that they are all owing to our violent and irreligious passions.

Now all trouble and uneasiness is founded in the want of something or other; would we therefore know the true cause of our troubles and disquiets, we must find out the cause

of

of our wants; because that which creates and increaseth our wants, does in the same degree create and increase our trouble and dis-

quiets.

God almighty has sent us into the world with very few wants; meat, and drink, and cloathing, are the only things necessary in life; and as these are only our present needs, so the present world is well furnish'd to supply these needs.

If a man had half the world in his power, he can make no more of it than this; as he wants it only to supply an *animal* life, so is it unable to do any thing else for him, or to

afford him any other happiness.

This is the state of man, born with few wants, and into a large world, very capable of supplying them. So that one would reasonably suppose, that men should pass their lives in content and thankfulness to God, at least that they should be free from violent disquiets and vexations, as being placed in a world, that has more than enough to relieve all their wants.

But if to all this we add, that this short life, thus furnish'd with all that we want in it, is only a short passage to eternal glory, where we shall be cloathed with the brightness of angels, and enter into the joys of God, we might still more reasonably expect, that human life should be a state of peace, and joy, and delight in God. Thus it would certainly

tainly be, if reason had its full power over us.

But alas, though God, and Nature, and Reason, make human life thus free from wants, and so full of happiness, yet our passions, in rebellion against God, against nature and reason, create a new world of evils, and fill human life with imaginary wants, and

vain disquiets.

The man of *pride* has a thousand wants, which only his own pride has *created*; and these render him as full of trouble, as if God had created him with a *thousand appetites*, without creating any thing that was proper to satisfy them. *Envy* and *Ambition* have also their endless wants, which disquiet the souls of men, and by their contradictory motions, render them as foolishly miserable, as those that want to fly and *creep* at the same time.

Let but any complaining, disquieted man tell you the ground of his uneasiness, and you will plainly see, that he is the author of his own torment; that he is vexing himself at some imaginary evil, which will cease to torment him, as soon as he is content to be that which God, and nature, and reason require

him to be.

If you should see a man passing his days in disquiet, because he could not walk upon the water, or catch birds as they fly by him, you would readily confess, that such a one might thank himself for such uneasiness. But now if you look into all the most tor-

menting disquiets of life, you will find them all thus absurd; where people are only tormented by their own folly, and vexing themselves at such things as no more concern them, nor are any more their proper good, than walking upon the water, or catching birds.

What can you conceive more silly and extravagant, than to suppose a man racking his brains, and studying night and day how to fly? wandring from his own house and home, wearying himself with climbing upon every ascent, cringing and courting every body he meets, to lift him up from the ground, bruising himself with continual falls, and at last breaking his neck? And all this, from an imagination that it would be glorious to have the eyes of people gazing up at him, and mighty happy to eat, and drink, and sleep, at the top of the highest trees in the kingdom. Would you not readily own, that such a one was only disquieted by his own folly?

If you ask, what it signifies to suppose such silly creatures as these, as are no where to be

found in human life?

It may be answer'd, that where-ever you see an ambitious man, there you see this vain

and senseless flyer.

Again, if you should see a man that had a large pond of water, yet living in continual thirst, not suffering himself to drink half a draught, for fear of lessening his pond; if you should see him wasting his time and strength, in fetching more water to his pond, always thirsty

thirsty, yet always carrying a bucket of water in his hand, watching early and late to catch the drops of rain, gaping after every cloud, and running greedily into every mire and mud, in hopes of water, and always studying how to make every ditch empty its self into his pond. If you should see him grow grey and old in these anxious labours, and at last end a careful, thirsty life, by falling into his own pond, would you not say that such a one was not only the author of all his own disquiets, but was foolish enough to be reckon'd amongst ideots and madmen? But yet foolish and absurd as this character is, it does not represent half the follies, and absurd disquiets of the covetous man.

I could now easily proceed to shew the same effects of all our other passions; and make it plainly appear, that all our miseries, vexations, and complaints, are entirely of our own making, and that in the same absurd manner, as in these instances of the *covetous* and ambitious man. Look where you will, you will see all *worldly vexations* but like the vexation of him, that was always in *mire* and *mud* in search of water to drink, when he had more at home than was sufficient for an *hundred borses*.

Calia is always telling you how provok'd she is, what intolerable shocking things happen to her, what monstrous usage she suffers, and what vexations she nieets with every-where. She tells you that her patience is quite wore

out, and there is no bearing the behaviour of people. Every assembly that she is at, sends her home provok'd; something or other has been said, or done, that no reasonable, wellbred person ought to bear. Poor people that want her charity, are sent away with hasty answers, not because she has not a heart to part with any money, but because she is too full of some trouble of her own, to attend to the complaints of others. Calia has no business upon her hands, but to receive the income of a plentiful fortune; but yet by the doleful turn of her mind, you would be apt to think, that she had neither food nor lodging. If you see her look more pale than ordinary, if her lips tremble when she speaks to you, it is because she is just come from a visit, where Lupus took no notice at all of her, but talked all the time to Lucinda, who has not half her fortune. When cross accidents have so disorder'd her spirits, that she is forc'd to send for the Doctor to make her able to eat; she tells him, in great anger at providence, that she never was well since she was born, and that she envies every beggar that she sees in health.

This is the disquiet life of Calia, who has nothing to torment her but her own spirit.

If you could inspire her with christian humility, you need do no more to make her as happy as any person in the world. This virtue would make her thankful to God for half so much health as she has had, and help her

to enjoy more for the time to come. This virtue would keep off *tremblings* of the spirits, and *loss* of appetite, and her blood would need

nothing else to sweeten it.

I have just touched upon these absurd characters for no other end, but to convince you in the plainest manner, that the *strictest rules* of religion are so far from rendering a life *dull*, *anxious*, and *uncomfortable*, (as is above objected) that, on the contrary, all the miseries, vexations, and complaints that are in the world, are all owing to the *want* of religion; being directly caused by those absurd passions, which religion teaches us to deny.

For all the wants which disturb human life, which make us uneasy to ourselves, quarrelsome with others, and unthankful to God; which weary us in vain labours and foolish anxieties; which carry us from project to project, from place to place, in a poor pursuit of we don't know what, are the wants which neither God, nor nature, nor reason hath subjected us to, but are solely infused into us by pride, envy, ambition, and covetousness.

So far therefore as you reduce your desires to such things as *nature* and *reason* require; so far as you regulate all the motions of your heart by the *strict rules* of religion, so far you remove yourself from that infinity of *wants* and vexations, which torment every heart that

is left to itself.

Most people indeed confess, that religion preserves us from a great many evils, and helps helps us in many respects to a more happy enjoyment of ourselves; but then they imagine, that this is only true of such a moderate share of religion, as only gently restrains us from the excesses of our passions. They suppose that the strict rules and restraints of an exalted piety, are such contradictions to our nature, as must needs make our lives dull and uncomfortable.

Altho' the weakness of this objection sufficiently appears from what hath been already said, yet I shall add one word more to it.

This objection supposes, that religion moderately practis'd, adds much to the happiness of life; but that such heights of piety as the perfection of religion requireth, have a con-

trary effect.

It supposes therefore, that it is happy to be kept from the excesses of envy, but unhappy to be kept from other degrees of envy. That it is happy to be deliver'd from a boundless ambition, but unhappy to be without a more moderate ambition. It supposes also, that the happiness of life consists in a mixture of virtue and vice, a mixture of ambition and humility, charity and envy, heavenly affection and covetousness. All which is as absurd, as to suppose that it is happy to be free from excessive pains, but unhappy to be without more moderate pains; or that the happiness of bealth consisted in being partly sick, and partly well.

For if humility be the peace and rest of the soul, then no one has so much happiness from humility

humility, as he that is the most humble. If excessive envy is a torment of the soul, he most perfectly delivers himself from torment, that most perfectly extinguishes every spark of envy. If there is any peace and joy in doing any action according to the will of God, he that brings the most of his actions to this rule, does most of all increase the peace and joy of his life.

And thus it is in every virtue; if you act up to every degree of it, the more happiness you have from it. And so of every vice; if you only abate its excesses, you do but little for yourself; but if you reject it in all degrees, then you feel the true ease and joy of a

reformed mind.

As for example: If religion only restrains the excesses of revenge, but lets the spirit still live within you in lesser instances, your religion may have made your life a little more outwardly decent, but not made you at all happier or easier in yourself. But if you have once sacrific'd all thoughts of revenge, in obedience to God, and are resolv'd to return good for evil at all times, that you may render yourself more like to God, and fitter for his mercy in the kingdom of love and glory; this is a height of virtue that will make you feel its happiness.

Secondly, As to those satisfactions and enjoyments which an exalted piety requireth us to deny ourselves, this deprives us of no real comfort of life.

For, 1st, Piety requires us to renounce no ways of life, where we can act reasonably, and offer what we do to the glory of God. All ways of life, all satisfactions and enjoyments that are within these bounds, are no way deny'd us by the strictest rules of piety. Whatever you can do, or enjoy, as in the presence of God, as his servant, as his rational creature. that has received reason and knowledge from him; all that you can perform conformably to a rational nature, and the will of God, all this is allowed by the laws of piety? And will you think that your life will be uncomfortable, unless you may displease God, be a fool and mad, and act contrary to that reason and wisdom which he has implanted in you?

And as for those satisfactions, which we dare not offer to a holy God, which are only invented by the folly and corruption of the world, which inflame our passions, and sink our souls into grossness and sensuality, and render us incapable of the divine favour either here or hereafter; surely it can be no uncomfortable state of life, to be rescu'd by religion from such self-murder, and to be rendered ca-

pable of eternal happiness.

Let us suppose a person destitute of that knowledge which we have from our senses, placed somewhere alone by himself, in the midst of a variety of things which he did not know how to use: that he has by him bread, wine, water, golden dust, iron chains, gravel, garments, fire, &c. Let it be supposed, that

he has no knowledge of the right use of these things, nor any direction from his senses how to quench his thirst, or satisfy his hunger, or make any use of the things about him. it be supposed, that in his drought he puts golden dust into his eyes; when his eyes smart, he puts wine into his ears; that in his hunger, he puts gravel in his mouth; that in pain, he loads himself with the iron chains; that feeling cold, he puts his feet in the water; that being frighted at the fire, he runs away from it; that being weary, he makes a seat of his bread. Let it be supposed, that thro' his ignorance of the right use of the things that are about him, he will vainly torment himself whilst he lives; and at last dye, blinded with dust, choaked with gravel, and loaded with Let it be suppos'd, that some good Being came to him, and shew'd him the nature and use of all the things that were about him, and gave him such strict rules of using them, as would certainly, if observ'd, make him the happier for all that he had, and deliver him from the pains of hunger, and thirst, and cold.

Now could you with any reason affirm, that those strict rules of using those things that were about him, had render'd that poor man's life dull and uncomfortable.

Now this is in some measure a representation of the *strict rules* of religion; they only relieve our ignorance, save us from tormenting ourselves, and teach us to use every thing

about us to our proper advantage.

Man is placed in a world full of variety of things; his ignorance makes him use many of them as absurdly, as the man that puts *dust* in his *eyes* to relieve his *thirst*, or puts on *chains* 

to remove pain.

Religion therefore here comes in to his relief, and gives him *strict rules* of using every thing that is about him; that by so using them suitably to his own nature, and the nature of the things, he may have always the pleasure of receiving a right benefit from them. It shews him what is strictly right in meat, and drink, and cloaths; and that he has nothing else to expect from the things of this world, but to satisfy such wants of his own; and then to extend his assistance to all his brethren, that as far as he is able, he may help all his fellow-creatures to the same benefit from the world that he hath.

It tells him, that this world is incapable of giving him any other happiness; and that all endeavours to be happy in heaps of money, or acres of land, in fine cloaths, rich beds, stately equipage, and shew and splendor, are only vain endeavours, ignorant attempts after impossibilities; these things being no more able to give the least degree of happiness, than dust in the eyes can cure thirst, or gravel in the mouth satisfy hunger; but, like dust and gravel misapply'd, will only serve to render him

him more unhappy by such an ignorant misuse of them.

It tells him, that altho' this world can do no more for him, than satisfy these wants of the body; yet that there is a much greater good prepared for man, than eating, drinking, and dressing; that it is yet invisible to his eyes, being too glorious for the apprehension of flesh and blood; but reserved for him to enter upon, as soon as this short life is over; where in a new body, form'd to an angelick likeness, he shall dwell in the light and glory of God to all eternity.

It tells him, that this state of glory will be given to all those, that make a right use of the things of this present world; who do not blind themselves with golden dust, or eat gravel, or groan under loads of iron of their own putting on; but use bread, water, wine, and garments, for such ends as are according to nature and reason; and who with faith and thankfulness worship the kind giver of all that they enjoy here, and hope for hereafter.

Now can any one say, that the strictest rules of such a religion as this, debar us of any of the comforts of life? Might it not as justly be said of those rules, that only hindred a man from choaking himself with gravel? For the strictness of these rules only consists in the

exactness of their rectitude.

Who would complain of the severe strictness of a law, that without any exception forbad the putting of dust into our eyes? Who could think

think it too rigid, that there were no abatements? Now this is the *strictness* of religion, it requires nothing of us strictly, or without abatements, but where every degree of the thing is wrong, where every indulgence does us some hurt.

If religion forbids all instances of revenge without any exception, 'tis because all revenge is of the nature of poison; and though we don't take so much as to put an end to life, yet if we take any at all, it corrupts the whole mass of blood, and makes it difficult to be

restor'd to our former health.

If religion commands an universal charity, to love our neighbour as ourselves, to forgive and pray for all our enemies without any reserve; 'tis because all degrees of love are degrees of happiness, that strengthen and support the divine life of the soul, and are as necessary to its health and happiness, as proper food is necessary to the health and happiness of the body.

If religion has laws against laying up treasures upon earth, and commands us to be content with food and raiment; 'tis because every other use of the world is abusing it to our own vexation, and turning all its conveniencies into snares and traps to destroy us. 'Tis because this plainness and simplicity of life, secures us from the cares and pains of restless pride and envy, and makes it easier to keep that straight road that will carry us to eternal life.

If religion saith, Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor; 'tis because there is no other natural or reasonable use of our riches, no other way of making ourselves happier for them; 'tis because it is as strictly right to give others that which we do not want ourselves, as 'tis right to use so much as our own wants re-For if a man has more food than his own nature requires, how base and unreasonable is it, to invent foolish ways of wasting it. and make sport for his own full belly, rather than let his fellow-creatures have the same comfort from food, which he hath had. It is so far therefore from being a hard law of religion, to make this use of our riches, that a reasonable man would rejoice in that religion, which teaches him to be happier in that which he gives away, than in that which he keeps for himself; which teaches him to make spare food and raiment be greater blessings to him, than that which feeds and cloaths his own body.

If religion requires us sometimes to fast, and deny our natural appetites, 'tis to lessen that struggle and war that is in our nature; 'tis to render our bodies fitter instruments of purity, and more obedient to the good motions of divine grace; 'tis to dry up the springs of our passions that war against the soul, to cool the flame of our blood, and render the mind more capable of divine meditations. So that altho' these abstinences give some pain to the body, yet they so lessen the power of bodily

appe-

appetites and passions, and so increase our taste of spiritual joys, that even these severities of religion, when practis'd with discretion, add much to the comfortable enjoyment of our lives.

If religion calleth us to a life of watching and prayer, 'tis because we live amongst a crowd of enemies, and are always in need of the assistance of God. If we are to confess and bewail our sins, 'tis because such confessions relieve the mind, and restore it to ease; as burdens and weights taken off the shoulders, relieve the body, and make it easier to itself. If we are to be frequent and fervent in holy petitions, 'tis to keep us steady in the sight of our true good, and that we may never want the happiness of a lively faith, a joyful hope, and well-grounded trust in God. If we are to pray often, 'tis that we may be often happy in such secret joys as only prayer can give; in such conmunications of the divine presence, as will fill our minds with all the happiness, that beings not in heaven are capable of.

Was there any thing in the world more worth our care, was there any exercise of the mind, or any conversation with men, that turned more to our advantage than this intercourse with God, we should not be called to such a continuance in prayer. But if a man considers what it is that he leaves when he retires to devotion, he will find it no small happiness to be so often relieved from doing nothing, or nothing to the purpose; from dull

idle-

idleness, unprofitable labour, or vain conversation. If he considers, that all that is in the world, and all that is doing in it, is only for the body, and bodily enjoyments, he will have reason to rejoyce at those *bours* of prayer, which carry him to higher consolations, which raise him above these poor concerns, which open to his mind a scene of greater things, and accustom his soul to the hope and expectation of them.

If religion commands us to live wholly unto God, and to do all to his glory, 'tis because every other way, is living wholly against our selves, and will end in our own shame and confusion of face.

As every thing is dark, that God does not enlighten; as every thing is senseless, that has not its share of knowledge from him; as nothing lives, but by partaking of life from him; as nothing exists, but because he commands it to be; so there is no glory, or greatness, but what is the glory or greatness of God.

We indeed may talk of human glory, as we may talk of human life, or human knowledge; but as we are sure that human life implies nothing of our own, but a dependant living in God, or enjoying so much life in God; so human glory, whenever we find it, must be only so much glory as we enjoy in the glory of God.

This is the state of all creatures, whether men or angels; as they make not themselves, so they enjoy nothing from themselves; if they are great, it must be only as great receivers of the gifts of God; their power can only be so much of the divine Power acting in them; their wisdom can be only so much of the divine Wisdom shining within them, and their light and glory, only so much of the light and glory of God shining upon them.

As they are not men or angels, because they had a mind to be so themselves, but because the will of God formed them to be what they are; so they cannot enjoy this or that happiness of men or angels, because they have a mind to it, but because it is the will of God, that such things be the happiness of men, and such things the happiness of angels. But now if God be thus all in all; if his will is thus the measure of all things, and all natures; if nothing can be done, but by his power; if nothing can be seen, but by a light from him; if we have nothing to fear, but from his justice; if we have nothing to hope for, but from his goodness; if this is the nature of man, thus helpless in himself; if this is the state of all creatures, as well those in heaven, as those on earth; if they are nothing, can do nothing, can suffer no pain, nor feel any happiness, but so far, and in such degrees, as the power of God does all this: if this be the state of things, then how can we have the least glimpse of joy or comfort, how can we have any peaceful enjoyment of ourselves, but by living wholly unto that God, using and doing every thing conform-

conformably to his will? A life thus devoted unto God, looking wholly unto him in all our actions, and doing all things suitably to his glory, is so far from being dull, and uncomfortable, that it creates new comforts in every thing that we do.

On the contrary, would you see how happy they are who live according to their own wills, who cannot submit to the dull and melancholy business of a life devoted unto God; look at the man in the parable, to whom his

Lord had given one talent?

He could not bear the thoughts of using his talent according to the will of him from whom he had it, and therefore he chose to make himself happier in a way of his own. Lord, says he, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hadst not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth. Lo there thou hast that is thine.

His Lord having convicted him out of his own mouth, dispatches him with this sentence, Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be

weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

Here you see how happy this man made himself by not acting zoholly according to his Lord's will. It was, according to his own account, a happiness of murmuring and discontent; I knew thee, says he, that thou wast an hard man: It was an happiness of fears and apprehensions; I was, says he, afraid: It was

an happiness of vain labours and fruitless travails: I went, says he, and hid thy talent; and after having been a while the sport of foolish passions, tormenting fears, and fruitless labours, he is rewarded with darkness, eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Now this is the happiness of all those, who look upon a *strict* and exalted piety, that is, a right use of their talent, to be a dull and

melancholy state of life.

They may live awhile free from the restraints and directions of Religion, but instead thereof, they must be under the absurd government of their passions: They must like the man in the parable, live in murmurings, and discontents, in fears and apprehensions. They may avoid the labour of doing good, of spending their time devoutly, of laying up treasures in heaven, of cloathing the naked, of visiting the sick; but then they must, like this man, have labours, and pains in vain, that tend to no use or advantage, that do no good either to themselves, or others; they must travail, and labour, and work, and dig to hide their talent in the earth. They must like him, at their Lord's coming, be convicted out of their own mouths, be accus'd by their own hearts, and have every thing that they have said and thought of Religion, be made to shew the justice of their condemnation to eternal darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This is the purchase that they make, who avoid the strictness and perfection of Religion,

in order to live happily.

On the other hand, would you see a short description of the happiness of a life rightly employ'd, wholly devoted to God, you must look at the man in the parable, to whom his Lord had given five talents. Lord, says he, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold I have gain'd besides them five talents more. His Lord said unto him, well done thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

Here you see a life that is wholly intent upon the improvement of the talents, that is devoted wholly unto God, is a state of happiness, prosperous labours, and glorious success. Here are not, as in the former case, any uneasy passions, murmurings, vain fears, and fruitless labours. The man is not toiling, and digging in the earth for no end or advantage; but his pious labours prosper in his hands, his happiness increases upon him, the blessing of five becomes the blessing of ten talents; and he is receiv'd with a well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

Now as the case of these men in the parable, left nothing else to their choice, but either to be happy in using their gifts to the glory of the Lord, or miserable by using them according to their own humours and fancies; so

the state of Christianity leaves us no other choice.

All that we have, all that we are, all that we enjoy, are only so many talents from God: if we use them to the ends of a pious and holy life, our five talents will become ten, and our labours will carry us into the joy of our Lord; but if we abuse them to the gratifications of our own passions, sacrificing the gifts of God to our own pride and vanity, we shall live here in vain labours and foolish anxieties, shunning Religion as a melancholy thing, accusing our Lord as a hard master, and then fall into everlasting misery.

We may for a while amuse our selves with names, and sounds, and shadows of happiness; we may talk of this or that greatness and dignity; but if we desire real happiness, we have no other possible way to it, but by improving our talents, by so holily and piously using the powers and faculties of men in this present state, that we may be happy and glorious in the powers and faculties of angels

in the world to come.

How ignorant therefore are they, of the nature of Religion, of the nature of man, and the nature of God, who think a life of strict piety and devotion to God, to be a dull uncomfortable state; when it's so plain and certain, that there is neither comfort or joy to be found in any thing else?

#### CHAP. XII

The happiness of a life wholly devoted unto God, farther prov'd, from the vanity, the sensuality, and the ridiculous, poor enjoyments, which they are forc'd to take up with, who live according to their own humours. This represented in various characters

WE may still see more of the happiness of a life devoted unto God, by considering the poor contrivances for happiness, and the contemptible ways of life, which they are thrown into, who are not under the directions of a strict piety, but seeking after hap-

piness by other methods.

If one looks at their lives, who live by no rule but their own humours and fancies; if one sees but what it is, which they call joy, and greatness, and happiness; if one sees how they rejoice, and repent, change and fly from one delusion to another; one shall find great reason to rejoyce, that God hath appointed a straight and narrow way, that leadeth unto life, and that we are not left to the folly of our own minds, or forc'd to take up with such shadows of joy and happiness, as the weakness and folly of the world has invented. I say invented, because those things which make up the joy and happiness of the world, are mere inventions, which have no foundation in

nature

nature and reason, are no way the proper good or happiness of man, no way perfect either his body, or his mind, or carry him to his true end.

As for instance, when a man proposes to be happy in ways of ambition, by raising himself to some imaginary heights above other people; this is truly an invention of happiness which has no foundation in nature, but is as mere a cheat, of our own making, as if a man should intend to make himself happy by

climbing up a ladder.

If a woman seeks for happiness from fine colours or spots upon her face, from jewels and rich cloaths, this is as merely an invention of happiness, as contrary to nature and reason, as if she should propose to make her self happy, by painting a post, and putting the same finery upon it. It is in this respect that I call these joys and happiness of the world, mere inventions of happiness, because neither God nor nature, nor reason, hath appointed them as such; but whatever appears joyful, or great, or happy in them, is entirely created or invented by the blindness and vanity of our own minds.

And it is on these inventions of happiness, that I desire you to cast your eye, that you may thence learn, how great a good Religion is, which delivers you from such a multitude of follies, and vain pursuits, as are the torment and vexation of minds, that wander from their true happiness in God.

Look at Flatus, and learn how miserable they are, who are left to the folly of their

own passions.

Flatus is rich and in health, yet always uneasy, and always searching after happiness. Every time you visit him, you find some new project in his head, he is eager upon it as something that is more worth his while, and will do more for him, than any thing that is already past. Every new thing so seizes him, that if you was to take him from it, he would think himself quite undone. His sanguine temper, and strong passions, promise him so much happiness in every thing, that he is always cheated, and is satisfied with nothing.

At his first setting out in life, fine cloaths was his delight, his enquiry was only after the best Taylors and Peruke-makers, and he had no thoughts of excelling in any thing but dress. He spar'd no expence, but carry'd every nicety to its greatest height. But this happiness not answering his expectations, he left off his Brocades, put on a plain coat, rail'd at fops and beaux, and gave himself up

to gaming with great eagerness.

This new pleasure satisfy'd him for some time, he envy'd no other way of life. But being by the fate of play drawn into a duel, where he narrowly escap'd his death, he left off the dice, and fought for happiness no long-

er amongst the gamesters.

The next thing that seiz'd his wandring imagination, was the diversions of the town; and for more than a twelvemonth, you heard him talk of nothing but Ladies, Drawing-rooms, Birth-nights, Plays, Balls, and Assemblies. But growing sick of these, he had recourse to hard drinking. Here he had many a merry night, and met with stronger joys than any he had felt before. Here he had thoughts of setting up his staff, and looking out no farther; but unluckily falling into a fever, he grew angry at all strong liquors, and took his leave of the happiness of being drunk.

The next attempt after happiness, carry'd him into the field, for two or three years nothing was so happy as bunting; he enter'd upon it with all his soul, and leap'd more hedges and ditches than had ever been known in so short a time. You never saw him but in a green coat; he was the envy of all that blow the horn, and always spoke to his dogs in great propriety of language. If you met him at home in a bad day, you would hear him blow his horn, and be entertain'd with the surprizing accidents of the last noble chase. No sooner had Flatus outdone all the world in the breed and education of his dogs, built new kennels, new stables, and bought a new hunting seat, but he immediately got sight of another happiness, hated the senseless noise and hurry of hunting, gave away his dogs, and

and was for some time after deep in the plea-

sures of building.

Now he invents new kinds of dove-cotes, and has such contrivances in his barns and stables, as were never seen before: He wonders at the dulness of the old builders, is wholly bent upon the improvement of Architecture, and will hardly hang a door in the ordinary way. He tells his friends, that he never was so delighted in anything in his life; that he has more happiness amongst his brick and morter, than ever he had at court; and that he is contriving how to have some little matter to do that way as long as he lives.

The next year he leaves his house unfinish'd, complains to every body of Masons and Carpenters, and devotes himself wholly to the happiness of riding about. After this, you can never see him but on borse-back, and so highly delighted with this new way of life, that he would tell you, give him but his horse and a clean country to ride in, and you might take all the rest to your self. A variety of new saddles and bridles, and a great change of horses, added much to the pleasure of this new way of life. But however, having after some time tir'd both himself and his horses, the happiest thing he could think of next, was to go abroad and visit foreign countries; and there indeed happiness exceeded his imagination, and he was only uneasy that he had begun so fine a life no sooner. The next month

month he return'd home, unable to bear any

longer the impertinence of foreigners.

After this, he was a great student for one whole year; he was up early and late at his Italian grammar, that he might have the happiness of understanding the opera, whenever he should hear one, and not be like those unreasonable people, that are pleased with they don't know what.

Flatus is very ill-natur'd, or otherwise, just as his affairs happen to be when you visit him; if you find him when some project is almost wore out, you will find a peevish ill-bred man; but if you had seen him just as he enter'd upon his riding regimen, or begun to excel in sounding of the horn, you had been saluted with great civility.

Flatus is now at a full stand, and is doing what he never did in his life before, he is reasoning and reflecting with himself. He loses several days, in considering which of his cast-off ways of life he should try again.

But here a new project comes into his relief. He is now living upon herbs, and running about the country, to get himself into as good wind as any running-footman in the king-

dom.

I have been thus circumstantial in so many foolish particulars of this kind of life, because I hope, that every particular folly that you here see, will naturally turn it self into an argument for the wisdom and happiness of a religious life.

If I could lay before you a particular account of all the circumstances of terror and distress, that daily attend a life at sea, the more particular I was in the account, the more I should make you feel and rejoice in the happiness of living upon the land.

In like manner, the more I enumerate the follies, anxieties, delusions, and restless desires which go through every part of a life devoted to human passions, and worldly enjoyments, the more you must be affected with that peace, and rest, and solid content, which religion

gives to the souls of men.

If you but just cast your eye upon a madman, or a fool, it perhaps signifies little or nothing to you; but if you was to attend them for some days, and observe the lamentable madness and stupidity of all their actions, this would be an affecting sight, and would make you often bless your self for the enjoyment of your reason and senses.

Just so, if you are only told in the gross, of the folly and madness of a life devoted to the world, it makes little or no impression upon you; but if you are shown how such people live every day; if you see the continual folly and madness of all their particular actions and designs, this would be an affecting sight, and make you bless God, for having given you a greater happiness to aspire after.

So that *characters* of this kind, the more folly and ridicule they have in them, pro-

vided that they be but natural, are most useful to correct our minds; and therefore are no where more proper than in books of devotion, and practical piety. And as in several cases, we best learn the nature of things, by looking at that which is contrary to them; so perhaps we best apprehend the excellency of wisdom, by contemplating the wild extravagancies of folly.

I shall therefore continue this method a little farther, and endeavour to recommend the happiness of piety to you; by shewing you in some other instances, how miserably and poor-

ly they live, who live without it.

But you will perhaps say, that the ridiculous, restless life of *Flatus*, is not the common state of those who resign themselves up to live by their own humours, and neglect the strict rules of religion; and that therefore it is not so great an argument of the happiness of a religious life, as I would make it.

I answer, that I am afraid it is one of the most general characters in life; and that few people can read it, without seeing something in it that belongs to themselves. For where shall we find that wise and happy man, who has not been eagerly pursuing different appearances of happiness, sometimes thinking it was here, and sometimes there?

And if people were to divide their lives into particular stages, and ask themselves what they were pursuing, or what it was

which 1

which they had chiefly in view, when they were twenty years old, what at twenty-five, what at thirty, what at forty, what at fffty, and so on, till they were brought to their last bed; numbers of people would find, that they had lik'd, and dislik'd, and pursu'd as many different appearances of happiness, as are to be seen in the life of Flatus.

And thus it must necessarily be, more or less, with all those who propose any other happiness, than that which arises from a strict

and regular piety.

But Secondly, let it be granted, that the generality of people are not of such restless, fickle tempers as Flatus; the difference then is only this, Flatus is continually changing and trying something new, but others are content with some one state; they don't leave gaming, and then fall to hunting. But they have so much steadiness in their tempers, that some seek after no other happiness, but that of heaping up riches; others grow old in the sports of the field; others are content to drink themselves to death, without the least enquiry after any other happiness.

Now is there any thing more happy, or reasonable, in such a life as this, than in the life of Flaius? Is it not as great and desirable, as wise and happy, to be constantly changing from one thing to another, as to be nothing else but a gatherer of money, a hunter,

a gamester, or a drunkard, all your life?

Shall religion be look'd upon as a burden, as a dull and melancholy state, for calling men from such happiness as this, to live according to the laws of God, to labour after the perfection of their nature, and prepare themselves for an endless state of joy and glory in the presence of God?

But turn your eyes now another way, and let the trifling joys, the gugaw-happiness of Feliciana, teach you how wise they are, what delusion they escape, whose hearts and hopes

are fixed upon an happiness in God.

If you was to live with Feliciana but one half year, you would see all the happiness that she is to have as long as she lives. has no more to come, but the poor repetition of that which could never have pleas'd once, but through a littleness of mind, and want of thought.

She is to be again dress'd fine, and keep her visiting-day. She is again to change the colour of her cloaths, again to have a new head, and again put patches on her face. She is again to see who acts best at the play-house, and who sings finest at the opera. She is again to make ten visits in a day, and be ten times in a day trying to talk artfully, easily and politely about nothing.

She is to be again delighted with some new fashion; and again angry at the change of some old one. She is to be again at cards, and gaming at midnight, and again in bed at noon. She is to be again pleas'd with hypo-

critical

critical compliments, and again disturb'datimaginary affronts. She is to be again pleas'd with her good luck at gaming, and again tormented with the loss of her money. She is again to prepare her self for a birth-night; and again see the town full of good company. She is again to hear the cabals and intrigues of the town; again to have secret intelligence of private amours, and early notice of marriages, quarrels, and partings.

If you see her come out of her chariot more briskly than usual, converse with more spirit, and seem fuller of joy than she was last week, it is because there is some surprizing new dress, or new diversion just come to town.

These are all the *substantial* and *regular* parts of *Feliciana*'s happiness; and she never knew a pleasant day in her life, but it was owing to some one, or more, of these things.

It is for this happiness, that she has always been deaf to the reasonings of religion, that her heart has been too gay and chearful to consider what is right or wrong, in regard to eternity; or to listen to the sound of such dull words, as wisdom, piety, and devotion.

It is for fear of losing some of this happiness, that she dares not meditate on the immortality of her soul, consider her relation to God, or turn her thoughts towards those joys, which make Saints and Angels infinitely happy in the presence and glory of God.

But

But now let it here be observ'd, that as poor a round of happiness as this appears, yet most women that avoid the restraints of religion for a gay life, must be content with very small parts of it. As they have not Feliciana's fortune and figure in the world, so they must give away the comforts of a pious life, for a

very small part of her happiness.

And if you look into the world, and observe the lives of those women, whom no arguments can persuade to live wholly unto God, in a wise and pious employment of themselves, you will find most of them to be such, as lose all the comforts of religion, without gaining the tenth part of Feliciana's happiness. They are such as spend their time and fortunes only in mimicking the pleasures of richer people; and rather look and long after, than enjoy those delusions, which are only to be purchas'd by considerable fortunes.

But if a woman of high birth, and great fortune, having read the Gospel, should rather wish to be an under servant in some pious family, where wisdom, piety, and great devotion, directed all the actions of every day; if she should rather wish this, than to live at the top of Feliciana's happiness; I should think her neither mad, nor melancholy; but that she judg'd as rightly of the spirit of the Gospel, as if she had rather wish'd to be poor Lazarus at the gate, than to be the rich man

cloath'd

cloath'd in purple and fine linnen, and faring

sumptuously every day.

But to proceed; would you know what an happiness it is, to be govern'd by the wisdom of religion, and be devoted to the joys and hopes of a pious life, look at the poor condition of Succus, whose greatest happiness, is a good nights rest in bed, and a good meal when he is up. When he talks of happiness, it is always in such expressions, as shews you, that he has only his bed and his dinner in his

thoughts.

This regard to his meals and repose, makes Succus order all the rest of his time with relation to them. He will undertake no business that may hurry his spirits, or break in upon his hours of eating and rest. If he reads, it shall only be for half an hour, because that is sufficient to amuse the spirits; and he will read something that may make him laugh, as rendering the body fitter for its food and rest. Or if he has at any time a mind to indulge a grave thought, he always has recourse to a useful treatise upon the antient cookery. Succus is an enemy to all party-matters, having made it an observation, that there is as good eating amongst the Whigs, as the Tories.

He talks cooly and moderately upon all subjects, and is as fearful of falling into a passion, as of catching cold; being very positive, that they are both equally injurious to the *stomach*. If ever you see him more hot

than ordinary, it is upon some provoking occasion, when the dispute about cookery runs very high, or in the defence of some beloved dish, which has often made him happy. But he has been so long upon these subjects, is so well acquainted with all that can be said on both sides, and has so often answer'd all objections, that he generally decides the matter with great gravity.

Succus is very loyal, and as soon as ever he likes any wine, he drinks the king's health with all his heart. Nothing could put rebellious thoughts into his head, unless he should live to see a *Proclamation* against eating of

Pheasant's eggs.

All the hours that are not devoted either to repose, or nourishment, are look'd upon by Succus as waste or spare time. For this reason he lodges near a coffee-house and a tavern, that when he rises in the morning he may be near the news, and when he parts at night, he may not have far to bed. In the morning you always see him in the same place in the coffeeroom, and if he seems more attentively engag'd than ordinary, it is because some criminal is broke out of Newgate, or some Lady was robb'd last night, but they can't tell where. When he has learnt all that he can, he goes home to settle the matter with the Barber's boy, that comes to shave him.

The next waste-time that lyes upon his hands, is from dinner to supper. And if melancholy thoughts ever come into his head, it

is at this time, when he is often left to himself for an hour or more, and that after the greatest pleasure he knows is just over. He is afraid to sleep, because he has heard, it is not healthful at that time, so that he is forc'd to refuse so welcome a guest.

But here he is soon reliev'd by a settl'd method of playing at cards, till it is time to think of some little nice matter for sup-

per.

After this, Succus takes his glass, talks of the excellency of the English constitution, and praises that Minister the most, who keeps the best table.

On a Sunday night you may sometimes hear him condemning the iniquity of the town rakes; and the bitterest thing that he says against them, is this, that he verily believes, some of them are so abandon'd, as not to have a regular meal, or a sound nights sleep in a week.

At eleven *Succus* bids all good night, and parts in great friendship. He is presently in bed, and sleeps till it is time to go to the coffee-house next morning.

If you was to live with *Succus* for a twelvemonth, this is all that you would see in his life, except a few *curses* and *oaths* that he

uses as occasion offers.

And now I cannot help making this Reflection:

That as I believe the most likely means in the world to inspire a person with true pie-

ĽУ

ty, was to have seen the example of some eminent professor of Religion; so the next thing that is likely to fill one with the same zeal, is to see the *folly*, the *baseness*, and *poor* satisfactions of a life destitute of Religion. As the one excites us to love and admire the wisdom and greatness of Religion, so the other may make us fearful of living without it.

For who can help blessing God for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory, when he sees what variety of folly they sink into, who live without it? Who would not heartily engage in all the labours and exercises of a pious life, be stedfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord; when he sees, what dull sensuality, what poor views, what gross enjoyments they are left to, who seek for happiness in other ways.

So that whether we consider the greatness of Religion, or the littleness of all other things, and the meanness of all other enjoyments, there is nothing to be found in the whole nature of things, for a thoughtful mind to rest upon, but a happiness in the

hopes of Religion.

Consider now with your self how unreasonably it is pretended, that a life of strict piety, must be a dull and anxious state? For can it with any reason be said, that the duties and restraints of Religion must render our lives heavy and melancholy, when they only deprive

deprive us of such happiness, as has been

here laid before you?

Must it be tedious and tiresome to live in the continual exercise of charity, devotion and temperance, to act wisely and virtuously, to do good to the utmost of your power, to imitate the divine perfections, and prepare your self for the enjoyment of God? Must it be dull and tiresome, to be deliver'd from blindness and vanity, from false hopes, and vain fears, to improve in holiness, to feel the comforts of conscience in all your actions, to know that God is your friend, that all must work for your good, that neither life nor death, neither men nor devils can do you any harm; but that all your sufferings and doings, that are offer'd unto God, all your watchings and prayers, and labours of love and charity, all your improvements, are in a short time to be rewarded with everlasting glory in the presence of God; must such a state as this be dull and tiresome, for want of such happiness, as Flatus or Feliciana enjoys?

Now if this cannot be said, then there is no happiness, or pleasure lost, by being strictly pious, nor has the devout man any thing to envy in any other state of life. For all the art and contrivance in the world, without Religion, cannot make more of human life, or carry its happiness to any greater height,

than Flatus or Feliciana have done.

The finest wit, the greatest genius upon earth, if not govern'd by Religion, must be as foolish

foolish, and low and vain in his methods of

happiness, as the poor Succus.

If you was to see a man dully endeavouring all his life to satisfy his thirst, by holding up one and the same *empty cup* to his mouth, you would certainly despise his ignorance.

But if you should see others of brighter parts, and finer understandings, ridiculing the dull satisfaction of one cup, and thinking to satisfy their own thirst by a variety of gilt and golden empty cups; would you think that these were ever the wiser, or happier, or better employ'd, for their finer parts?

Now this is all the difference that you can

see in the happiness of this life.

The dull and heavy soul, may be content with one empty appearance of happiness, and be continually trying to hold one and the same empty cup to his mouth all his life. But then, let the wit, the great scholar, the fine genius, the great statesman, the polite gentleman, lay all their heads together, and they can only shew you, more, and various, empty appearances of happiness; give them all the world into their hands, let them cut and carve as they please, they can only make a greater variety of empty cups.

So that if you don't think it hard to be depriv'd of the pleasures of gluttony for the sake of Religion, you have no reason to think it hard to be restrain'd from any other worldly pleasure. For search as deep, and look as far as you will, there is nothing here to be found,

that is *nobler*, or *greater*, than high eating and drinking, unless you look for it in the wisdom and laws of Religion.

And if all that is in the world, are only so many *empty cups*, what does it signify, which you take, or how many you take, or how

many you have?

If you would but use your self to such meditations as these, to reflect upon the vanity of all orders of life without piety, to consider how all the ways of the world, are only so many different ways of error, blindness, and mistake; you would soon find your heart made wiser and better by it. These meditations would awaken your soul into a zealous desire of that solid happiness, which is only to be found in recourse to God.

Examples of great piety are not now common in the world, it may not be your happiness to live within sight of any, or to have your virtue inflam'd by their light and fervour. But the misery and folly of worldly men, is what meets your eyes in every place, and you need not look far to see, how poorly, how vainly men dream away their lives for

want of religious wisdom.

This is the reason that I have laid before you so many characters of the vanity of a worldly life, to teach you to make a benefit of the corruption of the age, and that you may be made wise, tho' not by the sight of what piety is, yet by seeing what misery and folly reigns, where piety is not.

Ιf

If you would turn your mind to such reflections as these, your own observation would carry this instruction much farther, and all your conversation and acquaintance with the world, would be a daily conviction to you, of the necessity of seeking some greater happiness, than all the poor enjoyments of this world can give.

To meditate upon the perfection of the divine attributes, to contemplate the glories of Heaven, to consider the joys of Saints and Angels living for ever in the brightness and glory of the divine presence; these are the meditations of souls advanced in piety, and

not so suited to every capacity.

But to see and consider the *emptiness* and error of all worldly happiness; to see the *grossness* of sensuality, the *poorness* of pride, the *stupidity* of covetousness, the *vanity* of dress, the *delusion* of honour, the *blindness* of our passions, the *uncertainty* of our lives, and the *shortness* of all worldly projects; these are meditations that are suited to all capacities, fitted to strike all minds; they require no depth of thought, or sublime speculation, but are forc'd upon us by all our senses, and taught us by almost every thing that we see and hear.

Prov. viii. 1. This is that wisdom that crieth, and putteth forth her voice in the streets, that standeth at all our doors, that appealeth to all our senses, teaching us in every thing and every where, by all that we see and all

that we hear, by births and burials, by sickness and health, by life and death, by pains and poverty, by misery and vanity, and by all the changes and chances of life; that there is nothing else for a man to look after, no other end in nature for him to drive at, but a happiness which is only to be found in the hopes and expectations of Religion.

#### CHAP. XIII

That not only a life of vanity, or sensuality, but even the most regular kind of life, that is not govern'd by great devotion, sufficiently shews its miseries, its wants, and emptiness to the eyes of all the world. This represented in various characters

IT is a very remarkable saying of our Lord and Saviour to his disciples in these words: Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. They teach us two things: First, That the dulness and heaviness of men's minds with regard to spiritual matters, is so great, that it may justly be compar'd to the want of eyes and ears.

Secondly, That God has so fill'd every thing and every place with motives and arguments for a godly life, that they who are but so bless'd

bless'd, so happy as to use their eyes and their ears, must needs be affected with them.

Now though this was in a more especial manner, the case of those whose senses were witnesses of the life and miracles and doctrines of our blessed Lord, yet is it as truly the case of all Christians at this time. For the reasons of Religion, the calls to piety, are so written and engrav'd upon every thing, and present themselves so strongly, and so constantly to all our senses in every thing that we meet; that they can only be disregarded by eyes that see not, and ears that hear not.

What greater motive to a religious life, than the vanity, the poorness of all worldly enjoyments? And yet who can help seeing

and feeling this every day of his life?

What greater *call* to look towards God, than the pains, the sickness, the *crosses*, and vexations of this life; and yet whose eyes and ears are not daily witnesses of them?

What *miracles* could more strongly appeal to our senses, or what message from heaven speak louder to us, than the *daily dying* and departure of our fellow-creatures does?

So that the one thing needful, or the great end of life, is not left to be discover'd by fine reasoning, and deep reflections; but is press'd upon us in the plainest manner, by the experience of all our senses, by every thing that we meet with in life.

Let us but *intend* to *see* and *hear*, and then the whole world becomes a book of wis-

dom and instruction to us; all that is regular in the order of nature, all that is accidental in the course of things, all the mistakes and disappointments that happen to our selves, all the miseries and errors that we see in other people; become so many plain lessons of advice to us; teaching us with as much assurance as an Angel from Heaven, that we can no ways raise our selves to any true happiness, but by turning all our thoughts, our wishes, and endeavours, after the happiness of another life.

It is this right use of the world, that I would lead you into, by directing you to turn your eyes upon every shape of human folly, that you may thence draw fresh arguments and motives of living to the best and greatest

purposes of your creation.

And if you would but carry this intention about you, of profiting by the follies of the world, and of learning the greatness of Religion, from the littleness and vanity of every other way of life; if I say, you would but carry this intention in your mind, you would find, every day, every place, and every person, a fresh proof of their wisdom, who chuse to live wholly unto God. You would then often return home, the wiser, the better, and the more strengthen'd in Religion, by every thing that has fallen in your way.

Octavius is a learned, ingenious man, well vers'd in most parts of literature, and no stranger to any kingdom in Europe. The o-

ther day, being just recover'd from a lingring fever, he took upon him to talk thus to his friends.

My glass, says he, is almost run out; and your eyes see how many marks of age and death I bear about me: But I plainly feel my self sinking away faster than any standers-by imagine. I fully believe, that one year more

will conclude my reckening.

The attention of his friends was much rais'd by such a declaration, expecting to hear something truly excellent from so learned a man, who had but a year longer to live. When Octavius proceeded in this manner: For these reasons, says he, my friends, I have left off all taverns, the wine of those places is not good enough for me in this decay of nature. I must now be nice in what I drink; I can't pretend to do, as I have done; and therefore am resolved to furnish my own cellar with a little of the very best, tho' it cost me ever so much.

I must also tell you, my friends, that age forces a man to be wise in many other respects, and makes us change many of our opi-

nions and practices.

You know how much I have lik'd a large acquaintance; I now condemn it as an error. Three or four chearful, diverting companions, is all that I now desire: because I find, that in my present infirmities, if I am left alone, or to grave company, I am not so easy to myself.

A few days after *Octavius* had made this declaration to his friends, he relapsed into his former illness, was committed to a *nurse*, who clos'd his eyes, before his fresh parcel of wine came in.

Young *Eugenius*, who was present at this discourse, went home a new man, with full resolutions of devoting himself wholly unto God.

I never, says *Eugenius*, was so deeply affected with the wisdom and importance of religion, as when I saw how *poorly* and *meanly* the learned *Octavius* was to leave the world, thro' the want of it.

How often had I envy'd his great learning, his skill in languages, his knowledge of antiquity, his address, and fine manner of expressing himself upon all subjects! But when I saw how poorly it all ended, what was to be the last year of such a life, and how foolishly the master of all these accomplishments was then forc'd to talk, for want of being acquainted with the joys and expectations of piety; I was thoroughly convinced, that there was nothing to be envy'd or desir'd, but a life of true piety; nor any thing so poor and comfortless, as a death without it.

Now as the young Eugenius was thus edify'd and instructed in the present case; so if you are so happy as to have any thing of his thoughtful temper, you will meet with variety of instruction of this kind; you will find that arguments for the wisdom and happiness of a

strict

strict piety, offer themselves in all places, and appeal to all your senses in the plainest manner.

You will find, that all the world preaches to an attentive mind; and that if you have but ears to hear, almost every thing you meet,

teaches you some lesson of wisdom.

But now, if to these admonitions and instructions, which we receive from our senses, from an experience of the state of human life; if to these we add the lights of religion, those great truths which the Son of God has taught us; it will be then as much past all doubt, that there is but one happiness for man, as that there is but one God.

For since religion teaches us, that our souls are immortal, that piety and devotion will carry them to an eternal enjoyment of God; and that carnal, worldly tempers will sink them into an everlasting misery with damned spirits; what gross nonsense and stupidity is it, to give the name of joy or happiness to any thing but that, which carries us to this joy

and happiness in God?

Was all to dye with our bodies, there might be some pretence for those different sorts of happiness, that are now so much talked of: but since our all begins at the death of our bodies; since all men are to be immortal either in misery or happiness, in a world entirely different from this; since they are all hastening hence at all uncertainties, as fast as death can cut them down; some in sickness, some in health, some sleeping, some waking, some at midnight

midnight, others at cock-crowing, and all at hours that they know not of; is it not certain, that no man can exceed another in joy and happiness, but so far as he exceeds him in those virtues, which fit him for a happy death?

Cognatus is a sober, regular Clergyman, of good repute in the world, and well esteemed in his parish. All his parishioners say he is an bonest man, and very notable at making a bargain. The farmers listen to him with great attention, when he talks of the properest time of selling corn.

He has been for twenty years a diligent observer of *markets*, and has raised a considera-

ble fortune by good management.

Cognatus is very orthodox, and full of esteem for our English Liturgy; and if he has not prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays, 'tis because his Predecessor had not used the parish to any such custom.

As he cannot serve both his *livings* himself, so he makes it matter of *conscience* to keep a *sober curate* upon one of them, whom he *hires* to take care of all the souls in the parish, at as cheap a rate as a sober man can be procured.

Cognatus has been very prosperous all his time; but still he has had the uneasiness and vexations that they have, who are deep in worldly business. Taxes, losses, crosses, bad mortgages, bad tenants, and the hardness of the times, are frequent subjects of his conver-

sation

sation; and a good or a bad season has a great

effect upon his spirits.

Cognatus has no other end in growing rich, but that he may leave a considerable fortune to a Niece, whom he has politely educated in expensive finery, by what he has sav'd out of the tithes of two livings.

The neighbours look upon Cognatus as an happy clergyman, because they see him (as they call it) in good circumstances; and some of them intend to dedicate their own sons to the Church, because they see how well it has succeeded with Cognatus, whose father was but

an ordinary man.

But now, if Cognatus, when he first enter'd into holy orders, had perceived how absurd a thing it is to grow rich by the Gospel; if he had proposed to himself the example of some primitive father; if he had had the piety of the great St. Austin in his eye, who durst not enrich any of his relations out of the revenue of the Church: if instead of twenty years' care to lay up treasures upon earth, he had distributed the income of every year in the most Christian acts of charity and compassion.

If instead of tempting his Niece to be proud, and providing her with such ornaments, as the Apostle forbids, he had cloathed, comforted, and assisted numbers of widows, orphans, and distress'd, who were all to appear

for him at the last day.

If instead of the cares and anxieties of bad bonds, troublesome mortgages, and ill bargains,

he had had the constant comfort of knowing, that his treasure was securely laid up, where neither moth corrupteth, nor thieves break through and steal: Could it with any reason be said, that he had mistaken the spirit and dignity of his order, or lessen'd any of that happiness, which is to be found in his sacred employment?

If instead of rejoycing in the happiness of a second *living*, he had thought it as unbecoming the office of a clergyman to *traffick* for gain in *holy things*, as to open a *shop*.

If he had thought it better to recommend some honest labour to his Niece, than to support her in idleness by the labours of a curate; better that she should want fine cloaths, and a rich husband, than that cures of souls should be farm'd about, and brother clergymen not suffered to live by those altars, at which they serve. If this had been the spirit of Cognatus, could it with any reason be said, that these rules of religion, this strictness of piety, had robb'd Cognatus of any real happiness? Could it be said, that a life thus govern'd by the spirit of the Gospel, must be dull and melancholy, if compared to that of raising a fortune for a Niece?

Now as this cannot be said in the present case, so in every other kind of life, if you enter into the particulars of it, you will find, that however easy and prosperous it may seem, yet you cannot add piety to any part of it,

without adding so much of a better joy and happiness to it.

Look now at that condition of life, which

draws the envy of all eyes.

Negotius is a temperate, honest man. He served his time under a master of great trade, but has by his own management made it a more considerable business than ever it was before. For thirty years last past, he has wrote fifty or sixty letters in a week, and is busy in corresponding with all parts of Europe. The general good of trade seems to Negotius to be the general good of life; whomsoever he admires, whatever he commends or condemns either in Church or State, is admired, commended, or condemn'd, with some regard to trade.

As money is continually pouring in upon him, so he often lets it go in various kinds of expence and generosity, and sometimes in

ways of charity.

Negotius is always ready to join in any publick contribution: If a purse is making at any place where he happens to be, whether it be to buy a plate for a horse-race, or to redeem a prisoner out of jayl, you are always sure of having something from him.

He has given a fine *ring* of *bells* to a Church in the country; and there is much expectation, that he will some time or other make a more beautiful *front* to the *market-bouse*, than has yet been seen in any place.

For

For it is the generous spirit of Negotius to do

nothing in a mean way.

If you ask what it is, that has secur'd Negotius from all scandalous vices, it is the same thing that has kept him from all strictness of devotion, it is his great business. He has always had too many important things in his head, his thoughts have been too much employ'd, to suffer him to fall either into any courses of rakery, or to feel the necessity of an inward, solid piety.

For this reason he hears of the pleasures of debauchery, and the pleasures of piety, with the same indifferency; and has no more desire of living in the one than in the other, because neither of them consist with that turn of mind, and multiplicity of business, which are

his happiness.

If Negotius was ask'd, What it is which he drives at in life? he would be as much at a loss for an answer, as if he was ask'd, what any other person is thinking of. For tho' he always seems to himself to know what he is doing, and has many things in his head, which are the motives of his actions; yet he cannot tell you of any one general end of life, that he has chosen with deliberation, as being truly worthy of all his labour and pains.

He has several confus'd notions in his head, which have been a long time there; such as these, viz. That it is something great to have more business than other people, to have more dealings upon his hands than an hundred of

the same profession; to grow continually richer and richer, and to raise an immense fortune before he dies. The thing that seems to give Negotius the greatest life and spirit, and to be most in his thoughts, is an expectation that he has, that he shall dye richer than any of his business ever did.

The generality of people, when they think of happiness, think upon *Negotius*, in whose life every instance of happiness is supposed to meet; sober, prudent, rich, prosperous, generous, and charitable.

Let us now therefore look at this condition

in another, but truer light.

Let it be supposed, that this same *Negotius* was a painful, laborious man, every day deep in variety of affairs; that he neither drank, nor debauched; but was sober and regular in his business. Let it be supposed, that he grew old in this course of trading; and that the *end* and *design* of all this labour, and care, and application to business, was only this, that he might dye possessed of more than an hundred thousand pair of *boots* and *spurs*, and as many great coats.

Let it be supposed, that the sober part of the world say of him when he is dead, that he was a great and happy man, a thorough master of business, and had acquir'd an hundred thousand pair of *boots* and *spurs* when he

dy'd.

Now if this was really the case, I believe it would be readily granted, that a life of such busi-

business was as poor and ridiculous, as any that can be invented. But it would puzzle any one to shew, that a man that has spent all his time and thoughts in business and hurry, than he might dye, as it is said, worth an hundred thousand pounds, is any whit wiser than he, who has taken the same pains to have as many pair of boots and spurs when he leaves the world.

For if the temper and state of our souls be our whole state; if the only end of life be to dye as free from sin, and as exalted in virtue as we can; if naked as we came, so naked are we to return, and to stand a trial before Christ, and his holy angels, for everlasting happiness or misery; what can it possibly signify, what a man had, or had not, in this world? What can it signify what you call those things which a man has left behind him; whether you call them bis, or any one's else; whether you call them trees and fields, or birds and feathers; whether you call them an hundred thousand pounds, or an hundred thousand pairs of boots and spurs? I say, call them; for the things signify no more to him than the names.

Now it is easy to see the folly of a life thus spent, to furnish a man with such a number of boots and spurs. But yet there needs no better faculty of seeing, no finer understanding, to see the folly of a life spent in making a man a possessor of ten towns before he dies.

For

For if when he has got all his towns, or all his boots, his soul is to go to its own place amongst separate spirits, and his body be laid by in a coffin, till the last trumpet calls him to judgment; where the enquiry will be, how bumbly, how devoutly, how purely, how meekly, how piously, how charitably, how heavenly we have spoke, thought, and acted, whilst we were in the body; how can we say, that he who has wore out his life in raising an hundred thousand pounds, has acted wiser for himself, than he who has had the same care to procure an hundred thousand of any thing else?

But farther: Let it now be supposed, that Negotius, when he first entred into business, happening to read the Gospel with attention, and eyes open, found that he had a much greater business upon his hands, than that to which he had served an apprenticeship: that there were things which belong to man, of much more importance than all that our eyes can see; so glorious, as to deserve all our thoughts; so dangerous, as to need all our care; and so certain, as never to deceive the faithful labourer.

Let it be supposed, that from reading this book, he had discovered that his soul was more to him than his body; that it was better to grow in the virtues of the soul, than to have a large body, or a full purse; that it was better to be fit for heaven, than to have variety of fine houses upon the earth; that it

was better to secure an everlasting happiness, than to have plenty of things which he cannot keep; better to live in habits of humility, piety, devotion, charity, and self-denial, than to dye unprepar'd for judgment; better to be most like our Saviour, or some eminent saint, than to excel all the tradesmen in the world, in business and bulk of fortune.

Let it be supposed, that Negotius believing these things to be true, entirely devoted himself to God at his first setting out in the world resolving to pursue his business no farther than was consistent with great devotion, humility, and self-denial; and for no other ends, but to provide himself with a sober subsistance, and to do all the good that he could, to the souls and bodies of his fellowcreatures.

Let it therefore be supposed, that instead of the continual hurry of business, he was frequent in his retirements, and a strict observer of all the hours of prayer; that instead of restless desires after more riches, his soul had been full of the love of God and heavenly affection, constantly watching against worldly tempers, and always aspiring after divine grace; that instead of worldly cares and contrivances, he was busy in fortifying his soul against all approaches of sin; that instead of costly shew, and expensive generosity of a splendid life, he lov'd and exercis'd all instances of humility and lowliness; that instead of great treats and full tables

tables, his house only furnish'd a sober refreshment to those that wanted it.

Let it be suppos'd, that his contentment kept him free from all kinds of envy. That his piety made him thankful to God in all crosses and disappointments. That his charity kept him from being rich, by a continual distribution to all objects of compassion.

Now had this been the christian spirit of Negotius, can any one say, that he had lost the true joy and happiness of life, by thus conforming to the spirit, and living up

to the hopes of the Gospel?

Can it be said, that a life made exemplary by such virtues as these, which keep heaven always in our sight, which both delight and exalt the soul here, and prepare it for the presence of God hereafter, must be *poor* and *dull*, if compar'd to that of heaping up riches, which can neither stay with us, nor we with them?

It would be endless to multiply examples of this kind, to shew you how little is lost, and how much is gain'd, by introducing a strict and exact piety into every condition of human life.

I shall now therefore leave it to your own meditation, to carry this way of thinking farther, hoping that you are enough directed by what is here said, to convince your self, that a true and exalted piety is so far from rendering any life dull and tiresome, that it is

the only joy and happiness of every condition in the world.

Imagine to your self some person in a consumption, or any other lingring distemper, that was incurable.

If you was to see such a man wholly intent upon doing every thing in the spirit of Religion, making the wisest use of all his time, fortune, and abilities. If he was for carrying every duty of piety to its greatest height, and striving to have all the advantage that could be had from the remainder of his life. If he avoided all business, but such as was necessary; if he was averse to all the follies and vanities of the world, had no taste for finery, and shew, but sought for all his comfort in the hopes and expectations of Religion; you would certainly commend his prudence, you would say that he had taken the right method to make himself as joyful and happy, as any one can be in a state of such infirmity.

On the other hand, if you should see the same person, with trembling hands, short breath, thin jaws, and hollow eyes, wholly intent upon business and bargains, as long as he could speak. If you should see him pleas'd with fine cloaths, when he could scarce stand to be dress'd, and laying out his money in horses and dogs, rather than purchase the prayers of the poor for his soul, which was so soon to be separated from his body, you would certainly condemn him, as a weak silly man.

Now as it is easy to see the reasonableness, the wisdom and happiness of a religious spirit in a *consumptive man*, so if you pursue the same way of thinking, you will as easily perceive the same wisdom and happiness of a pious temper in every other state of life.

For how soon will every man that is in health, be in the state of him that is in a consumption? How soon will he want all the same comforts and satisfactions of Reli-

gion, which every dying man wants?

And if it be wise and happy to live piously, because we have not above a year to live, is it not being more wise, and making our selves more happy, because we may have more years to come? If one year of piety before we die, is so desirable, is not more years of piety much more desirable?

If a man had five fix'd years to live, he could not possibly think at all, without intending to make the best use of them all. When he saw his stay so short in this world, he must needs think that this was not a world for him; and when he saw how near he was to another world, that was eternal, he must surely think it very necessary to be very diligent in preparing himself for it.

Now as reasonable as piety appears in such a circumstance of life, it is yet more reasonable in every circumstance of life, to every

thinking man.

For who but a madman, can reckon that he

has five years certain to come?

And if it be reasonable and necessary to deny our worldly tempers, and live wholly unto God, because we are *certain* that we are to die at the end of *five years*; surely it must be much more reasonable and necessary, for us to live in the same spirit, because we have no *certainty*, that we shall live *five weeks*.

Again, if we were to add twenty years to the five, which is in all probability more than will be added to the lives of many people who are at man's estate; what a poor thing is this! how small a difference is there between

five, and twenty-five years?

'It is said, that a *day* is with God as a *thousand years*, and a thousand years as one day; because in regard to his eternity, this

difference is as nothing.

Now as we are all created to be *eternal*, to live in an endless succession of ages upon ages, where *thousands*, and *millions of thousands* of years, will have no proportion to our everlasting life in God; so with regard to this eternal state, which is our real state, twenty-five *years* is as poor a pittance as twenty-five *days*.

Now we can never make any true judgment of time as it relates to us, without considering the true state of our *duration*. If we are *temporary* beings, then a little time, may justly be call'd a great deal in relation to us,

but

but if we are eternal beings, then the diffe-

rence of a few years is as nothing.

If we were to suppose three different sorts of rational beings, all of different, but fix'd duration, one sort that liv'd certainly only a month, the other a year, and the third anhundred years.

Now if these beings were to meet together, and talk about time, they must talk in a very different language; half an hour to those that were to live but a month, must be a very different thing, to what it is to those, who are

to live an hundred years.

As therefore time is thus a different thing with regard to the state of those who enjoy it, so if we would know what time is with regard to our selves, we must consider our state.

Now since our eternal state, is as certainly ours, as our present state; since we are as certainly to live for ever, as we now live at all; it is plain, that we cannot judge of the value of any particular time, as to us, but by comparing it to that eternal duration for which we are created.

If you would know, what five years signify to a being that was to live an hundred, you must compare five to an hundred, and see what proportion it bears to it, and then you will judge right.

So if you would know, what twenty years signify to a son of Adam, you must compare

it, not to a *million* of ages, but to an *eternal* duration, to which no number of millions bears any proportion; and then you will judge

right, by finding it nothing.

Consider therefore this; how would you condemn the folly of a man, that should lose his share of future glory, for the sake of being rich, or great, or prais'd, or delighted in any enjoyment, only one poor day before he was to die!

But if the time will come, when a number of years will seem less to every one, than a day does now; what a condemnation must it then be, if eternal happiness should appear to be lost, for something less than the enjoyment of a day!

Why does a day seem a trifle to us now? It is because we have years to set against it. It is the duration of years, that

makes it appear as nothing.

What a *trifle* therefore must the years of a *man's age* appear, when they are forc'd to be set against *eternity*, when there shall be nothing but eternity to compare them with!

Now this will be the case of every man, as soon as he is out of the body; he will be forc'd to forget the distinctions of days and years, and to measure time, not by the course of the Sun, but by setting it against eternity.

As the fix'd stars, by reason of our being plac'd at such distance from them, appear but as so many points; so when we, plac'd in eternity, shall look back upon all time, it will all appear but as a moment.

Then, a luxury, an indulgence, a prosperity, a greatness of fifty years, will seem to every one that looks back upon it, as the same poor short enjoyment, as if he had

been snatch'd away in his first sin.

These few reflections upon time, are only to shew how poorly they think, how miserably they judge, who are less careful of an eternal state, because they may be at some years distance from it, than they would be, if they knew they were within a few weeks of it.

#### CHAP. XIV

Concerning that part of Devotion which relates to times and hours of Prayer. Of daily early prayer in the morning. How we are to improve our forms of Prayer, and how to increase the spirit of devotion

HAVING in the foregoing Chapters shewn the necessity of a devout spirit, or habit of mind in every part of our common

life, in the discharge of all our business, in the use of all the gifts of God: I come now to consider that part of devotion, which re-

lates to times and hours of prayer.

I take it for granted, that every Christian, that is in health, is up early in the morning; for it is much more reasonable to suppose a person up early, because he is a Christian, than because he is a labourer, or a tradesman, or a servant, or has business that wants him.

We naturally conceive some abhorrence of a man that is in *bed*, when he should be at his *labour*, or in his *shop*. We can't tell how to think any thing good of him, who is such a slave to drowsiness, as to neglect his busi-

ness for it.

Let this therefore teach us to conceive, how odious we must appear in the sight of heaven, if we are in *bed*, shut up in *sleep* and *darkness*, when we should be praising God; and are such slaves to drowsiness, as to neglect our devotions for it.

For if he is to be blam'd as a slothful drone, that rather chuses the lazy indulgence of sleep, than to perform his proper share of worldly business; how much more is he to be reproach'd, that had rather lie folded up in a bed, than be raising up his heart to God in acts of praise and adoration?

Prayer is the nearest approach to God, and the highest enjoyment of him, that we are

capable of in this life.

It is the noblest exercise of the soul, the most exalted use of our best faculties, and the highest imitation of the blessed inhabitants

of heaven.

When our hearts are full of God, sending up holy desires to the throne of grace, we are then in our highest state, we are upon the utmost heights of human greatness; we are not before *kings* and *princes*, but in the presence and audience of the *Lord* of all the world, and can be no higher, till death is swallow'd up in glory.

On the other hand, sleep is the poorest, dullest refreshment of the body, that is so far from being intended as an enjoyment, that we are forc'd to receive it either in a state of in-

sensibility, or in the folly of dreams.

Sleep is such a dull, stupid state of existence, that even amongst mere animals, we despise

them most, which are most drowsy.

He therefore that chuses to enlarge the slothful indulgence of sleep, rather than be early at his devotions to God; chuses the dullest refreshment of the body, before the highest, noblest employment of the soul; he chuses that state, which is a reproach to mere animals, rather than that exercise, which is the glory of Angels.

You will perhaps say, tho' you rise late, yet you are always careful of your devotions:

when you are up.

It may be so. But what then? Is it well done of you to rise late, because you pray when

when you are up? Is it pardonable to waste great part of the day in bed, because some

time after you say your prayers?

It is as much your duty to rise to pray, as to pray when you are risen. And if you are late at your prayers, you offer to God the prayers of an idle, slothful worshipper, that rises to prayers, as idle servants rise to their labour.

Farther, if you fancy that you are careful of your devotions, when you are up, though it be your custom to rise late, you deceive your self; for you cannot perform your devotions as you ought. For he that cannot deny himself this drowsy indulgence, but must pass away good part of the morning in it, is no more prepared for prayer when he is up, than he is prepared for fasting, abstinence, or any other self-denial. He may indeed more easily read over a form of prayer, than he can perform these duties; but he is no more disposed to enter into the true spirit of prayer, than he is disposed to fasting. For sleep thus indulged, gives a softness and idleness to all our tempers, and makes us unable to relish any thing, but what suits with an idle state of mind, and gratifies our natural tempers, as sleep does. So that a person that is a slave to this idleness, is in the same temper when he is up; and though he is not asleep, yet he is under the effects of it; and every thing that is idle, indulgent, or sensual, pleases him for the same reason that sleep pleases him; and

on the other hand, every thing that requires care, or trouble, or self-denial, is hateful to him, for the same reason that he hates to rise. He that places any happiness in this morning indulgence, would be glad to have all the day made happy in the same manner; though not with sleep, yet with such enjoyments as gratify and indulge the body in the same manner as sleep does; or at least, with such as come as near to it as they can. The remembrance of a warm bed is in his mind all the day, and he is glad when he is not one of those that sit starving in a Church.

Now you don't imagine, that such a one can truly mortify that body which he thus indulges; yet you might as well think this, as that he can truly perform his devotions; or live in such a drowsy state of indulgence, and

yet relish the joys of a spiritual life.

For surely, no one will pretend to say, that he knows and feels the true happiness of prayer, who does not think it worth his while to be *early* at it.

It is not possible in nature, for an *Epicure* to be truly devout; he must renounce this habit of sensuality, before he can relish the

happiness of devotion.

Now he that turns sleep into an *idle indul*gence, does as much to corrupt and disorder his soul, to make it a slave to bodily appetites, and keep it incapable of all devout and heavenly tempers, as he that turns the necessities of eating, into a course of indul-

gence.

A person that eats and drinks too much, does not feel such effects from it, as those do, who live in notorious instances of gluttony and intemperance; but yet his course of indulgence, though it be not scandalous in the eyes of the world, nor such as torments his own conscience, is a great and constant hindrance to his improvement in virtue; it gives him eyes that see not, and ears that hear not; it creates a sensuality in the soul, increases the power of bodily passions, and makes him incapable of entring into the true spirit of Religion.

Now this is the case of those who waste their time in sleep; it does not disorder their lives, or wound their consciences, as notorious acts of intemperance do; but like any other more moderate course of indulgence, it silently, and by smaller degrees, wears away the spirit of Religion, and sinks the soul into a

state of dulness and sensuality.

If you consider devotion only as a *time* of so much prayer, you may perhaps perform it, though you live in this daily indulgence: But if you consider it as a *state* of the heart, as a *lively fervour* of the soul, that is deeply affected with a sense of its own misery and infirmities, and desiring the spirit of God more than all things in the world, you will find that the spirit of indulgence, and the spirit of prayer, cannot subsist together. Mortification

cation, of *all kinds*, is the very life and soul of piety; but he that has not so small a degree of it, as to be able to be early at his prayers, can have no reason to think that he has taken up his cross, and is following Christ.

What conquest has he got over himself? What right hand has he cut off? What trials is he prepar'd for? What sacrifice is he ready to offer unto God; who cannot be so cruel to himself, as to rise to prayer at such time, as the drudging part of the world are content to rise to their labour.

Some people will not scruple to tell you, that they indulge themselves in sleep, because they have nothing to do; and that if they had either business or pleasure to rise to, they would not lose so much of their time in sleep. But such people must be told, that they mistake the matter; that they have a great deal of business to do; they have a harden'd heart to change; they have the whole spirit of Religion to get. For surely, he that thinks devotion to be of less moment than business or pleasure; or that he has nothing to do, because nothing but his prayers want him, may be justly said to have the whole spirit of Religion to seek.

You must not therefore consider, how small a crime it is to *rise late*, but you must consider how great a misery it is to want the *spirit* of Religion; to have a heart not rightly affected with prayer; and to live in such soft-

ness and idleness, as makes you incapable of the most fundamental duties of a truly christian and spiritual life.

This is the right way of judging of the crime of wasting great part of your time in

bed.

You must not consider the thing barely in it self, but what it proceeds from; what virtues it shews to be wanting; what vices it naturally strengthens. For every habit of this kind discovers the *state* of the soul, and plainly shews the *whole turn* of your mind.

If our blessed Lord used to pray early before day; if he spent whole nights in prayer; if the devout *Anna* was day and night in the temple; if St. *Paul* and *Silas* at midnight sang praises unto God; if the *primitive Christians*, for several hundred years, besides their hours of prayer in the day-time, met publickly in the Churches at *midnight*, to join in Psalms and Prayers, is it not certain that these practices shew'd the *state* of their heart? Are they not so many plain proofs of the *whole turn* of their minds?

And if you live in a contrary state, wasting great part of every day in sleep, thinking any time soon enough to be at your prayers; is it not equally certain, that this practice as much shews the state of your heart, and the whole turn of your mind?

So that if this indulgence is your way of life, you have as much reason to believe your self destitute of the true spirit of devotion,

as you have, to believe the Apostles and Saints of the Primitive Church were truly devout. For as their way of life was a demonstration of their devotion, so a contrary way of life is as strong a proof of a want of devotion.

When you read the Scriptures, you see a Religion that is all *life*, and *spirit*, and *joy* in God; that supposes our souls risen from earthly desires, and bodily indulgences, to prepare for another body, another world, and other enjoyments. You see christians represented as temples of the holy Ghost, as children of the day, as candidates for an eternal crown, as watchful virgins, that have their lamps always burning, in expectation of the bridegroom. But can he be thought to have this joy in God, this care of eternity, this watchful spirit, who has not zeal enough to rise to his prayers?

When you look into the writings and lives of the first christians, you see the same spirit that you see in the Scriptures. All is reality, life, and action. Watching and prayers, selfdenial and mortification, was the common

business of their lives.

From that time to this, there has been no person like them, eminent for piety, who has not, like them, been eminent for self-denial and mortification. This is the only royal way that leads to a kingdom.

But how far are you from this way of life, or rather how contrary to it, if instead of imitating their austerity and mortification,

you can't so much as renounce so poor an indulgence, as to be able to rise to your prayers? If self-denials and bodily sufferings, if watchings and fastings, will be marks of glory at the day of Judgment, where must we hide our heads, that have slumber'd away our time in sloth and softness?

You perhaps now find some pretences, to excuse your self from that severity of fasting and self-deniai, which the first christians practis'd. You fancy that human nature is grown weaker, and that the difference of *Climates*, may make it not possible for you to observe their methods of self-denial and austerity, in these colder countries.

But all this is but pretence; for the change is not in the outward state of things, but in the inward state of our minds. When there is the same spirit in us, that there was in the Apostles and primitive Christians, when we feel the weight of Religion, as they did, when we have their faith and hope, we shall take up our cross, and deny our selves, and live in such methods of mortification as they did.

Had St. Paul liv'd in a cold countrey, had he had a constitution made weak with a sickly stomach, and often infirmities, he would have done as he advis'd Timothy, he would have mix'd a little wine with his water.

But still he would have liv'd in a state of self-denial and mortification. He would have given this same account of himself. I there-

fore

fore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it unto subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I

my self should be a cast-away.

After all, let it now be suppos'd, that you imagine there is no necessity for you to be so sober and vigilant, so fearful of your self, so watchful over your passions, so apprehensive of danger, so careful of your salvation, as the Apostles were. Let it be suppos'd, that you imagine that you want less self-denial and mortification, to subdue your bodies, and purify your souls, than they wanted; that you need not have your loins girt, and your lamps burning as they had, will you therefore live in a quite contrary state? Will you make your life as constant a course of softness and indulgence, as theirs was of strictness and self-denial.

If therefore, you should think that you have time sufficient, both for prayer and other duties, though you rise late; yet let me persuade you to rise early, as an instance of self-denial. It is so small a one, that if you cannot comply with it, you have no reason to think your self capable of any other.

If I was to desire you, not to study the gratifications of your *palate*, in the niceties of meats and drinks, I would not insist much upon the crime of wasting your money in such a way, though it be a great one; but I

would

would desire you to renounce such a way of life, because it supports you in such a state of sensuality and indulgence, as renders you incapable of relishing the most essential doctrines

of Religion.

For the same reason, I don't insist much on the crime of wasting so much of your time in sleep, though it be a great one; but I desire you to renounce this indulgence, because it gives a softness and idleness to your soul; and is so contrary to that lively, zealous, watchful, self-denying spirit, which was not only the spirit of Christ and his Apostles, the spirit of all the saints and martyrs which have ever been amongst men, but must be the spirit of all those who would not sink in the common corruption of the world.

Here therefore, we must fix our charge against this practice; we must blame it, not as having this or that particular evil, but as a general habit, that extends it self through our whole spirit, and supports a state of mind

that is wholly wrong.

It is contrary to piety; not as accidental slips and mistakes in life are contrary to it, but in such a manner, as an ill habit of body

is contrary to health.

On the other hand, if you was to rise early every morning, as an instance of self-denial, as a method of renouncing indulgence, as a means of redeeming your time, and fitting your spirit for prayer, you would find mighty advantages from it. This method, though

1t

it seems such a small circumstance of life, would in all probability be a means of great piety. It would keep it constantly in your head, that softness and idleness were to be avoided, that self-denial was a part of Christianity. It would teach you to exercise power over yourself, and make you able by degrees to renounce other pleasures and tempers that war against the soul.

This one rule would teach you to think of others; it would dispose your mind to exactness, and be very likely to bring the remaining part of the day, under rules of prudence

and devotion.

But above all, one certain benefit from this method you will be sure of having, it will best fit and prepare you for the reception of the holy Spirit. When you thus begin the day in the spirit of religion, renouncing sleep, because you are to renounce softness, and redeem your time; this disposition, as it puts your heart into a good state, so it will procure the assistance of the holy Spirit; what is so planted and watered, will certainly have an increase from God. You will then speak from your heart, your soul will be awake, your prayers will refresh you like meat and drink, you will feel what you say, and begin to know what saints and holy men have meant, by fervours of devotion.

He that is thus prepared for prayer, who rises with these dispositions, is in a very different state from him, who has no rules of this

kind

kind; who rises by chance, as he happens to be weary of his bed, or is able to sleep no longer. If such a one prays only with his mouth; if his heart feels nothing of that which he says; if his prayers are only things of course; if they are a lifeless form of words, which he only repeats because they are soon said, there is nothing to be wondred at in all this: for such dispositions are the natural effect of such a state of life.

Hoping therefore, that you are now enough convinced of the necessity of rising early to your prayers, I shall proceed to lay before you

a method of daily prayer.

I don't take upor me to prescribe to you the use of any particular forms of prayer, but only to shew you the necessity of praying at

such times, and in such a manner.

You will here find some helps, how to furnish yourself with such *forms* of prayer, as shall be useful to you. And if you are such a proficient in the spirit of devotion, that your heart is always ready to pray in its own language, in this case I press no necessity of borrow'd forms.

For tho' I think a form of prayer very necessary and expedient for publick worship, yet if any one can find a better way of raising his heart unto God in private, than by prepared forms of prayer, I have nothing to object against it; my design being only to assist and direct such as stand in need of assistance.

Thus much, I believe, is certain, that the generality of Christians ought to use forms of prayer, at all the regular times of prayer. It seems right for every one to begin with a form of prayer; and if in the midst of his devotions, he finds his heart ready to break forth into new and higher strains of devotion, he should leave his form for a while, and follow those fervours of his heart, till it again wants the assistance of his usual petitions.

This seems to be the true liberty of private devotion; it should be under the direction of some form; but not so ty'd down to it, but that it may be free to take such new expressions, as its present fervours happen to furnish it with; which sometimes are more affecting, and carry the soul more powerfully to God, than any expressions that were ever used be-

fore.

All people that have ever made any reflections upon what passes in their own hearts, must know that they are mighty changeable in regard to devotion. Sometimes our hearts are so awaken'd, have such strong apprehensions of the divine Presence, are so full of deep compunction for our sins, that we cannot confess them in any language, but that of tears.

Sometimes the light of God's countenance shines so bright upon us, we see so far into the invisible world, we are so affected with the wonders of the love and goodness of God, that our hearts worship and adore in a language

higher

higher than that of words, and we feel transports of devotion, which only can be felt.

On the other hand, sometimes we are so sunk into our bodies, so dull and unaffected with that which concerns our souls, that our hearts are as much too low for our prayers; we cannot keep pace with our forms of confession, or feel half of that in our hearts, which we have in our mouths; we thank and praise God with forms of words, but our hearts have little or no share in them.

It is therefore highly necessary, to provide against this inconstancy of our hearts, by having at hand such forms of prayer, as may best suit us when our hearts are in their best state, and also be most likely to raise and stir them up, when they are sunk into dulness. For as words have a power of affecting our hearts on all occasions, as the same thing differently expressed has different effects upon our minds; so it is reasonable, that we should make this advantage of language, and provide ourselves with such forms of expressions, as are most likely to move and enliven our souls, and fill them with sentiments suitable to them.

The first thing that you are to do, when you are upon your knees, is to shut your eyes, and with a short silence let your soul place it self in the presence of God; that is, you are to use this, or some other better method, to separate yourself from all common thoughts, and make your heart as sensible as you can of

the divine presence.

Now if this recollection of spirit is necessary, as who can say it is not? then how poorly must they perform their devotions, who are always in a *burry*; who begin them in haste, and hardly allow themselves time to repeat their very *form*, with any gravity or attention? Theirs is properly *saying* prayers,

instead of praying.

To proceed; if you was to use yourself (as far as you can) to pray always in the same place; if you was to reserve that place for devotion, and not allow yourself to do any thing common in it; if you was never to be there yourself, but in times of devotion; if any little room, (or if that cannot be) if any particular part of a room was thus used, this kind of consecration of it, as a place holy unto God, would have an effect upon your mind, and dispose you to such tempers, as would very much assist your devotion. For by having a place thus sacred in your room, it would in some measure resemble a chapel, or house of This would dispose you to be always in the spirit of religion, when you was there; and fill you with wise and holy thoughts, when you was by yourself. Your own apartment would raise in your mind such sentiments, as you have, when you stand near an altar; and you would be afraid of thinking or doing any thing that was foolish near that place, which is the place of prayer, and holy intercourse with God.

When you begin your petitions, use such various expressions of the attributes of God, as may make you most sensible of the great-

ness and power of the divine Nature.

Begin therefore in words like these: O Being of all beings, Fountain of all light and glory, gracious Father of men and angels, whose universal Spirit is every where present, giving life, and light, and joy, to all angels in beaven, and all creatures upon earth, &c.

For these representations of the divine Attributes, which shew us in some degree the majesty and greatness of God, are an excellent means of raising our hearts into lively acts of

worship and adoration.

What is the reason that most people are so much affected with this petition in the Burial Service of our Church: Yet, O Lord God most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death? It is, because the joining together so many great expressions, gives such a description of the greatness of the Divine Majesty, as naturally affects every sensible mind.

Altho' therefore prayer does not consist in fine words, or study'd expressions; yet as words speak to the soul, as they have a certain power of raising thoughts in the soul; so those words which speak of God in the highest manner, which most fully express the power and presence of God, which raise thoughts in the soul most suitable to the greatness and providence

of God, are the most useful, and most edify-

ing in our prayers.

When you direct any of your petitions to our blessed Lord, let be in some expressions of this kind: O Saviour of the world, God of God, Light of Light; thou that art the Brightness of thy Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person; thou that art the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End of all things; thou that hast destroyed the power of the devil, that hast overcome death; thou that art entred into the Holy of Holies, that sittest at the right band of the Father, that art high above all thrones and principalities, that makest intercession for all the world; thou that art the judge of the quick and dead; thou that wilt speedily come down in thy Father's glory, to reward all men according to their works, be thou my light and my peace, &c.

For such representations, which describe so many *characters* of our Saviour's nature and power, are not only proper acts of *adoration*, but will, if they are repeated with any attention, fill our hearts with the highest fervours

of true devotion.

Again, if you ask any particular grace of our blessed Lord, let it be in some manner like this:

O holy Jesus, Son of the most high God, thou that wast scourged at a pillar, stretched and nail'd upon a cross, for the sins of the world, unite me to thy cross, ond fill my soul with thy holy, humble, and suffering spirit. O Fountain

of mercy, thou that didst save the thief upon the cross, save me from the guilt of a sinful life; thou that didst cast seven devils out of Mary Magdalene, cast out of my heart all evil thoughts, and wicked tempers. O Giver of life, thou that didst raise Lazarus from the dead, raise up my soul from the death and darkness of sin. Thou that didst give to thy Apostles power over unclean spirits, give me power over my own heart. Thou that didst appear unto thy disciples when the doors were shut, do thou appear unto me in the secret apartment of my heart. Thou that didst cleanse the lepers, heal the sick, and give sight to the blind, cleanse my heart, heal the disorders of my soul, and fill me with heavenly light.

Now these kind of appeals have a double advantage; first, as they are so many proper acts of our *faith*, whereby we not only shew our belief of the *miracles* of Christ, but turn them at the same time into so many instances

of worship and adoration.

Secondly, As they strengthen and increase the faith of our prayers, by presenting to our minds so many instances of that power and goodness, which we call upon for our own assistance.

For he that appeals to Christ, as casting out *devils*, and raising the *dead*, has then a powerful motive in his mind to pray earnestly, and depend faithfully upon his assistance.

Again; In order to fill your prayers with excellent strains of devotion, it may be of use

to you to observe this farther rule:

When

When at any time, either in reading the Scripture, or any book of Piety, you meet with a passage, that more than ordinarily affects your mind, and seems as it were to give your heart a new motion towards God, you should try to turn it into the form of a petition, and then give it a place in your prayers.

By this means, you would be often improving your prayers, and storing yourself with proper forms of making the desires of your

heart known unto God.

At all the *stated hours* of prayer, it will be of great benefit to you, to have something fix'd, and something at *liberty*, in your devotions.

You should have some fix'd subject, which is constantly to be the chief matter of your prayer at that particular time; and yet have liberty to add such other petitions, as your

condition may then require.

For instance; As the morning is to you the beginning of a new life; as God has then given you a new enjoyment of yourself, and a fresh entrance into the world, it is highly proper, that your first devotions should be a praise and thanksgiving to God, as for a new creation; and that you should offer and devote body and soul, all that you are, and all that you have, to his service and glory.

Receive therefore every day, as a resurrection from death, as a new enjoyment of life; meet every rising sun with such sentiments of God's goodness, as if you had seen it, and all things,

new created upon your account; and under the sense of so great a blessing, let your joyful heart praise and magnify so good and glorious a Creator.

Let therefore praise and thanksgiving, and oblation of yourself unto God, be always the fixed and certain subject of your first prayers in the morning; and then take the liberty of adding such other devotions, as the accidental difference of your state, or the accidental difference of your heart, shall then make most needful and expedient for you.

For one of the greatest benefits of *private* devotion, consists in rightly adapting our prayers to these two conditions, the difference of our *state*, and the difference of our *hearts*.

By the difference of our state, is meant the difference of our external state or condition, as of sickness, health, pains, losses, disappointments, troubles, particular mercies or judgments from God; all sorts of kindnesses, injuries or

reproaches from other people.

Now as these are great parts of our state of life, as they make great difference in it, by continually changing; so our devotion will be made doubly beneficial to us, when it watches to receive and sanctify all these *changes* of our state, and turns them all into so many occasions of a more particular application to God, of such thanksgivings, such resignation, such petitions, as our present state more especially requires.

And he that makes every change in his state, a reason of presenting unto God some particular petitions suitable to that change, will soon find, that he has taken an excellent means, not only of *praying* with fervour, but

of living as he prays.

The next condition, to which we are always to adapt some part of our prayers, is the difference of our hearts; by which is meant the different state of the tempers of our hearts, as of love, joy, peace, tranquility; dulness and driness of spirit, anxiety, discontent, motions of envy and ambition, dark and disconsolate thoughts, resentments, fretfulness, and peevish tempers.

Now as these tempers, through the weakness of our nature, will have their succession more or less, even in pious minds; so we should constantly make the *present state* of our heart, the reason of some particular application to

God.

If we are in the delightful calm of sweet and easy passions, of *love* and *joy* in God, we should then offer the grateful tribute of thanksgiving to God, for the possession of so much happiness, thankfully owning and acknowledging him as the bountiful Giver of it all.

If on the other hand, we feel ourselves laden with *beavy* passions, with *dulness* of spirit, anxiety and uneasiness, we must then look up to God in acts of humility, confessing our unworthiness, opening our troubles to him, beseeching him in his good time to lessen the weight of our infirmities, and to deliver us

from

from such passions as oppose the purity and

perfection of our souls.

Now by thus watching, and attending to the present state of our hearts, and suiting some of our petitions exactly to their wants, we shall not only be well acquainted with the disorders of our souls, but also be well exercis'd in the method of curing them.

By this prudent and wise application of our prayers, we shall get all the relief from them that is possible; and the very *change-ableness* of our hearts, will prove a means of exercising a greater variety of holy tem-

pers.

Now by all that has here been said, you will easily perceive, that persons careful of the greatest benefit of prayer, ought to have a great share in the forming and composing

their own devotions.

As to that part of their prayers, which is always fix'd to one certain subject, in that they may use the help of forms compos'd by other persons; but in that part of their prayers, which they are always to suit to the present state of their life, and the present state of their heart, there they must let the sense of their own condition help them to such kinds of petition, thanksgiving, or resignation, as their present state more especially requires.

Happy are they, who have this business

and employment upon their hands!

And now, if people of leisure, whether men, or women, who are so much at a loss how to dispose of their time, who are forc'd into poor contrivances, idle visits, and ridiculous diversions, merely to get rid of hours that hang heavily upon their hands; if such were to appoint some certain spaces of their time, to the study of devotion, searching after all the means and helps to attain a devout If they were to collect the best forms of devotion, to use themselves to transcribe the finest passages of scripture-prayers; if they were to collect the devotions, confessions, petitions, praises, resignations, and thanksgivings, which are scattered up and down in the Psalms, and range them under proper heads, as so much proper fuel for the flame of their own devotion. If their minds were often thus employ'd, sometimes meditating upon them, sometimes getting them by heart, and making them as habitual as their own thoughts, how fervently would they pray, who came thus prepar'd to prayer?

And how much better would it be, to make this benefit of *leisure-time*, than to be dully and idly lost in the poor impertinencies

of a playing, visiting, wandring life?

How much better would it be, to be thus furnish'd with hymns and anthems of the saints, and teach their souls to ascend to God; than to corrupt, bewilder and confound their hearts, with the wild fancies, the lustful thoughts of lewd Poets?

Now

Now though people of leisure seem called more particularly to this study of devotion, yet persons of much business or labour, must not think themselves excus'd from this, or some better method of improving their devotion.

For the greater their business is, the more need they have of some such method as this, to prevent its power over their hearts; to secure them from sinking into worldly tempers, and preserve a sense and taste of heavenly things in their minds. And a little time regularly and constantly employ'd to any one use or end, will do great things, and produce

mighty effects.

And it is for want of considering devotion in this *light*, as something that is to be nurs'd and cherish'd with care, as something that is to be made part of our business, that is to be improv'd with care and contrivance, by art and method, and a diligent use of the best helps; it is for want of considering it in this light, that so many people are so little benefited by it, and live and die strangers to that spirit of devotion, which by a prudent use of proper means, they might have enjoy'd in a high degree.

For though the spirit of devotion is the gift of God, and not attainable by any *mere* power of our own, yet is it mostly given, and *never withheld*, from those, who by a wise and diligent use of proper means, prepare

themselves for the reception of it.

And

And it is amazing to see, how eagerly men employ their parts, their sagacity, time, study, application and exercise; how all helps are call'd to their assistance, when any thing is intended and desir'd in worldly matters; and how dull, negligent, and unimprov'd they are, how little they use their parts, sagacity, and abilities, to raise and increase their devotion!

Mundanus is a man of excellent parts, and clear apprehension. He is well advanc'd in age, and has made a great figure in business. Every part of trade and business that has fallen in his way, has had some improvement from him; and he is always contriving to carry every method of doing any thing well, to its greatest height. Mundanus aims at the greatest perfection in every thing. The soundness and strength of his mind, and his just way of thinking upon things, makes him intent upon removing all imperfections.

He can tell you all the defects and errors in all the common methods, whether of trade, building, or improving land, or manufactures. The clearness and strength of his understanding, which he is constantly improving, by continual exercise in these matters, by often digesting his thoughts in writing, and trying every thing every way, has render'd him a great master of most concerns in human

life.

Thus has *Mundanus* gone on, increasing his *knowledge* and *judgment*, as fast as his years came upon him.

The

The one only thing which has not fallen under his improvement, nor receiv'd any benefit from his judicious mind, is his devotion: This is just in the same poor state it was, when he was only six years of age; and the old man prays now, in that little form of words, which his mother us'd to hear him repeat night and

morning.

This Mundanus, that hardly ever saw the poorest utensil, or ever took the meanest trifle into his hand, without considering how it might be made, or us'd to better advantage, has gone all his life long praying in the same manner, as when he was a child; without ever considering how much better, or oftner he might pray; without considering how improveable the spirit of devotion is, how many helps a wise and reasonable man may call to his assistance, and how necessary it is, that our prayers should be enlarg'd, vary'd, and suited to the particular state and condition of our lives.

If *Mundanus* sees a book of *devotion*, he passes it by, as he does a *spelling-book*, because he remembers that he learn'd to *pray* so many years ago under his *mother*, when he learnt to spell.

Now how poor and pitiable is the conduct of this man of sense, who has so much judgment and understanding in every thing, but that which is the whole wisdom of man?

And how miserably do many people, more or less imitate this conduct?

All

All which seems to be owing to a strange infatuated state of negligence, which keeps people from considering what devotion is. For if they did but once proceed so far, as to reflect about it, or ask themselves any questions concerning it, they would soon see, that the spirit of devotion was like any other sense or understanding, that is only to be improv'd by study, care, application, and the use of such means and helps, as are necessary to make a man a proficient in any art, or science.

Classicus is a man of learning, and well vers'd in all the best authors of antiquity. He has read them so much, that he has enter'd into their spirit, and can very ingeniously imitate the manner of any of them. All their thoughts are his thoughts, and he can express himself in their language. He is so great a friend to this improvement of the mind, that if he lights of a young scholar, he never fails to advise him concerning his studies.

Classicus tells his young man, he must not think that he has done enough, when he has only learnt languages; but that he must be daily conversant with the best authors, read them again and again, catch their spirit by living with them, and that there is no other way of becoming like them, or of making himself a man of taste and judgment.

How wise might Classicus have been, and how much good might he have done in

the world, if he had but thought as justly of

devotion, as he does of learning?

He never, indeed, says any thing shocking or offensive about devotion, because he never thinks, or talks about it. It suffers nothing from him, but neglect and disregard.

The two Testaments would not have had so much as a place amongst his Books, but

that they are both to be had in Greek.

Classicus thinks that he sufficiently shews his regard for the holy Scripture, when he tells you, that he has no other Books of piety besides them.

It is very well, *Classicus*, that you prefer the Bible to all other Books of piety; he has no judgment, that is not thus far of your

opinion.

But if you will have no other book of piety besides the Bible, because it is the best, How comes it, Classicus, that you don't content your self with one of the best Books amongst the Greeks and Romans? How comes it that you are so greedy and eager after all of them? How comes it that you think the knowledge of one is a necessary help to the knowledge of the other? How comes it that you are so earnest, so laborious, so expensive of your time and money, to restore broken periods, and scraps of the ancients?

How comes it that you read so many Commentators upon Cicero, Horace, and Homer, and not one upon the Gospel? How comes it that you love to read a man? How comes it that your love of Cicero, and Ovid, makes you love to read an author that writes like them; and yet your esteem for the Gospel gives you no desire, nay, prevents your reading such Books, as breathe the very spirit of the Gospel?

How comes it that you tell your young scholar, he must not content himself with barely understanding his authors, but must be continually reading them all, as the only means of entering into their spirit, and forming his own judgment according to them?

Why then must the Bible lye alone in your study? Is not the spirit of the saints, the piety of the holy followers of Jesus Christ, as good and necessary a means of entering into the spirit and taste of the Gospel, as the reading of the antients is of entering into the spirit of antiquity?

Is the spirit of poetry only to be got by much reading of Poets and Orators? And is not the spirit of devotion to be got in the same way, by frequent reading the holy thoughts, and pious strains of devout men?

Is your young Poet to search after every line, that may give new wings to his fancy, or direct his imagination? And is it not as reasonable for him, who desires to improve in the divine life, that is, in the love of heavenly things, to search after every strain of devotion, that may move, kindle, and inflame the holy ardour of his soul?

Do you advise your *Orator* to translate the best Orations, to commit much of them to memory, to be frequently exercising his talent in this manner, that habits of thinking and speaking justly may be form'd in his mind? And is there not the same benefit and advantage to be made by books of devotion? Should not a man use them in the same way, that habits of devotion, and aspiring to God in holy thoughts, may be well form'd in his soul?

Now the reason why Classicus does not think and judge thus reasonably of devotion, is owing to his never thinking of it in any other manner, than as the repeating a form of words. It never in his life enter'd into his head, to think of devotion as a state of the heart, as an improveable talent of the mind, as a temper that is to grow and increase like our reason and judgment, and to be form'd in us by such a regular diligent use of proper means, as are necessary to form any other wise habit of mind.

And it is for want of this, that he has been content all his life, with the *bare letter* of Prayer, and eagerly bent upon entering into

the spirit of heathen poets and orators.

And it is much to be lamented, that numbers of scholars are more or less chargeable with this excessive folly; so negligent of improving their devotion, and so desirous of other poor accomplishments, as if they thought it a nobler talent, to be able to write an epigram in the turn of Martial, than to live,

and

and think, and pray to God, in the spirit of St. Austin.

And yet, to correct this temper, and fill a man with a quite contrary spirit, there seems to be no more requir'd, than the *bare* belief

of the truth of Christianity.

And if you was to ask *Mundanus*, and *Classicus*, or any man of business, or learning, whether *piety* is not the highest perfection of man, or *devotion* the greatest attainment in the world, they must both be forced to answer in the affirmative, or else give up the truth of the Gospel.

For to set any accomplishment against devotion, or to think any thing, or all things in the world, bears any proportion to its excellency; is the same absurdity in a Christian, as it would be in a *Philosopher* to prefer a *meals meat*, to the greatest improvement in know-

ledge.

For as *Philosophy* professes purely the search and enquiry after knowledge, so *Christianity* supposes, intends, desires and aims at nothing else, but the raising fallen man to a divine life, to such habits of holiness, such degrees of devotion, as may fit him to enter amongst the holy inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven.

He that does not believe this of Christianity, may be reckon'd an infidel; and he that believes thus much, has *faith* enough to give him a right *judgment* of the *value* of things, to support him in a *sound mind*, and enable him

him to conquer all the temptations which the world shall lay in his way.

To conclude this Chapter. Devotion is nothing else, but right apprehensions, and right

affections towards God.

All practices therefore that heighten and improve our true apprehensions of God, all ways of life that tend to *nourish*, *raise*, and fix our affections upon him, are to be reckon'd so many helps and means to fill us with devotion.

As Prayer is the proper fuel of this holy flame, so we must use all our care and contrivance to give prayer its full power; as by alms, self-denial, frequent retirements, and holy readings, composing forms for our selves, or using the best we can get, adding length of time, and observing hours of Prayer; changing, improving, and suiting our devotions to the condition of our lives, and the state of our hearts.

Those who have most leisure, seem more especially call'd to a more eminent observance of these holy rules of a devout life. And they who by the necessity of their state, and not through their own choice, have but little time to employ thus, must make the best use of that little they have.

For this is the certain way of making de-

votion produce a devout life.

#### CHAP. XV

Of chanting, or singing of Psalms in our private devotions. Of the excellency and benefit of this kind of devotion. Of the great effects it hath upon our hearts. Of the means of performing it in the best manner

YOU have seen in the foregoing Chapter, what means and methods you are to use, to raise and improve your devotion. How early you are to begin your prayers, and what is to be the subject of your first devotions in the morning.

There is one thing still remaining, that you must be requir'd to observe, not only as fit and proper to be done, but as such as cannot be neglected, without great prejudice to your devotions. And that is, to begin all your

Prayers with a Psalm.

This is so right, is so beneficial to devotion, has so much *effect* upon our hearts, that it may be insisted upon as a *common* rule for all

persons.

I don't mean, that you should read over a Psalm, but that you should chant or sing one of those Psalms, which we commonly call the reading Psalms. For singing is as much the proper use of a Psalm, as devout supplication is the proper use of a form of Prayer. And a

Psalm only read, is very much like a Prayer

that is only look'd over.

Now the method of chanting a Psalm, such as is us'd in the Colleges in the Universities, and in some Churches, is such as all persons are capable of. The change of the voice in thus chanting of a Psalm is so small and natural, that every body is able to do it, and yet sufficient to raise and keep up the gladness of our hearts.

You are therefore to consider this *chanting* of a Psalm, as a necessary beginning of your devotions, as something that is to *awaken* all that is *good* and *holy* within you, that is to call your *spirits* to their proper duty, to set you in your best *posture* towards heaven, and tune all the powers of your soul to worship and

adoration.

For there is nothing that so clears a way for your prayers, nothing that so disperses dulness of heart, nothing that so purifies the soul from poor and little passions, nothing that so opens heaven, or carries your heart so near it, as these songs of praise.

They create a sense and delight in God, they awaken holy desires, they teach you how to ask, and they prevail with God to give. They kindle an *holy* flame, they turn your heart into an *altar*, your prayers into *incense*, and carry them as a sweet-smelling savour to

the throne of Grace.

The difference between singing and reading a Psalm, will easily be understood, if you consi-

consider the difference between reading and singing a common song that you like. Whilst you only read it, you only like it, and that is all; but as soon as you sing it, then you enjoy it, you feel the delight of it, it has got hold of you, your passions keep pace with it, and you feel the same spirit within you, that there seems to be in the words.

If you was to tell a person that has such a song, that he need not sing it, that it was sufficient to peruse it; he would wonder what you mean; and would think you as absurd, as if you was to tell him, that he should only look at his food, to see whether it was good, but need not eat it: For a song of praise not sung, is very like any other good thing not made use of.

You will perhaps say, that singing is a particular talent, that belongs only to particular people, and that you have neither voice nor ear to make any musick.

If you had said that singing is a general talent, and that people differ in that as they do in all other things, you had said something much truer.

For how vastly do people differ in the talent of *thinking*, which is not only common to all men, but seems to be the very essence of human nature? How readily do some people reason upon every thing? and how hardly do others reason upon any thing? How clearly do some people discourse upon the most ab-

struse

struse matters? and how confusedly do others

talk upon the plainest subjects?

Yet no one desires to be excused from thought, or reason, or discourse, because he has not these talents as some people have them. But it is full as just, for a person to think himself excused from thinking upon God, from reasoning about his duty to him, or discoursing about the means of salvation, because he has not these talents in any fine degree; this is full as just, as for a person to think himself excused from singing the praises of God, because he has not a fine ear, or a musical voice.

For as it is *speaking*, and not *graceful* speaking, that is a requir'd part of prayer; as it is *bowing*, and not *genteel* bowing, that is a proper part of adoration; so it is *singing*, and not *artful* fine singing, that is a requir'd way of

praising God.

If a person was to forbear praying, because he had an odd tone in his voice; he would have as good an excuse as he has, that forbears from singing Psalms, because he has but little management of his voice. And as a man's speaking his prayers, tho' in an odd tone, may yet sufficiently answer all the ends of his own devotion; so a man's singing of a Psalm, tho' not in a very musical way, may yet sufficiently answer all the ends of rejoycing in, and praising God.

Secondly, This objection might be of some weight, if you was desired to sing, to enter-

tain other people; but is not to be admitted in the present case; where you are only required to sing the praises of God, as a part of

your own private devotion.

If a person that has a very ill voice, and a bad way of speaking, was desired to be the mouth of a congregation, it would be a very proper excuse for him, to say that he had not a voice, or a way of speaking that was proper for prayer. But he would be very absurd, if for the same reason he should neglect his own private devotions.

Now this is exactly the case of singing Psalms; you may not have the talent of singing, so as to be able to entertain other people, and therefore it is reasonable to excuse your self from it; but if for that reason you should excuse yourself from this way of praising God, you would be guilty of a great absurdity: Because singing is no more requir'd for the musick that is made by it, than prayer is requir'd for the fine words that it contains, but as it is the natural and proper expression of a heart rejoycing in God.

Our blessed Saviour and his apostles sung an hymn; but it may reasonably be supposed, that they rather *rejoiced* in God, than made

fine musick.

Do but so live, that your heart may truly rejoice in God, that it may feel itself affected with the praises of God, and then you will find, that this state of your heart will neither want a voice, nor ear, to find a tune for a

Psalm. Every one at some time or other finds himself able to sing in some degree; there are some times and occasions of joy, that make all people ready to express their sense of it in some sort of harmony. The joy that they feel, forces them to let their voice have a part in it.

He therefore that saith he wants a voice, or an ear, to sing a Psalm, mistakes the case; he wants that *spirit* that really rejoices in God; the dulness is in his *heart*, and not in his *ear*; and when his heart feels a true joy in God, when it has a full relish of what is expressed in the Psalms, he will find it very pleasant, to make the motions of his voice

express the motions of his heart.

Singing indeed, as it is improv'd into an art, as it signifies the running of the voice thro' such or such a compass of notes, and keeping time with a study'd variety of changes, is not natural, nor the effect of any natural state of mind; so in this sense, it is not common to all people, any more than those antick and invented motions which make fine dancing, are common to all people.

But singing, as it signifies a motion of the voice suitable to the motions of the heart, and the changing of its tone according to the meaning of the words which we utter, is as natural and common to all men, as it is to speak *high* when they *threaten* in anger, or to speak *low* when they are *dejected* and ask for a

pardon.

All men therefore are singers, in the same manner as all men think, speak, laugh, and lament. For singing is no more an invention,

than grief or joy are inventions.

Every state of the heart naturally puts the body into some state that is suitable to it, and is proper to shew it to other people. If a man is angry, or disdainful, no one need instruct him how to express these passions by the tone of his voice. The state of his heart disposes him to a proper use of his voice.

If therefore there are but few singers of divine songs, if people want to be exhorted to this part of devotion; it is because there are but few, whose hearts are raised to that height of piety, as to feel any motions of joy

and delight in the praises of God.

Imagine to yourself, that you had been with Moses when he was led thro' the Red Sea; that you had seen the waters divide themselves, and stand on an heap on both sides; that you had seen them held up till you had pass'd thro', then let fall upon your enemies; do you think that you should then have wanted a voice or an ear to have sung with Moses, The Lord is my strength, and my song, and he is become my salvation, &c.? I know, your own heart tells you, that all people must have been singers upon such an occasion. Let this therefore teach you, that it is the heart that tunes a voice to sing the praises of God; and that if you can't sing these same words now with joy, it is because you are not so af-

fected with the salvation of the world by Jesus Christ, as the *Jews* were, or you yourself would have been, with their deliverance at the *Red* sea.

That it is the state of the heart that disposes us to rejoyce in any particular kind of singing, may be easily proved from variety of observations upon human nature. An old debauchee may, according to the language of the world, have neither voice nor ear, if you only sing a Psalm, or a song in praise of virtue to him; but yet if in some easy tune you sing something that celebrates his former debauches, he will then, tho' he has no teeth in his head, shew you, that he has both a voice and an ear to join in such musick. You then awaken his heart, and he as naturally sings to such words, as he laughs when he is pleas'd. And this will be the case in every song that touches the heart; if you celebrate the ruling passion of any man's heart, you put his voice in tune to join with you.

Thus if you can find a man, whose ruling temper is devotion, whose heart is full of God, his voice will rejoice in those songs of praise, which glorify that God, that is the joy of his heart, tho' he has neither voice nor ear for other musick. Would you therefore delightfully perform this part of devotion, it is not so necessary to learn a tune, or practise upon notes, as to prepare your heart; for, as our blessed Lord saith, out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, &c. so it is equally

true, that out of the heart proceed holy joys, thanksgiving and praise. If you can once say with David, My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; it will be very easy and natural to add, as he did, I will sing and give praise, &c.

Secondly, Let us now consider another reason for this kind of devotion. As singing is a natural effect of joy in the heart, so it has also a natural power of rendering the heart

joyful.

The soul and body are so united, that they have each of them power over che another in their actions. Certain thoughts and sentiments in the soul, produce such and such motions or actions in the body; and on the other hand, certain motions and actions of the body, have the same power of raising such and such thoughts and sentiments in the soul. So that as singing is the natural effect of joy in the mind, so it is as truly a natural cause of raising joy in the mind.

As devotion of the heart naturally breaks out into outward acts of prayer, so outward acts of prayer are natural means of raising the

devotion of the heart.

It is thus in all states and tempers of the mind; as the inward state of the mind produces outward actions suitable to it, so those outward actions have the like power of raising an inward state of mind suitable to them.

As anger produces angry words, so angry

words increase anger.

So that if we barely consider human nature, we shall find, that *singing* or *chanting* the Psalms, is as proper and necessary to raise our hearts to a delight in God, as prayer is proper and necessary to excite in us the spirit of devotion. Every reason for one, is in all respects as strong a reason for the other.

If therefore you would know the reason and necessity of singing Psalms, you must consider the reason and necessity of praising and rejoicing in God; because singing of Psalms is as much the true exercise and support of this spirit of thanksgiving, as prayer is the true exercise and support of the spirit of devotion. And you may as well think, that you can be devout as you ought, without the use of prayer, as that you can rejoice in God as you ought, without the practice of singing of Psalms. Because this singing is as much the natural language of praise and thanksgiving, as prayer is the natural language of devotion.

The union of soul and body is not a mixture of their substances, as we see bodies united and mix'd together, but consists solely in the mutual power that they have of acting upon one another.

If two persons were in such a state of dependance upon one another, that neither of them could act, or move, or think, or feel, or suffer, or desire any thing, without putting

th

the other into the same condition, one might properly say, that they were in a state of strict union, although their substances were

not united together.

Now this is the union of the soul and body; the substance of the one cannot be mix'd, or united with the other; but they are held together in such a state of union, that all the actions and sufferings of the one, are at the same time the actions and sufferings of the other. The soul has no thought or passion, but the body is concern'd in it; the body has no action or motion, but what in some degree affects the soul.

Now as it is the sole will of God, that is the reason and cause of all the powers and effects which you see in the world; as the Sun gives light and heat, not because it has any natural power of so doing; as it is fix'd in a certain place, and other bodies moving about it; not because it is in the nature of the Sun to stand still, and in the nature of other bodies to move about it; but merely because it is the will of God, that they should be in such a state. As the eye is the organ, or instrument of seeing, not because the skins, and coats, and bumours of the eye, have a natural power of giving sight: As the ears are the organs, or instruments of hearing; not because the make of the ear has any natural power over sounds, but merely because it is the will of God, that seeing and hearing should be thus receiv'd: So in like manner it

is the sole will of God, and not the nature of a human soul or body, that is the cause of this union betwixt the soul and the body.

Now if you rightly apprehend this short account of the union of the soul and body, you will see a great deal into the reason and necessity of all the outward parts of Re-

ligion.

This union of our souls and bodies, is the reason both why we have so little and so much power over our selves. It is owing to this union, that we have so little power over our souls; for as we cannot prevent the effects of external objects upon our bodies, as we cannot command outward causes, so we cannot always command the inward state of our minds; because, as outward objects act upon our bodies without our leave, so our bodies act upon our minds by the laws of the union of the soul and the body: And thus you see it is owing to this union, that we have so little power over our selves.

On the other hand, it is owing to this union, that we have so *much* power over our selves. For as our souls in a great measure depend upon our bodies; and as we have great power over our bodies, as we can command our outward actions, and oblige our selves to such habits of life, as naturally produce habits in the soul; as we can mortify our bodies, and remove our selves from objects that inflame

inflame our passions; so we have a great power over the *inward* state of our souls. Again, as we are masters of our outward actions; as we can force our selves to outward acts of reading, praying, singing, and the like; and as all these bodily actions have an effect upon the soul, as they naturally tend to form such and such tempers in our hearts; so by being masters of these outward, bodily actions, we have great power over the inward state of the heart.

And thus it is owing to this union, that we have so much power over our selves.

Now from this you may also see the necessity and benefit of singing Psalms, and of all the outward acts of Religion; for if the body has so much power over the soul, it is certain that all such bodily actions as affect the soul, are of great weight in Religion. Not as if there was any true worship, or piety in the actions themselves, but because they are proper to raise and support that *spirit*, which is the true worship of God.

Though therefore the seat of Religion is in the heart, yet since our bodies have a power over our hearts, since outward actions both proceed from, and enter into the heart, it is plain, that outward actions have a great power over that Religion which is seated in the

heart.

We are therefore as well to use outward helps, as inward meditation, in order to beget and fix habits of piety in our hearts.

This

This doctrine may easily be carry'd too far; for by calling in too many outward means of worship, it may degenerate into superstition: as on the other hand, some have fallen into the contrary extreme. For because Religion is justly plac'd in the heart, some have pursued that notion so far, as to renounce vocal prayer, and other outward acts of worship, and have resolved all Religion into a quietism, or mystic intercourses with God in silence.

Now these are two *extremes* equally prejudicial to true Religion; and ought not to be objected either against internal, or external worship. As you ought not to say, that I encourage that *quietism*, by placing religion in the heart; so neither ought you to say, that I encourage superstition, by shewing the bene-

fit of outward acts of worship.

For since we are neither all soul, nor all body; seeing none of our actions are either separately of the soul, or separately of the body; seeing we have no habits but such as are produced by the actions both of our souls and bodies; it is certain, that if we would arrive at habits of devotion, or delight in God, we must not only meditate and exercise our souls, but we must practise and exercise our bodies to all such outward actions, as are conformable to these inward tempers.

If we would truly prostrate our souls before God, we must use our bodies to postures of lowliness; if we desire true fervours of devotion, we must make prayer the frequent labour of our lips. If we would banish all pride and passion from our hearts, we must force our selves to all outward actions of patience and meekness. If we would feel inward motions of joy and delight in God, we must practise all the outward acts of it, and make our voices call upon our hearts.

Now therefore, you may plainly see the reason and necessity of singing of Psalms; it is because outward actions are necessary to support inward tempers; and therefore the outward act of joy is necessary to raise and sup-

port the inward joy of the mind.

If any people were to leave off prayer, because they seldom find the motions of their hearts answering the words which they speak, you would charge them with great absurdity. You would think it very reasonable, that they should continue their prayers, and be strict in observing all times of prayer, as the most likely means of removing the dulness and indevotion of their hearts.

Now this is very much the case as to singing of Psalms; people often sing without finding any inward joy suitable to the words which they speak; therefore they are careless of it, or wholly neglect it; not considering, that they act as absurdly, as he that should neglect prayer, because his heart was not enough affected with it. For it is certain, that this singing is as much the natural means

of raising motions of joy in the mind, as prayer is the natural means of raising devotion.

I have been the longer upon this head, because of its great importance to true religion. For there is no state of mind so holy, so excellent, and so truly perfect, as that of thankfulness to God; and consequently nothing is of more importance in Religion, than that which exercises and improves this habit of mind.

A dull, uneasy, complaining spirit, which is sometimes the spirit of those that seem careful of Religion, is yet of all tempers the most contrary to Religion, for it disowns that God which it pretends to adore. For he sufficiently disowns God, who does not adore him as a Being of infinite goodness.

If a man does not believe that all the world is as God's family, where nothing happens by chance, but all is guided and directed by the care and providence of a Being that is all love and goodness to all his creatures; if a man do not believe this from his heart, he cannot be said truly to believe in God. And yet he that has this faith, has faith enough to overcome the world, and always be thankful to God. For he that believes that every thing happens to him for the best, cannot possibly complain for the want of something that is better.

If therefore you live in murmurings and complaints, accusing all the accidents of life, it is not because you are a weak, infirm creature, but it is because you want the first principle of Religion, a right belief in God. For as thankfulness is an express acknowledgment of the goodness of God towards you, so repinings and complaints are as plain accusations of God's want of goodness towards you.

On the other hand, would you know who is the greatest Saint in the world? It is not he who prays most, or fasts most; it is not he who gives most alms, or is most eminent for temperance, chastity or justice; but it is he who is always thankful to God, who wills every thing that God willeth, who receives every thing as an instance of God's goodness, and has a heart always ready to praise God for it.

All prayer and devotion, fastings and repentance, meditation and retirement, all sacraments and ordinances, are but so many means to render the soul thus divine, and conformable to the will of God, and to fill it with thankfulness and praise for every thing that comes from God. This is the perfection of all virtues; and all virtues that do not tend to it, or proceed from it, are but so many false ornaments of a soul not converted unto God.

You need not therefore now wonder, that I lay so much stress upon singing a Psalm at all your devotions, since you see it is to form your spirit to such joy and thankfulness

to God, as is the highest perfection of a di-

vine and holy life.

If any one would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness, and all perfection, he must tell you to make it a rule to your self, to thank and praise God for every thing that happens to you. For it is certain, that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing. Could you therefore work miracles, you could not do more for your self, than by this thankful spirit, for it heals with a word speaking, and turns all that it touches

into happiness.

If therefore you would be so true to your eternal interest, as to propose this thankfulness as the end of all your Religion; if you would but settle it in your mind, that this was the state that you was to aim at by all your devotions, you would then have something plain and visible to walk by in all your actions, you would then easily see the effect of your virtues, and might safely judge of your improvement in piety. For so far as you renounce all selfish tempers, and motions of your own will, and seek for no other happiness, but in the thankful reception of every thing that happens to you, so far you may be safely reckon'd to have advanc'd in piety.

And altho' this be the highest temper that you can aim at, tho' it be the noblest sacrifice that the greatest saint can offer unto God, yet is it not ty'd to any time, or place, or great occasion, but is always in your power, and may be the exercise of every day. For the common events of every day are sufficient to discover and exercise this temper, and may plainly shew you how far you are govern'd in all your actions by this thankful spirit.

And for this reason I exhort you to this method in your devotion, that every day may be made a day of thanksgiving, and that the spirit of murmur and discontent may be unable to enter into the heart, which is so often employ'd in singing the praises of God.

It may perhaps after all be objected, that although the great benefit, and excellent effects of this practice are very apparent, yet it seems not altogether so fit for *private* devotions; since it can hardly be perform'd without making our devotions publick to other people, and seems also liable to the charge of *sounding a trumpet* at our prayers.

It is therefore answer'd, First, That great numbers of People have it in their power to be as private as they please; such persons therefore are excluded from this excuse, which however it may be so to others, is none to them. Therefore let such take the benefit of

this excellent devotion.

Secondly, Numbers of people are by the necessity of their state, as servants, apprentices, prisoners, and families in small houses, forc'd to be continually in the presence, or sight of somebody or other.

Now

Now are such persons to neglect their prayers, because they cannot pray without being seen? Are they not rather oblig'd to be more exact in them, that others may not be witnesses of their neglect, and so corrupted by their example?

Now what is here said of devotion, may surely be said of this *chanting a Psalm*, which

is only a part of devotion.

The rule is this; Don't pray that you may be seen of men, but if your confinement obliges you to be always in the sight of others, be more afraid of being seen to neglect, than of being seen to have recourse to prayer.

Thirdly, the short of the matter is this. Either people can use such privacy in this practice, as to have no hearers, or they cannot. If they can, then this objection vanishes as to them: And if they cannot, they should consider their confinement, and the necessities of their state, as the confinement of a prison; and then they have an excellent pattern to follow, they may imitate St. Paul and Silas, who sang praises to God in prison, though we are expressly told, that the prisoners heard They therefore did not refrain from this kind of devotion for fear of being heard by others. If therefore any one is in the same necessity, either in prison or out of prison, what can he do better, than to follow this example?

I cannot pass by this place of Scripture, without desiring the pious reader to observe,

how strongly we are here call'd upon to this use of Psalms, and what a mighty recommendation of it, the practice of these two great *Saints* is.

In this their great distress, in *prison*, in *chains*, under the soreness of *stripes*, in the horror of *night*, the *divinest*, *holiest* thing they could do, was to *sing praises unto God*.

And shall we after this, need any exhortation to this holy practice? Shall we let the day pass without such thanksgivings, as they would not neglect in the night? Shall a prison, chains, and darkness, furnish them with songs of praise, and shall we have no singings in our closets?

Farther, let it also be observ'd, that while these two holy men were thus employ'd in the most exalted part of devotion, doing that Acts xvi. 26. On earth, which Angels do in Heaven, that the foundations of the prison were shaken, all the doors were opened, and every ones hands were loosed.

And shall we now ask for motives to this divine exercise, when instead of arguments, we have here such miracles to convince us of

its mighty power with God?

Could God by a voice from Heaven more expressly call us to these songs of praise, than by thus shewing us, how he hears, delivers,

and rewards those that use them?

But this by the way. I now return to the objection in hand; and answer Fourthly, That the privacy of our prayers is not destroy'd by our having, but by our seeking witnesses of them.

Ιf

If therefore no body hears you but those you cannot separate your self from, you are as much in secret, and your Father who seeth in secret, will as truly reward your secrecy, as if

you was seen by him alone.

Fifthly, Private prayer, as it is oppos'd to prayer in publick, does not suppose, that no one is to have any witness of it. For husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, parents and children, masters and servants, tutors and pupils, are to be witnesses to one another of such devotion, as may truly and properly be call'd private. It is far from being a duty to conceal such devotion from such near relations.

In all these cases therefore, where such relations sometimes pray together in private, and sometimes apart by themselves, the chanting of a Psalm can have nothing objected

against it.

Our blessed Lord commands us, when we fast, to anoint our heads, and wash our faces, that we appear not unto men to fast, but unto our Father which is in secret.

But this only means, that we must not make publick ostentation to the world of our

fasting.

For if no one was to fast in *private*, or could be said to fast in private, but he that had no witnesses of it, no one could keep a private fast, but he that liv'd by himself: For every family must know who fasts in it. Therefore the *privacy* of fasting does not suppose such a privacy as excludes *every body* from knowing

t

it, but such a privacy as does not seek to be known abroad.

Cornelius the devout Centurion, of whom the Scripture saith, that he gave much, and prayed to God alway, saith unto St. Peter, four days ago I was fasting until this hour.

Now that this fasting was sufficiently private and acceptable to God, appears from the vision of an Angel, with which the holy man was

bless'd at that time.

But that it was not so private, as to be entirely unknown to others, appears, as from the relation of it here, so from what is said in another place, that he call'd two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited upon him continually. So that Cornelius his fasting was so far from being unknown to his family, that the soldiers and they of his household were made devout themselves, by continually waiting upon him, that is, by seeing and partaking of his good works.

The whole of the matter is this. *Great* part of the world can be as private as they please, therefore let them use this excellent devotion between God and themselves.

As therefore the *privacy* or *excellency* of fasting is not destroy'd by being known to some particular persons, neither would the *privacy* or *excellency* of your devotions be hurt, though by *chanting* a Psalm, you should be heard by some of your family.

Another

Another great part of the world must and ought to have witnesses of several of their devotions; let them therefore not neglect the use of a Psalm at such times as it ought to be known to those with whom they live, that they do not neglect their prayers. For surely, there can be no harm in being known to be singing a Psalm, at such times as it ought to be known that you are at your prayers.

And if at other times, you desire to be in such secrecy at your devotions, as to have no body suspect it, and for that reason forbear your *Psalm*; I have nothing to object against it: Provided, that at the known *hours* of

prayer, you never omit this practice.

For who would not be often doing that in the day, which St. Paul and Silas would not neglect in the middle of the night? And if when you are thus singing, it should come into your head, how the prison shak'd, and the doors open'd, when St. Paul sang, it would do

your devotion no harm.

Lastly, Seeing our imaginations have great power over our hearts, and can mightily affect us with their representations, it would be of great use to you, if at the beginning of your devotions, you was to imagine to your self some such representations, as might heat and warm your heart into a temper suitable to those prayers that you are then about to offer unto God.

As thus; before you begin your *Psalm* of praise and rejoycing in God, make this use of your *imagination*. Be

Be still, and imagine to your self, that you saw the heavens open, and the glorious Choirs of Cherubims and Seraphims about the throne of God. Imagine that you hear the musick of those Angelick voices that cease not day and night to sing the glories of him that is,

and was, and is to come.

Help your imagination with such passages of Scripture as these. Revel. vii. 9. I beheld, and lo in heaven a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the lamb, cloath'd with white robes, and palms in their hands. And they cried with a loud voice, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb.

And all the angels stood round about the throne, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and strength, be unto God, for

ever and ever. Amen.

Think upon this till your imagination has carried you above the clouds, till it has plac'd you amongst those heavenly beings, and made you long to bear a part in their eternal musick.

If you will but use your self to this method, and let your imagination dwell upon such representations as these, you will soon find it to be an excellent means of raising the spirit of devotion within you.

Always therefore begin your Psalm, or Song of praise, with these imaginations; and at

every verse of it, imagine your self amongst those heavenly companions, that your voice is added to theirs, and that Angels join with you, and you with them; and that you with a poor and low voice are singing that on earth,

which they are singing in heaven.

Again, Sometimes imagine that you had been one of those that joined with our blessed Saviour when he sung an Hymn. Strive to imagine to your self, with what majesty he look'd; fancy that you had stood close by him surrounded with his glory. Think how your heart would have been inflam'd, what ecstasies of joy you would have then felt, when singing with the Son of God. Think again and again, with what joy and devotion you would then have sung, had this been really your happy state, and what a punishment you should have thought it, to have been then silent; and let this teach you how to be affected with Psalms and Hymns of thanksgiving.

Again, Sometimes imagine to your self, that you saw holy David with his bands upon his barp, and his eyes fix'd upon beaven, calling in transport upon all the Creation, Sun and Moon, light and darkness, day and night, men and angels, to joyn with his rapturous soul in praising the Lord of Heaven.

Dwell upon this imagination, till you think you are singing with this divine musician, and let such a companion teach you to exalt your heart unto God in the following Psalm; which you may use constantly first in the morning.

Psalm

Psalm cxlv. I will magnify thee, O God my king: and I will praise thy name for ever and

ever, &c.

These following Psalms, as the 34th, 96th, 103d, 111th, 146th, 147th, are such as wonderfully set forth the glory of God; and therefore you may keep to any one of them at any particular hour, as you like: Or you may take the finest parts of any Psalms, and so adding them together, may make them fitter for your own devotion.

#### . CHAP. XVI

Recommending devotions at nine o' clock in the morning, called in Scripture, the third hour of the day. The subject of these prayers, is humility

I AM now come to another hour of prayer, which in Scripture is called the *third hour* of the day; but according to our way of numbering the hours, it is called the ninth hour of the morning.

The devout Christian must at this time look upon himself as called upon by God to renew his acts of prayer, and address himself again

to the throne of grace.

There is indeed no express command in Scripture to repeat our devotions at this hour. But then it is to be consider'd also, that neither is there any express command to begin and end the day with prayer. So that if that be looked upon as a reason for neglecting de-

votion

votion at this hour, it may as well be urged as a reason, for neglecting devotion both at

the beginning and end of the day.

But if the practice of the saints in all ages of the world, if the customs of the pious Jews and primitive Christians be of any force with us, we have authority enough to persuade us, to make this hour a constant season of devotion.

The Scriptures show us how this hour was consecrated to devotion both by Jews and Christians: so that if we desire to number our selves amongst those whose hearts were devoted unto God, we must not let this hour pass, without presenting us to him in some solemnities of devotion. And besides this authority for this practice, the reasonableness of it is sufficient to invite us to the observance of it.

For if you was up at a good time in the morning, your first devotions will have been at *proper* distance from this hour; you will have been long enough at other business, to make it proper for you to return to this greatest of all business, the raising your soul and affections unto God.

But if you have risen so *late*, as to be hardly able to begin your first devotions at this *bour*, which is proper for your *second*, you may thence learn, that the indulging yourself in the morning sleep is no *small* matter; since it sets you so far *back* in your devotions, and

robs

robs you of those graces and blessings, which

are obtained by frequent prayers.

For if prayer has power with God, if it looses the bands of sin, if it purifies the soul, reforms our hearts, and draws down the aids of divine grace; how can that be reckon'd a small matter, which robs us of an hour of prayer.

Imagine yourself some where placed in the air, as a spectator of all that passes in the world; and that you saw in one view, the devotions which all Christian people offer unto God every day. Imagine, that you saw some piously dividing the day and night, as the primitive Christians did, and constant at all hours of devotion, singing Psalms, and calling upon God, at all those times, that Saints and Martyrs received their gifts and graces from God.

Imagine that you saw others living without any rules, as to times and frequency of prayer, and only at their devotions sooner or later, as sleep and laziness happens to permit

them.

Now if you was to see this, as God sees it, how do you suppose you should be affected with this sight? What judgment do you imagine, you should pass upon these different sorts of people? Could you think, that those who were thus exact in their rules of devotion, got nothing by their exactness? Could you think, that their prayers were received just in the same manner, and procured them no more blessings

blessings, than theirs do, who prefer laziness and indulgence to times and rules of devotion?

Could you take the one to be as true servants of God, as the other? Could you imagine, that those who were thus different in their *lives*, would find no difference in their states after *death*? Could you think it a matter of *indifferency*, to which of these people you were *most* like?

If not, let it be now your care to join your self to that number of devout people, to that society of saints, amongst whom you desire to be found, when you leave the world.

And altho' the bare number and repetition of our prayers is of little value, yet since prayer rightly and attentively performed, is the most natural means of amending and purifying our hearts; since importunity and frequency in prayer is as much press'd upon us by Scripture, as prayer itself; we may be sure, that when we are frequent and importunate in our prayers, we are taking the best means of obtaining the highest benefits of a devout life.

And on the other hand, they who through negligence, laziness, or any other indulgence, render themselves either unable, or uninclin'd to observe *rules* and *hours* of devotion, we may be sure, that they deprive themselves of those graces and blessings, which an *exact* and *fervent* devotion procures from God.

Now as this frequency of prayer is founded in the doctrines of Scripture, and recommend-

ed to us by the practice of the true worshippers of God; so we ought not to think our selves excused from it, but where we can shew, that we are spending our time in such business, as is more acceptable to God, than these returns of prayer.

Least of all must we imagine, that dulness, negligence, indulgence, or diversions, can be any pardonable excuses, for our not observing an exact and frequent method of devotion.

If you are of a devout spirit, you will rejoice at these returns of prayer, which keep your soul in an holy enjoyment of God; which change your passions into divine love, and fill your heart with stronger joys and consolations, than you can possibly meet with in any thing else.

And if you are not of a devout spirit, then you are moreover obliged to this frequency of prayer, to train and exercise your heart into a

true sense and feeling of devotion.

Now seeing the holy spirit of the Christian Religion, and the example of the saints of all ages, calls upon you thus to divide the day into hours of prayers; so it will be highly beneficial to you, to make a right choice of those matters, which are to be the subject of your prayers, and to keep every hour of prayer appropriated to some particular subject, which you may alter or enlarge, according as the state you are in requires.

By this means, you will have an opportunity of being large and particular in all the

parts of any virtue or grace, which you then make the subject of your prayers. And by asking for it in all its parts, and making it the substance of a whole prayer once every day, you will soon find a mighty change in your heart; and that you cannot thus constantly pray for all the parts of any virtue every day of your life, and yet live the rest of the day contrary to it.

If a worldly-minded man was to pray every day against all the instances of a worldly temper; if he should make a large description of the temptations of covetousness, and desire God to assist him to reject them all, and to disappoint him in all his covetous designs, he would find his conscience so much awaken'd, that he would be forced either to forsake such

prayers, or to forsake a worldly life.

The same will hold true in any other instance. And if we ask, and have not, 'tis because we ask amiss. Because we ask in cold and general forms, such as only name the virtues, without describing their particular parts, such as are not enough particular to our condition, and therefore make no change in our hearts. Whereas when a man enumerates all the parts of any virtue in his prayers, his conscience is thereby awaken'd, and he is frighted at seeing how far short he is of it. And this stirs him up to an ardor in devotion, when he sees how much he wants of that virtue which he is praying for.

I have in the last chapter laid before you the excellency of *praise* and *thanksgiving*, and recommended that as the subject of your first

devotions in the morning.

And because an humble state of soul is the very state of Religion, because humility is the life and soul of piety, the foundation and support of every virtue and good work, the best guard and security of all holy affections; I shall recommend humility to you, as highly proper to be made the constant subject of your devotions, at this third hour of the day; earnestly desiring you to think no day safe, or likely to end well, in which you have not thus early put yourself in this posture of humility, and called upon God to carry you through the day in the exercise of a meek and lowly spirit.

This virtue is so essential to the *right state* of our souls, that there is no pretending to a *reasonable* or *pious* life without it. We may as well think to see without *eyes*, or live without *breath*, as to live in the spirit of religion.

without the spirit of humility.

And altho' it is thus the soul and essence of all religious duties, yet is it, generally speaking, the least understood, the least regarded, the least intended, the least desired and sought after, of all other virtues, amongst all sorts of Christians.

No people have more occasion to be afraid of the approachers of pride, than those who have made *some advances* in a pious life. For

pride

pride can grow as well upon our virtues as our vices, and steals upon us on all occasions.

Every good thought that we have, every good action that we do, lays us open to pride, and exposes to the assaults of vanity and selfsatisfaction.

It is not only the beauty of our persons, the gifts of fortune, our natural talents, and the distinctions of life; but even our devotions and alms, our fastings and humiliations, expose us to fresh and strong temptations of this evil spirit.

And it is for this reason, that I so earnestly advise every devout person to begin every day in this exercise of humility, that he may go on in safety under the protection of this good guide, and not fall a sacrifice to his own progress in those virtues, which are to save mankind from destruction.

Humility does not consist in having a worse opinion of ourselves than we deserve, or in abasing ourselves lower than we really are. But as all virtue is founded in truth, so humility is founded in a true and just sense of our weakness, misery, and sin. He that rightly feels and lives in this sense of his condition, lives in humility.

The weakness of our state appears from our inability to do any thing, as of ourselves. our natural state we are entirely without any power; we are indeed active beings, but can only act by a power, that is every moment lent us from God.

We have no more power of our own to move a hand, or stir a foot, than to move the

sun, or stop the clouds.

When we speak a word, we feel no more power in ourselves to do it, than we feel our selves able to raise the dead. For we act no more within our own power, or by our own strength, when we speak a word, or make a sound, than the Apostles acted within their own power, or by their own strength, when a word from their mouth cast out devils, and cured diseases.

As it was solely the power of God that enabled them to speak to *such purposes*, so it is solely the power of God that enables us to

speak at all.

We indeed find that we can *speak*, as we find that we are *alive*; but the actual exercise of speaking is no more in our own power,

than the actual enjoyment of life.

This is the dependent, helpless poverty of our state; which is a great reason for humility. For since we neither are, nor can do any thing of ourselves, to be proud of any thing that we are, or of any thing that we can do, and to ascribe glory to ourselves for these things, as our own ornaments, has the guilt both of stealing and lying. It has the guilt of stealing, as it gives to ourselves those things which only belong to God. It has the guilt of lying, as it is the denying the truth of our state, and pretending to be something that we are not.

Secondly, Another argument for humility, is founded in the misery of our condition.

Now the misery of our condition appears in this, that we use these borrow'd powers of our nature, to the torment and vexation of our

selves, and our fellow-creatures.

God Almighty has entrusted us with the use of reason, and we use it to the disorder and corruption of our nature. We reason ourselves into all kinds of folly and misery, and make our lives the sport of foolish and extravagant passions: Seeking after imaginary happiness in all kinds of shapes, creating to ourselves a thousand wants, amusing our hearts with false hopes and fears, using the world worse than irrational animals, envying, vexing and tormenting one another with restless passions, and unreasonable contentions.

Let any man but look back upon his own life, and see what use he has made of his reason, how little he has consulted it, and how less he has followed it. What foolish passions, what vain thoughts, what needless labours, what extravagant projects, have taken up the greatest part of his life. How foolish he has been in his words and conversation; how seldom he has done well with judgment, and how often he has been kept from doing ill by accident; how seldom he has been able to please; how often he has changed his counsels, hated what he lov'd, and lov'd what he hated; how often

often he has been enrag'd and transported at trifles, pleas'd and displeas'd with the very same things, and constantly changing from one vanity to another. Let a man but take this view of his own life, and he will see reason enough to confess, that pride was not made for man.

Let him but consider, that if the world knew all that of him, which he knows of himself; if they saw what vanity and passions govern his inside, and what secret tempers sully and corrupt his best actions, he would have no more pretence to be honour'd and admir'd for his goodness and wisdom, than a rotten and distempered body to be lov'd and admir'd for its beauty and comeliness.

This is so true, and so known to the hearts of almost all people, that nothing would appear more dreadful to them, than to have their hearts thus fully discovered to the eyes of all beholders.

And perhaps there are very few people in the world, who would not rather chuse to die, than to have all their secret follies, the errors of their judgments, the vanity of their minds, the falseness of their pretences, the frequency of their vain and disorderly passions, their uneasiness, hatreds, envies, and vexations, made known unto the world.

And shall pride be entertained in a heart thus conscious of its own miserable behaviour?

Shall a creature in such a condition, that he could not support himself under the *shame* 

of being known to the world in his *real state*; shall such a creature, because his shame is only known to God, to holy Angels, and his own conscience; shall he, in the sight of God and holy angels, dare to be *vain* and *proud* of himself?

Thirdly, If to this we add the *shame* and guilt of sin, we shall find a still greater reason

for humility.

No creature that had liv'd in innocence, would have thereby got any pretence for *self-honour* and *esteem*; because as a creature, all that it is, or has, or does, is from God, and therefore the honour of all that belongs to it, is only due to God.

But if a creature that is a *sinner*, and under the *displeasure* of the great governor of all the world, and deserving nothing from him, but pains and punishments for the *shameful* abuse of his powers; if such a creature pretends to self-glory for any thing that he is, or does, he can only be said to glory in his shame?

Now how monstrous and shameful the nature of sin is, is sufficiently apparent from that great attonement that is necessary to cleanse us from the guilt of it.

Nothing less has been requir'd to take away the guilt of our sins, than the sufferings and death of the Son of God. Had he not taken our nature upon him, our nature had been

for

for ever separated from God, and incapable

of ever appearing before him.

And is there any room for pride or selfglory, whilst we are partakers of such a nature as this?

Have our sins render'd us so abominable and odious to him that made us, that he could not so much as receive our prayers, or admit our repentance, 'till the Son of God made himself man, and became a suffering advocate for our whole race; and can we in this state pretend to high thoughts of our selves? Shall we presume to take delight in our own worth, who are not worthy so much as to ask pardon for our sins, without the mediation and intercession of the Son of God?

Thus deep is the foundation of humility laid, in these deplorable circumstances of our condition; which shew, that it is as great an offence against truth, and the reason of things, for a man in this state of things, to lay claim to any degrees of glory, as to pretend to the honour of creating himself. If man will boast of any thing as his own, he must boast of his misery and sin; for there is nothing else but this, that is his own property.

Turn your eyes towards heaven, and fancy that you saw what is doing there; that you saw cherubims and seraphims, and all the glorious inhabitants of that place, all united in one work; not seeking glory from one another, not labouring their own advancement, not contemplating their own perfections, not singing

their

their own praises, not valuing themselves, and despising others, but all employ'd in one and the same work, all happy in one and the same joy; casting down their crowns before the throne of God, giving glory, and honour, and power to him alone.

Then turn your eyes to the fallen world, and consider how unreasonable and odious it must be, for such poor worms, such miserable sinners, to take delight in their own fancy'd glories, whilst the highest and most glorious sons of heaven, seek for no other greatness and honour, but that of ascribing all honour and greatness, and glory to God alone?

Pride is only the disorder of the fallen world, it has no place amongst other beings; it can only subsist where ignorance and sensuality, lies and falshood, lusts and impurity

reign.

Let a man, when he is most delighted with his own figure, look upon a crucifix, and contemplate our blessed Lord stretch'd out, and nail'd upon a Cross; and then let him consider, how absurd it must be, for a heart full of pride and vanity, to pray to God, through the sufferings of such a meek and crucify'd Saviour?

These are the reflections that you are often to meditate upon, that you may thereby be dispos'd to walk before God and man in such a spirit of humility, as becomes the weak, miserable, sinful state of all that are descended from fallen Adam.

When you have by such general reflections as these, convinc'd your mind of the reasonableness of humility, you must not content your self with this, as if you was therefore humble, because your mind acknowledges the reasonableness of humility, and declares against pride. But you must immediately enter your self into the practice of this virtue, like a young beginner, that has all of it to learn, that can learn but little at a time, and with great difficulty. You must consider, that you have not only this virtue to learn, but that you must be content to proceed as a learner in it all your time, endeavouring after greater degrees of it, and practising every day acts of humility, as you every day practice acts of devotion.

You would not imagine your self to be devout, because in your judgment you approv'd of prayers, and often declar'd your mind in favour of devotion. Yet how many people imagine themselves humble enough, for no other reason, but because they often commend humility, and make vehement decla-

rations against pride?

Cacus is a rich man, of good breeding, and very fine parts. He is fond of dress, curious in the smallest matters that can add any ornament to his person. He is haughty and imperious to all his inferiors, is very full of every thing that he says, or does, and never

ima-

imagines it possible for such a judgment as his to be mistaken. He can bear no contradiction, and discovers the weakness of your understanding, as soon as ever you oppose him. He changes every thing in his bouse, his habit, and his equipage, as often as any thing more elegant comes in his way. Cacus would have been very religious, but that he always thought he was so.

There is nothing so odious to Cacus as a proud man; and the misfortune is, that in this he is so very quick-sighted, that he discovers in almost every body, some strokes of

vanity.

On the other hand, he is exceeding fond of humble and modest persons. Humility, says he, is so amiable a quality, that it forces our esteem where-ever we meet with it. There is no possibility of despising the meanest person that has it, or of esteeming the greatest man that wants it.

Cacus no more suspects himself to be proud, than he suspects his want of sense. And the reason of it is, because he always finds himself so in love with humility, and

so enrag'd at pride.

It is very true, Cacus, you speak sincerely when you say you love humility, and abhor pride. You are no hypocrite, you speak the true sentiments of your mind; but then take this along with you, Cacus, that you only love humility, and hate pride, in other people. You never once in your life thought of any

other

other humility, or of any other pride, than that which you have seen in other people.

The case of *Cacus* is a common case; many people live in all the instances of pride, and indulge every vanity that can enter into their minds, and yet never suspect themselves to be govern'd by pride and vanity, because they know how much they dislike proud people, and how mightily they are pleas'd with humility and modesty, where-ever they find them.

All their speeches in favour of humility, and all their railings against pride, are look'd upon as so many true exercises, and effects of their own humble spirit.

Whereas in truth, these are so far from being proper acts, or proofs of humility, that they are great arguments of the want of

it.

For the fuller of pride any one is himself, the more impatient will he be at the smallest instances of it in other people. And the less humility any one has in his own mind, the more will he demand, and be delighted with

it in other people.

You must therefore act by a quite contrary measure, and reckon your self only so far humble, as you impose *every instance* of humility upon your self, and *never* call for it in other people. So far an enemy to pride, as you never *spare* it in your self, nor ever *censure* it in other persons.

Now in order to do this, you need only consider, that pride and humility signify nothing to you, but so far as they are your own; that they do you neither good nor harm, but as they are the tempers of your own heart.

The loving therefore of humility is of no benefit or advantage to you, but so far as you love to see all your own thoughts, words, and actions govern'd by it. And the hating of pride does you no good, is no perfection in you, but so far as you hate to harbour any degree of it in your own heart.

Now in order to begin, and set out well in the practice of humility, you must take it for granted, that you are *proud*, that you have all your life been more or less infected with

this unreasonable temper.

You should believe also, that it is your greatest weakness, that your heart is most subject to it, that it is so constantly stealing upon you, that you have reason to watch and suspect its approaches in all your actions.

For this is what most people, especially new beginners in a pious life, may with great truth

think of themselves.

For there is no one vice that is more deeply rooted in our nature, or that receives such constant nourishment from almost every thing that we think or do. There being hardly any thing in the world that we want or use, or any action or duty of life, but pride finds some means or other to take hold of it. So that at what time soever we begin to offer our selves

to God, we can hardly be surer of any thing, than that we have a great deal of pride to re-

pent of.

If therefore you find it disagreeable to your mind to entertain this opinion of your self, and that you cannot put your self amongst those that want to be cur'd of pride, you may be as sure, as if an *Angel* from heaven had told you, that you have not only much, but all your humility to seek.

For you can have no greater sign of a more confirm'd pride, that when you think that you are humble enough. He that thinks he loves God enough, shews himself to be an entire stranger to that holy passion; so he that thinks he has humility enough, shews that he is not so much as a beginner in the practice of true humility.

#### CHAP, XVII

Shewing how difficult the practice of humility is made, by the general spirit and temper of the world. How Christianity requireth us to live contrary to the world,

EVERY person, when he first applies himself to the exercise of this virtue of humility, must, as I said before, consider himself as a *learner*, that is to learn something that

that is contrary to former tempers and habits of mind, and which can only be got by daily

and constant practice.

He has not only as much to do, as he that has some new art, or science to learn, but he has also a great deal to unlearn: He is to forget, and lay aside his own spirit, which has been a long while fixing and forming it self; he must forget, and depart from abundance of passions and opinions, which the fashion, and vogue, and spirit of the world, has made natural to him.

He must lay aside his own spirit; because as we are born in sin, so in pride, which is as natural to us as self-love, and continually springs from it. And this is one reason why Christianity is so often represented as a new

birth, and a new spirit.

He must lay aside the opinions and passions which he has receiv'd from the world, because the vogue and fashion of the world, by which we have been carry'd away, as in a torrent, before we could pass right judgments of the value of things, is in many respects contrary to humility; so that we must unlearn what the spirit of the world has taught us, before we can be govern'd by the spirit of humility.

The Devil is call'd in Scripture the prince of this world, because he has great power in it, because many of its rules and principles are invented by this evil spirit, the father of all lies and falshood, to separate us from God,

and prevent our return to happiness.

Now

Now according to the spirit and vogue of this world, whose corrupt air we have all breath'd, there are many things that pass for great, and honourable, and most desirable, which yet are so far from being so, that the true greatness and honour of our nature con-

sists in the not desiring them.

To abound in wealth, to have fine houses, and rich cloaths, to be attended with splendor and equipage, to be beautiful in our persons, to have titles of dignity, to be above our fellow-creatures, to command the bows and obeisance of other people, to be look'd on with admiration, to overcome our enemies with power, to subdue all that oppose us, to set out our selves in as much splendor as we can, to live highly and magnificently, to eat and drink, and delight our selves in the most costly manner, these are the great, the honourable, the desirable things, to which the spirit of the world turns the eyes of all people. And many a man is afraid of standing still, and not engaging in the pursuit of these things, lest the same world should take him for a fool.

The history of the Gospel, is chiefly the history of Christ's conquest over this spirit of the world. And the number of true Christians, is only the number of those who following the Spirit of Christ, have liv'd contra-

ry to this spirit of the world.

If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Again, Whosoever is born of God

God, overcometh the world. Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. This is the language of the whole New Testament. This is the mark of Christianity; you are to be dead, that is, dead to the spirit and temper of the world, and live a new life in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

But notwithstanding the clearness and plainness of these doctrines which thus renounce the world, yet great part of Christians live and die slaves to the *customs*, and *temper* of

the world.

How many people swell with *pride* and *vanity*, for such things as they would not know how to value at all, but that they are admir'd in the world?

Would a man take ten years more drudgery in business to add two horses more to his coach, but that he knows, that the world most of all admires a coach and six? How fearful are many people of having their houses poorly furnish'd, or themselves meanly cloath'd, for this only reason, lest the world should make no account of them, and place them amongst low and mean people?

How often would a man have *yielded* to the haughtiness and ill nature of others, and shewn a *submissive* temper, but that he dares not pass for such a poor-spirited man in the

opinion of the world?

Many a man would often drop a resentment, and forgive an affront, but that he is afraid,

if he should, the world would not forgive him?

How many would practise Christian temperance and sobriety in its utmost perfection, were it not for the censure which the world passes upon such a life?

Others have frequent intentions of living up to the *rules* of Christian perfection, which they are frighted from, by considering what

the world would say of them.

Thus do the impressions which we have receiv'd from living in the world enslave our minds, that we dare not attempt to be *eminent* in the sight of God, and holy Angels, for fear of being little in the eyes of the world.

From this quarter arises the greatest difficulty of humility, because it cannot subsist in any mind, but so far as it is dead to the world, and has parted with all desires of enjoying its greatness, and honours. So that in order to be truly humble, you must unlearn all those notions which you have been all your life learning from this corrupt spirit of the world.

You can make no *stand* against the assaults of pride, the meek affections of humility can have no place in your soul, till you stop the power of the world over you, and resolve against a *blind obedience* to its laws.

And when you are once advanc'd thus far, as to be able to stand still in the torrent of worldly fashions and opinions, and examine

the worth and value of things which are most admir'd and valued in the world, you have gone a great way in the gaining of your freedom, and have laid a good foundation for the amendment of your heart.

For as great as the power of the world is, it is all built upon a *blind obedience*, and we need only open our eyes, to get quit of its

power.

Ask who you will, learned or unlearned, every one seems to know and confess, that the general temper and spirit of the world, is nothing else but humour, folly, and extra-

vagance.

Who will not own, that the wisdom of *Philosophy*, the piety of *Religion*, was always confin'd to a small number? And is not this expressly owning and confessing, that the *common spirit* and *temper* of the world, is neither according to the wisdom of *Philosophy*, nor the piety of *Religion*.

The world therefore seems enough condemn'd even by its self, to make it very easy for a thinking man to be of the same judg-

ment.

And therefore I hope you will not think it a hard saying, that in order to be humble, you must withdraw your obedience from that vulgar spirit which gives laws to Fops and Coquets, and form your judgments according to the wisdom of Philosophy, and the piety of Religion. Who would be afraid of making such a change as this?

Again

Again, To lessen your fear and regard to the opinion of the world, think how soon the world will disregard you, and have no more thought or concern about you, than about the

poorest animal that dy'd in a ditch.

Your friends, if they can, may bury you with some distinction, and set up a monument to let posterity see that your dust lies under such a Stone; and when that is done, all is done. Your place is fill'd up by another, the world is just in the same state it was, you are blotted out of its sight, and as much forgotten by the world as if you had never belong'd to it.

Think upon the *rich*, the *great*, and the *learned* persons, that have made great figures, and been high in the esteem of the world; many of them died in your time, and yet they are sunk, and lost, and gone, and as much disregarded by the world, as if they had been only so many *bubbles of water*.

Think again, how many poor souls see heaven lost, and lie now expecting a miserable eternity, for their service and homage to a world, that thinks it self every whit as well without them, and is just as merry as it was, when they were in it.

Is it therefore worth your while to lose the smallest degree of virtue, for the sake of pleasing so bad a master, and so false a friend as

the world is?

Is it worth your while to bow the knee to such an *idol* as this, that so soon will have neither

neither eyes, nor ears, nor a heart to regard you; instead of serving that great, and holy, and mighty God, that will make all his servants partakers of his own eternity?

Will you let the fear of a false world, that has no love for you, keep you from the fear of that God, who has only created you, that he may love and bless you to all eternity?

Lastly, you must consider what behaviour the profession of Christianity requireth of

you, with regard to the world.

Now this is plainly deliver'd in these words: Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present Gal. i. 4. evil world. Christianity therefore implieth a deliverance from this world; and he that professeth it, professeth to live contrary to every thing and every temper, that is peculiar to this evil world.

St. John declareth this opposition to the world in this manner, They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God. This is the description of the followers of Christ; and it is proof enough that no people are to be reckon'd Christians in reality, who in their hearts and tempers belong to this world. We know, saith the same Apostle, That we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

Christians therefore can no farther know that they are of God, than so far as they know they are not of the world; that is, that they

don't

don't live according to the ways and spirit of the world. For all the ways, and maxims, and politicks, and tempers of the world, lie in wickedness. And he is only of God, or born of God in Christ Jesus, who has overcome this world, that is, who has chose to live by faith. and govern his actions by the principles of a wisdom revealed from God by Christ Jesus.

St. Paul takes it for a certainty so well known to Christians, that they are no longer to be consider'd as living in this world, that he thus argues from it, as from an undeniable principle, concerning the abolishing the rites of the Jewish law: Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, Col. ii. 20. why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances? Here could be no argument in this, but in the Apostle's taking it for undeniable, that Christians knew, that their profession requir'd them to have done with all the tempers, and passions of this world, to live as citizens of the new Jerusalem, and to have their conversation in heaven.

Our blessed Lord himself has fully determin'd this point, in these words: They are not of this world, as I am not of this world. This is the state of Christianity with regard to this world. If you are not thus out of, and contrary to the world, you want the distinguishing mark of Christianity; you don't belong to Christ, but by being out of the world as he was out of it.

We

We may deceive our selves, if we please, with vain and softning comments upon these words, but they are and will be understood in their first simplicity and plainness, by every one that reads them in the same spirit that our blessed Lord spoke them. And to understand them in any lower, less significant meaning, is to let carnal wisdom explain away that doctrine, by which it self was to be destroy'd.

The Christians great conquest over the world, is all contain'd in the mystery of Christ upon the *Cross*. It was there, and from thence, that he taught all Christians how they were to come out of, and conquer the world, and what they were to do in order to be his Disciples. And all the *doctrines*, sacraments, and institutions of the Gospel, are only so many explications of the meaning, and applications of the benefit of this great mystery.

And the state of Christianity implieth nothing else but an *entire*, absolute conformity to that spirit which Christ shew'd in the mysterious sacrifice of himself upon the cross.

Every mantherefore; is only so far a Christian, as he partakes of this spirit of Christ. It was this that made St. Paul so passionately express himself, God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: But why does he glory? Is it because Christ had suffer'd in his stead, and had excus'd him from suffering? No, by no means. But it was because his christian profession had call'd him to the

honour

honour of suffering with Christ, and of dying to the world under reproach and contempt, as he had done upon the Cross. For he immediately adds, by whom the world Gal. vi. 14. is crucified unto me, and I unto the This you see was the reason of his glorying in the cross of Christ, because it had call'd him to a like state of death and crucifixion to the world.

Thus was the Cross of Christ, in St. Paul's days, the glory of Christians; not as it signified their not being asham'd to own a Master that was crucified, but as it signified their glorying in a Religion, which was nothing else but a doctrine of the Cross, that call'd them to the same suffering spirit, the same sacrifice of themselves, the same renunciation of the world, the same humility and meekness, the same patient bearing of injuries, reproaches, and contempts, and the same dying to all the greatness, honours and happiness of this world, which Christ shew'd upon the Cross.

To have a true idea of Christianity, we must not consider our blessed Lord as suffering in our stead, but as our representative, acting in our name, and with such particular merit, as to make our joining with him, acceptable unto God.

He suffer'd, and was a sacrifice, to make our sufferings and sacrifice of our selves fit to be receiv'd by God. And we are to suffer, to be crucified, to die, and rise with Christ,

or else his crucifixion, death and resurrection

will profit us nothing.

The necessity of this conformity to all that Christ did, and suffer'd upon our account, is very plain from the whole tenor of Scripture.

First, as to his sufferings, this is the only condition of our being sav'd by them, if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.

Secondly, as to his Crucifixion. Rom. vi. 6. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, &c. Here you see Christ is not crucified in our stead; but unless our old man be really crucified with him, the cross of Christ will profit us nothing.

Thirdly, as to the death of Christ, the condition is this; If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. If therefore Christ be dead alone, if we are not dead with him, we are as sure from this Scripture, that we shall not live with him.

Lastly, as to the resurrection of Christ, the Scripture sheweth us how we are to partake of the benefit of it: If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Thus you see how plainly the Scripture sets forth our blessed Lord, as our representative,

acting and suffering in our name, binding and obliging us to conform to all that he did and suffered for us.

It was for this reason, that the holy Jesus said of his disciples, and in them of all true believers, They are not of this world, as I am not of this world. Because all true believers conforming to the sufferings, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ, live no longer after the spirit and temper of this world, but their

life is hid with Christ in God.

This is the state of separation from the world, to which all orders of Christians are called. They must so far renounce all worldly tempers, be so far governed by the things of another life, as to shew, that they are truly and really crucify'd, dead, and risen with Christ. And it is as necessary for all Christians to conform to this great change of spirit, to be thus in Christ new creatures, as it was necessary that Christ should suffer, dye, and rise again for our salvation.

How high the Christian life is placed above the ways of this world, is wonderfully describ'd by St. Paul in these words: Where-2 Cor. v. 16. fore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, tho' we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are pass'd away; behold, all things are become new.

He that feels the force and spirit of these words, can hardly bear any human interpretation of them. Henceforth, says he; that is, since the death and resurrection of Christ, the state of Christianity is become so glorious a state, that we don't even consider Christ himself as in the flesh upon earth, but as a God of glory in heaven; we know and consider ourselves not as men in the flesh, but as fellow-members of a new society, that are to have all our hearts, our tempers, and conversation in heaven.

Thus it is that Christianity has placed us out of, and above the world; and we fall from our calling, as soon as we fall into the tem-

pers of the world.

Now as it was the spirit of the world that nailed our blessed Lord to the *cross*; so every man that has the spirit of Christ, that opposes the world as he did, will certainly be crucify'd by the world some way or other.

For Christianity still lives in the same world that Christ did; and these two will be utter enemies, till the kingdom of darkness

is entirely at an end.

Had you lived with our Saviour as his true disciple, you had then been hated as he was; and if you now live in his spirit, the world will be the same enemy to you now, that it was to him then.

If ye were of the world, saith our blessed Lord, the world would love its own; John xv. 19. but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

X

We are apt to lose the true meaning of these words, by considering them only as an bistorical description of something that was the state of our Saviour and his disciples at that time. But this is reading the Scripture as a dead letter; for they as exactly describe the state of true Christians at this, and all other times, to the end of the world.

For as true Christianity is nothing else but the spirit of Christ, so whether that spirit appear in the person of Christ himself, or his Apostles, or followers in any age, it is the same thing; whoever hath his spirit, will be hated, despised, and condemned by the world, as he was.

For the world will always love its own, and none but its own: this is as certain and unchangeable, as the contrariety betwixt *light* and *darkness*.

When the holy Jesus saith, If the world hate you, he does not add by way of consolation, that it may some time or other cease its hatred, or that it will not always hate them; but he only gives this as a reason for their bearing it, You know that it hated me before it hated you: signifying, that it was he, that is, his spirit, that by reason of its contrariety to the world, was then, and always would be, hated by it.

You will perhaps say, that the world is now become Christian, at least that part of it where we live; and therefore the world is not

now to be considered in that state of opposition to Christianity, as when it was heathen.

It is granted, the world now professeth Christianity. But will any one say, that this Christian world is of the spirit of Christ? Are its general tempers the tempers of Christ? Are the passions of sensuality, self-love, pride, covetousness, ambition, and vain-glory, less contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, now they are amongst Christians, than when they were amongst heathens? Or will you say, that the tempers and passions of the heathen world are lost and gone?

Consider, secondly, what you are to mean by the world. Now this is fully described to

our hands by St. John. All that

1 John ii. 16. is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, &c. This is an exact and full description of the Now will you say, that this world is become Christian? But if all this still subsists, then the same world is now in being, and the same enemy to Christianity, that was in St. John's days.

It was this world that St. John condemned. as being not of the Father; whether therefore it outwardly professeth, or openly persecuteth Christianity, it is still in the same state of contrariety to the true spirit and holiness of

the Gospel.

And indeed the world by professing Christianity, is so far from being a less dangerous enemy than it was before, that it has by its

favours

favours destroyed more Christians, than ever

it did by the most violent persecution.

We must therefore be so far from considering the world as in a state of less enmity and opposition to Christianity, than it was in the first times of the Gospel, that we must guard against it as a greater and more dangerous enemy now, than it was in those times.

It is a greater enemy, because it has greater power over Christians by its favours, riches, honours, rewards and protections, than it had by the fire and fury of its persecutions.

It is a more dangerous enemy, by having lost its appearance of enmity. Its outward profession of Christianity makes it no longer consider'd as an enemy, and therefore the generality of people are easily persuaded to resign themselves up to be govern'd and directed by it.

How many consciences are kept at quiet, upon no other foundation, but because they sin under the authority of the christian world?

How many directions of the Gospel lye by unregarded; and how unconcernedly do particular persons read them; for no other reason, but because they seem unregarded by the christian world?

How many compliances do people make to the christian world, without any hesitation, or remorse; which if they had been requir'd of them only by heathens, would have been refus'd refus'd, as contrary to the holiness of Christia-

nity?

Who could be content with seeing how contrary his life is to the *Gospel*, but because he sees that he lives as the christian world doth?

Who that reads the Gospel, would want to be persuaded of the necessity of great self-denial, humility, and poverty of spirit, but that the authority of the world has banish'd this doctrine of the cross?

There is nothing therefore, that a good Christian ought to be more suspicious of, or more constantly guard against, than the au-

thority of the christian world.

And all the passages of Scripture, which represent the world as contrary to Christianity, which require our separation from it, as from a mammon of unrighteousness, a monster of iniquity, are all to be taken in the same strict sense, in relation to the present world.

For the change that the world has undergone, has only alter'd its methods, but not lessen'd its power of destroying Religion.

Christians had nothing to fear from the heathen world, but the loss of their lives; but the world become a friend, makes it difficult

for them to save their Religion.

Whilst pride, sensuality, covetousness and ambition, had only the authority of the beathen world, Christians were thereby made more intent upon the contrary virtues. But when pride, sensuality, covetousness and ambition,

have

have the authority of the Christian world, then private Christians are in the utmost danger, not only of being sham'd out of the practice, but of losing the very notion of the

piety of the Gospel.

There is therefore hardly any possibility of saving your self from the present world, but by considering it as the same wicked enemy to all true holiness, as it is represented in the Scriptures; and by assuring your self, that it is as dangerous to conform to its tempers and passions, now it is christian, as when it was heathen.

For only ask your self, Is the piety, the humility, the sobriety of the christian world, the piety, the humility, and sobriety of the christian spirit? If not, how can you be more undone by any world, than by conforming to that which is christian?

Need a man do more to make his scul unfit for the mercy of God, than by being greedy and ambitious of honour? Yet how can a man renounce this temper, without renouncing the spirit and temper of the world, in

which you now live?

How can a man be made more incapable of the spirit of Christ, than by a wrong value for money; and yet how can he be more wrong in his value of it, than by following the authority of the christian world?

Nay, in every order and station of life, whether of learning or business, either in Church or State, you cannot act up to the spi-

rit

rit of Religion, without renouncing the most general temper and behaviour of those, who are of the same order and business as your self.

And though human prudence seems to talk mighty wisely about the necessity of avoiding particularities, yet he that dares not be so weak as to be particular, will be often oblig'd to avoid the most substantial duties of christian piety.

These reflections will, I hope, help you to break through those difficulties, and resist those temptations, which the authority and fashion of the world hath rais'd against the

practice of christian humility.

#### CHAP. XVIII

Shewing how the education which men generally receive in their youth, makes the doctrines of humility difficult to be practis'd.

The spirit of a better education, represented in the character of Paternus

A NOTHER difficulty in the practice of humility, arises from our education. We are all of us, for the most part corruptly educated, and then committed to take our course in a corrupt world; so that it is no won-

wonder, if examples of great piety are so seldom seen.

Great part of the world are undone, by being born and bred in families that have no Religion; where they are made vicious and irregular, by being like those with whom they first liv'd.

But this is not the thing I now mean; the education that I here intend, is such as children generally receive from virtuous and sober parents, and learned tutors and governors.

Had we continued perfect, as God created the first man, perhaps the perfection of our nature had been a sufficient self-instruction for every one. But as sickness and diseases have created the necessity of medicines and physicians, so the change and disorder of our rational nature, has introduc'd the necessity of education and tutors.

And as the only end of the physician is, to restore nature to its own state, so the only end of education is, to restore our rational nature to its proper state. Education therefore is to be consider'd as reason borrow'd at second hand, which is, as far as it can, to supply the loss of original perfection. And as physick may justly be call'd the art of restoring health, so education should be considered in no other light, than as the art of recovering to man the use of his reason.

Now as the instruction of every art or science is founded upon the discoveries, the wisdom, experience and maxims of the several great

great men that have laboured in it; so that human wisdom, or right use of our reason, which young people should be call'd to by their education, is nothing else but the best experience, and finest reasonings of men, that have devoted themselves to the study of wisdom, and

the improvement of human nature.

All therefore that great saints, and dying men, when the fullest of light and conviction, and after the highest improvement of their reason, all that they have said of the necessity of piety, of the excellency of virtue, of their duty to God, of the emptiness of riches, of the vanity of the world; all the sentences, judgments, reasonings, and maxims of the wisest of philosophers, when in their highest state of wisdom, should constitute the common lessons of instruction for youthful minds.

This is the only way to make the young and ignorant part of the world, the better for the wisdom and knowledge of the wise and

ancient.

An education which is not wholly intent upon this, is as much beside the point, as an art of *Physick*, that had little or no regard to

the restoration of health.

The youths that attended upon *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, and *Epictetus*, were thus educated. Their every day lessons and instructions were so many lectures upon the nature of man, his true *end*, and the right use of his faculties; upon the immortality of the soul, its relation to God, the beauty of virtue, and

its agreableness to the divine nature; upon the dignity of reason, the necessity of temperance, fortitude and generosity, and the shame

and folly of indulging our passions.

Now as Christianity has, as it were, new created the moral and religious world, and set every thing that is reasonable, wise, holy and desirable, in its true point of light; so one would expect, that the education of youth should be as much better'd and amended by Christianity, as the faith and doctrines of Religion are amended by it.

As it has introduc'd such a new state of things, and so fully inform'd us of the nature of man, the ends of his creation, the state of his condition; as it has fix'd all our goods and evils, taught us the means of purifying our souls, pleasing God, and becoming eternally happy; one might naturally suppose, that every Christian Country abounded with schools for the teaching, not only a few questions and answers of a Catechism, but for the forming, training and practising youths in such an outward course of life, as the highest precepts, the strictest rules, and the sublimest doctrines of Christianity require.

An education under Pythagoras, or Socrates, had no other end, but to teach youth to think, judge, act, and follow such rules of life, as

Pythagoras and Socrates us'd.

And is it not as reasonable to suppose, that a Christian education should have no other end, but to teach youth how to think, and judge

judge, and act, and live according to the strictest laws of Christianity?

At least one would suppose, that in all christian schools, the teaching youth to begin their lives in the *spirit* of Christianity, in such severity of behaviour, such abstinence, sobriety, humility and devotion, as Christianity requires, should not only be more, but an hundred times more regarded, than any, or all things else.

For our education should imitate our guardian angels, suggest nothing to our minds but what is wise and holy; help us to discover and subdue every vain passion of our hearts, and

every false judgment of our minds.

And it is as sober and reasonable to expect and require all this benefit of a christian education, as to require that physick should strengthen all that is right in our nature, and remove that which is sickly and diseas'd.

But alas, our modern education is not of

this kind.

The first temper that we try to awaken in children, is pride; as dangerous a passion as that of lust. We stir them up to vain thoughts of themselves, and do every thing we can, to puff up their minds with a sense of their own abilities.

Whatever way of life we intend them for, we apply to the *fire* and vanity of their minds, and exhort them to every thing from corrupt motives: We stir them up to action from principles of strife and ambition, from glory, envy, and a desire of distinction, that they

may excel others, and shine in the eyes of the world.

We repeat and inculcate these motives upon them, till they think it a part of their duty to be proud, envious, and vain-glorious

of their own accomplishments.

And when we have taught them to scorn to be outdone by any, to bear no rival, to thirst after every instance of applause, to be content with nothing but the highest distinctions; then we begin to take comfort in them, and promise the world some mighty things from youths of such a glorious spirit.

If children are intended for holy orders, we set before them some eminent orator, whose fine preaching has made him the admiration of the age, and carry'd him through all the dig-

nities and preferments of the Church.

We encourage them to have these *honours* in their eye, and to expect the reward of their studies from them.

If the youth is intended for a trade; we bid him look at all the rich men of the same trade, and consider how many now are carry'd about in their stately coaches, who began in the same low degree as he now does. We awaken his ambition, and endeavour to give his mind a right turn, by often telling him how very rich such and such a tradesman dy'd.

If he is to be a *lawyer*, then we set great *Counsellors*, Lords *Judges*, and *Chancellors*, before his eyes. We tell him what great *fees*, and great *applause* attend fine pleading. We

exhort

exhort him to take fire at these things, to raise a spirit of emulation in himself, and to be content with nothing less than the highest

honours of the long Robe.

That this is the nature of our *best education*, is too plain to need any proof; and I believe there are few parents, but would be glad to see these instructions daily given to their children.

And after all this, we complain of the effects of pride; we wonder to see grown men acted and govern'd by ambition, envy, scorn, and a desire of glory; not considering that they were all the time of their youth call'd upon to all their action and industry upon the same principles.

You teach a child to scorn to be outdone, to thirst for distinction and applause; and is it any wonder that he continues to act all his life

in the same manner?

Now if a youth is ever to be so far a Christian, as to govern his heart by the doctrines of humility, I would fain know at what time he is to begin it; or if he is ever to begin it at all, why we train him up in tempers quite contrary to it?

How dry and poor must the doctrine of humility sound to a youth, that has been spurr'd up to all his industry by ambition, envy, emulation, and a desire of glory and distinction? And if he is not to act by these principles when he is a man, why do we call him to act by them in his youth?

Envy

Envy is acknowledg'd by all people to be the most ungenerous, base and wicked passion, that can enter into the heart of man.

And is this a temper to be instill'd, nourish'd and establish'd in the minds of young

people?

I know it is said, that it is not envy, but emulation, that is intended to be awaken'd in

the minds of young men.

But this is vainly said. For when children are taught to bear no rival, and to scorn to be outdone by any of their age, they are plainly and directly taught to be envious. For it is impossible for any one to have this scorn of being outdone, and this contention with rivals, without burning with envy against all those that seem to excel him, or get any distinction from him. So that what children are taught, is rank envy, and only cover'd with a name of a less odious sound.

Secondly, If envy is thus confessedly bad, and it be only emulation that is endeavour'd to be awaken'd in children, surely there ought to be great care taken, that children may know the one from the other. That they may abominate the one as a great crime, whilst they give the other admission into their minds.

But if this were to be attempted, the fineness of the distinction betwixt envy and emulation, would shew that it was easier to divide them in words, than to separate them in

action.

For *emulation*, when it is defin'd in its best manner, is nothing else but a *refinement* upon envy, or rather the most *plausible part* of that

black and venomous passion.

And though it is easy to separate them in the *notion*, yet the most acute *Philosopher*, that understands the art of distinguishing ever so well, if he gives himself up to *emulation*, will certainly find himself *deep* in *envy*.

For *envy* is not an *original* temper, but the natural, necessary, and unavoidable effect of

emulation, or a desire of glory.

So that he who establishes the one in the minds of people, necessarily fixes the other there. And there is no other possible way of destroying envy, but by destroying emulation, or a desire of glory. For the one always rises

and falls in proportion to the other.

I know it is said in defense of this method of education, that ambition, and a desire of glory, are necessary to excite young people to industry; and that if we were to press upon them the doctrines of humility, we should deject their minds, and sink them into dulness and idleness.

But these people who say this, don't consider, that this reason, if it has any strength, is full as strong against pressing the doctrines of humility upon grown men, lest we should deject their minds, and sink them into dulness and idleness.

For who does not see, that middle-aged men want as much the assistance of pride, ambi-

tion, and vain-glory, to spur them up to action and industry, as *children* do? And it is very certain, that the precepts of humility are more contrary to the designs of such men, and more grievous to their minds, when they are pressed upon them, than they are to the minds of young persons.

This reason therefore that is given, why children should not be trained up in the principles of true humility, is as good a reason why the same humility should never be re-

quir'd of grown men.

Thirdly, Let those people, who think that children would be spoil'd, if they were not thus educated, consider this.

Could they think, that if any children had been educated by our blessed Lord, or his holy Apostles, that their minds would have been

sunk into dulness and idleness?

Or could they think, that such children would not have been train'd up in the profoundest principles of a strict and true humility? Can they say that our blessed Lord, who was the meekest and humblest man that ever was on earth, was hinder'd by his humility from being the greatest example of worthy and glorious actions, that ever were done by man?

Can they say that his Apostles, who liv'd in the humble spirit of their master, did therefore cease to be laborious and active instruments of doing good to all the world?

A few

A few such reflections as these, are sufficient to expose all the poor pretences for an edu-

cation in pride and ambition.

Paternus liv'd about two hundred years ago; he had but one son, whom he educated himself in his own house. As they were sitting together in the Garden, when the child was ten years old, Paternus thus began to him.

The little time that you have been in the world, my child, you have spent wholly with me; and my love and tenderness to you, has made you look upon me as your only friend and benefactor, and the cause of all the comfort and pleasure that you enjoy: Your heart, I know, would be ready to break with grief, if you thought this was the last day that I should live with you.

But, my child, tho' you now think your self mighty happy, because you have hold of my hand, you are now in the hands, and under the tender care of a much greater father and friend than I am, whose love to you is far greater than mine, and from whom you receive such blessings as no mortal can give.

That God whom you have seen me daily worship, whom I daily call upon to bless both you and me, and all mankind, whose wondrous acts are recorded in those Scriptures which you constantly read. That God who created the heavens and the earth, who brought a flood upon the old world, who sav'd Noah in the Ark, who was the God of Abra-

ham

ham, Isaac and Jacob, whom Job blessed and prais'd in the greatest afflictions, who deliver'd the Israelites out of the hands of the Egyptians, who was the protector of righteous Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and holy Daniel, who sent so many Prophets into the world, who sent his Son Jesus Christ to redeem mankind; this God who has done all these great things, who has created so many millions of men, who liv'd and died before you was born, with whom the spirits of good men that are departed this life, now live, whom infinite numbers of Angels now worship in Heaven; this great God who is the creator of worlds, of angels, and men, is your loving father and friend, your good creator and nourisher, from whom and not from me, you receiv'd your being ten years ago, at the time that I planted that little tender Elm which you there see.

I my self am not half the age of this shady Oak, under which we sit; many of our fathers have sat under its boughs, we have all of us call'd it ours in our turn, tho' it stands, and drops its masters, as it drops its leaves.

You see, my son, this wide and large Firmament over our heads, where the Sun and Moon, and all the Stars appear in their turns. If you was to be carried up to any of these bodies at this vast distance from us, you would still discover others, as much above you, as the Stars that you see here are above the Earth. Were you to go up or down, East or

West

West, North or South, you would find the same height without any top, and the same

depth without any bottom.

And yet my child, so great is God, that all these bodies added together, are but as a grain of sand in his sight. And yet you are as much the care of this great God and Father of all worlds and all spirits, as if he had no son but you, or there were no creature for him to love and protect but you alone. He numbers the hairs of your head, watches over you sleeping and waking, and has preserv'd you from a thousand dangers, which neither you, nor I know any thing of.

How poor my power is, and how little I am able to do for you, you have often seen. Your late *sickness* has shewn you how little I could do for you in that state; and the frequent pains of your head are plain proofs, that

I have no power to remove them.

I can bring you *food* and *medicines*, but have no power to turn them into your relief and nourishment; it is God alone that can do this

for you.

Therefore, my child, fear, and worship, and love God. Your eyes indeed cannot yet see him, but every thing you see, are so many marks of his power and presence, and he is nearer to you, than any thing that you can see.

Take him for your Lord, and Father, and Friend, look up unto him as the fountain and cause of all the good that you have receiv'd through

through my hands, and reverence me only as the *bearer* and *minister* of God's good things unto you. And he that blessed my father before I was born, will bless you when I am dead.

Your youth and little mind is only yet acquainted with my family, and therefore you

think there is no happiness out of it.

But, my child, you belong to a greater Family than mine, you are a young member of the family of this Almighty Father of all Nations, who has created infinite orders of Angels, and numberless generations of men, to be fellow-members of one and the same society in Heaven.

You do well to reverence and obey my authority, because God has given me power over you, to bring you up in his fear, and to do for you, as the holy fathers recorded in Scripture did for their children, who are now

in rest and peace with God.

I shall in a short time die, and leave you to God, and your self, and if God forgiveth my sins, I shall go to his Son Jesus Christ, and live amongst Patriarchs and Prophets, Saints and Martyrs, where I shall pray for you, and hope for your safe arrival at the same place.

Therefore, my child, meditate on these great things, and your soul will soon grow great and noble by so meditating upon them.

Let your thoughts often leave these gardens, these fields and farms, to contemplate upon God and Heaven, to consider upon Angels,

and

and the spirits of good men living in light

and glory.

As you have been us'd to look to me in all your actions, and have been afraid to do any thing, unless you first knew my will; so let it now be a rule of your life, to look up to God in all your actions, to do every thing in his fear, and to abstain from every thing that is not according to his will.

Bear him always in your mind, teach your thoughts to reverence him in every place, for

there is no place where he is not.

God keepeth a book of life, wherein all the actions of all men are written; your name is there, my child, and when you die, this book will be laid open before men and angels, and according as your actions are there found, you will either be receiv'd to the happiness of those holy men who have died before you, or be turn'd away amongst wicked spirits, that are never to see God any more.

Never forget this book, my son, for it is written, it must be open'd, you must see it, and you must be try'd by it. Strive therefore to fill it with your good deeds, that the handwriting of God may not appear against you.

God, my child, is all love, and wisdom, and goodness; and every thing that he has made, and every action that he does, is the effect of them all. Therefore you cannot please God, but so far as you strive to walk in love, wisdom and goodness. As all wisdom, love and

goodness

goodness proceeds from God, so nothing but love, wisdom, and goodness can lead to God.

When you love that which God loves, you act with him, you joyn your self to him; and when you love what he dislikes, then you oppose him, and separate your self from him. This is the true and the right way; think what God loves, and do you love it with all your heart.

First of all, my child, worship and adore God, think of him magnificently, speak of him reverently, magnify his providence, adore his power, frequent his service, and pray

unto him frequently and constantly.

Next to this, love your neighbour, which is all mankind, with such tenderness and affection, as you love your self. Think how God loves all mankind, how merciful he is to them, how tender he is of them, how carefully he preserves them, and then strive to love the world, as God loves it.

God would have all men to be happy, therefore do you will, and desire the same. All men are great instances of divine love, therefore let all men be instances of your

love.

But above all, my son, mark this, never do any thing through strife, or envy, or emulation, or vain-glory. Never do any thing in order to excell other people, but in order to please God, and because it is his will, that you should do every thing in the best manner that you can.

For

For if it is once a pleasure to you to excell other people, it will by degrees be a pleasure to you, to see other people not so good as

your self.

Banish therefore every thought of *self-pride* and *self-distinction*, and accustom your self to rejoice in all the excellencies and perfections of your fellow-creatures, and be as glad to see any of their good actions, as your own.

For as God is as well pleas'd with their well doings, as with yours, so you ought to desire, that every thing that is wise, and holy, and good, may be perform'd in as high a manner

by other people, as by your self.

Let this therefore be your only motive and spur to all good actions, honest industry, and business, to do every thing in as perfect and excellent a manner as you can, for this only reason, because it is pleasing to God, who desires your perfection, and writes all your actions in a book. When I am dead, my son, you will be master of all my estate, which will be a great deal more, than the necessities of one family require. Therefore as you are to be charitable to the souls of men, and wish them the same happiness with you in heaven, so be charitable to their bodies, and endeavour to make them as happy as you upon earth.

As God has created all things for the common good of all men, so let that part of them which is fallen to your share, be employ'd as God would have all employ'd, for the com-

mon good of all.

Do good, my son, first of all to those that most deserve it, but remember to do good to all. The greatest sinners receive daily instances of God's goodness towards them, he nourishes and preserves them, that they may repent, and return to him; do you therefore imitate God, and think no one too bad to receive your relief and kindness, when you see that he wants it.

I am teaching you Latin and Greek, not that you should desire to be a great Critick, a fine Poet, or an eloquent Orator; I would not have your heart feel any of these desires, for the desire of these accomplishments, is a vanity of the mind, and the masters of them are generally vain men. For the desire of any thing that is not a real good, lessens the application of the mind after that which is so.

But I teach you these languages, that at proper times you may look into the history of past ages, and learn the methods of God's providence over the world. That reading the writings of the antient Sages, you may see how wisdom and virtue have been the praises of great men of all ages, and fortify your mind by their wise sayings.

Let truth and plainness therefore be the only ornament of your language, and study nothing but how to think of all things as they deserve, to chuse every thing that is best, to live according to reason and order, and to act in every part of your life in conformity to

the will of God.

Study how to fill your heart full of the love of God, and the love of your neighbour, and then be content to be no deeper a scholar, no finer a gentleman, than these tempers will make you. As true Religion is nothing else but simple Nature govern'd by right reason, so it loves and requires great plainness and simplicity of life. Therefore avoid all superfluous shews of finery and equipage, and let your house be plainly furnish'd with moderate conveniencies. Don't consider what your estate can afford, but what right reason requires.

Let your *dress* be sober, clean, and modest, not to set out the beauty of your person, but to declare the sobriety of your mind, that your outward garb may resemble the inward plainness and simplicity of your heart. For it is highly reasonable, that you should be *one man*, all of a piece, and appear outwardly

such as you are inwardly.

As to your *meat* and *drink*, in them observe the *highest rules* of Christian temperance and sobriety; consider your body only as the servant and minister of your soul; and only so nourish it, as it may best perform an humble and obedient service to it.

But, my son, observe this as a most principal thing, which I shall remember you of, as long as I live with you.

Hate and despise all buman glory, for it is nothing else but human folly. It is the grea-

test snare, and the greatest betrayer that you

can possibly admit into your heart.

Love humility in all its instances, practise it in all its parts, for it is the noblest state of the soul of man; it will set your heart and affections right towards God, and fill you with every temper that is tender and affectionate towards men.

Let every day therefore be a day of humility, condescend to all the weakness, and infirmities of your fellow-creatures, cover their frailties, love their excellencies, encourage their virtues, relieve their wants, rejoice in their prosperities, compassionate their distress, receive their friendship, overlook their unkindness, forgive their malice, be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowest offices to the lowest of mankind.

Aspire after nothing but your own purity and perfection, and have no ambition but to do every thing in so reasonable and religious a manner, that you may be glad that God is every where present, and sees and observes all your actions. The greatest trial of humility, is an humble behaviour towards your equals in age, estate, and condition of life. Therefore be careful of all the motions of your heart towards these people. Let all your behaviour towards them be govern'd by unfeigned love. Have no desire to put any of your equals below you, nor any anger at those that would put themselves above you. If they are proud, they are ill of a very bad distemper, let them therefore

therefore have your tender pity, and perhaps your meekness may prove an occasion of their cure. But if your humility should do them no good, it will however be the greatest good that you can do to your self.

Remember that there is but one man in the world, with whom you are to have perpetual contention, and be always striving to exceed

him, and that is your self.

The time of practising these precepts, my child, will soon be over with you, the world will soon slip through your hands, or rather you will soon slip through it; it seems but the other day since I receiv'd these same instructions from my dear Father, that I am now leaving with you. And the God that gave me ears to hear, and a heart to receive what my Father said unto me, will, I hope, give you grace to love and follow the same instructions.

Thus did Paternus educate his son.

Can any one now think that such an education as this, would weaken and deject the minds of young people, and deprive the world of any worthy and reasonable labours?

It is so far from that, that there is nothing so likely to enoble, and exalt the mind, and prepare it for the most heroical exercise of all virtues.

For who will say, that a love of God, a desire of pleasing him, a love of our neighbour, a love of truth, of reason, and virtue, a contemplation of eternity, and the rewards of piety, are not stronger motives to great

and good actions, than a little uncertain popu-

lar praise.

On the other hand, there is nothing in reality that more weakens the mind, and reduces it to meanness and slavery, nothing that makes it less master of its own actions, or less capable of following reason, than a love of praise and honour.

For as praise and honour are often given to things and persons, where they are not due, as that is generally most prais'd and honour'd, that most gratifies the humours, fashions, and vicious tempers of the world: so he that acts upon the desire of praise and applause, must part with every other principle; he must say black is white, put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, and do the meanest, basest things, in order to be applauded.

For in a corrupt world, as this is, worthy actions are only to be supported by their own worth, where instead of being prais'd and honour'd, they are most often reproach'd, and

persecuted.

So that to educate children upon a motive of *emulation*, or a desire of *glory*, in a world where glory it self is *false*, and most commonly given *wrong*, is to destroy the natural integrity and fortitude of their minds, and give them a *biass* which will oftner carry them to base and mean, than great and worthy actions.

#### CHAP. XIX

Shewing how the method of educating daughters, makes it difficult for them to enter into the spirit of Christian humility. How miserably they are injur'd and abus'd by such an education. The spirit of a better education represented in the character of Eusebia

THAT turn of mind which is taught and encourag'd in the education of daughters, makes it exceeding difficult for them to enter into such a sense and practice of humility, as the spirit of Christianity requireth.

The right education of this sex is of the utmost importance to human life. There is nothing that is more desirable for the common good of all the world. For though women don't carry on the trade and business of the world, yet as they are mothers, and mistresses of families, that have for some time the care of the education of their children of both sorts, they are entrusted with that which is of the greatest consequence to human life. For this reason, good or bad women are likely to do as much good or harm in the world, as good or bad men in the greatest business of life.

For as the *health* and *strength*, or *weakness* of our bodies, is very much owing to *their methods* 

methods of treating us when we were young; so the soundness or folly of our minds are not less owing to those first tempers and ways of thinking, which we eagerly receiv'd from the love, tenderness, authority, and constant conversation of our mothers.

As we call our first language our mothertongue, so we may as justly call our first tempers our mother-tempers; and perhaps it may be found more easy to forget the language, than to part entirely with those tempers which we learnt in the nursery.

It is therefore much to be lamented, that this sex, on whom so much depends, who have the first forming both of our bodies and our minds, are not only educated in pride, but in the silliest and most contemptible part of it.

They are not indeed suffer'd to dispute with us the proud prizes of arts and sciences, of learning and eloquence, in which I have much suspicion they would often prove our superiors; but we turn them over to the study of beauty and dress, and the whole world conspires to make them think of nothing else. Fathers and mothers, friends and relations, seem to have no other wish towards the little girl, but that she may have a fair skin, a fine shape, dress well, and dance to admiration.

Now if a fondness for our persons, a desire of beauty, a love of dress, be a part of pride (as surely it is a most contemptible part of it) the first step towards a woman's humility, seems

to require a repentance of her education.

For it must be own'd that, generally speaking, good parents are never more fond of their daughters, than when they see them too fond of themselves, and dress'd in such a manner, as is a great reproach to the gravity and sobriety of the Christian life.

And what makes this matter still more to be lamented, is this, That women are not only spoil'd by this education, but we spoil that part of the world, which would otherwise furnish most instances of an eminent and

exalted piety.

For I believe it may be affirmed, that for the most part there is a finer sense, a clearer mind, a readier apprehension, and gentler dispo-

sitions in that sex, than in the other.

All which tempers, if they were truly improved by *proper* studies, and *sober* methods of education, would in all probability carry them to greater heights of piety, than are to be found amongst the generality of men.

For this reason I speak of this matter with so much openness and plainness, because it is much to be lamented, that persons so *naturally* qualified to be great examples of *piety*, should by an erroneous education, be made *poor* and *gaudy* spectacles of the greatest vanity.

The Church has formerly had eminent saints in that sex; and it may reasonably be thought, that it is purely owing to their poor and vain education, that this honour of their sex is for

the most part confin'd to former ages.

The

The corruption of the world indulges them in great vanity, and mankind seem to consider them in no other view, than as so many painted idols, that are to allure and gratify their passions; so that if many women are vain, light, gugaw creatures, they have this to excuse themselves, that they are not only such as their education has made them, but such as the generality of the world allows them to be.

But then they should consider, that the friends to their vanity are no friends of theirs; they should consider, that they are to live for themselves, that they have as great a share in the rational nature as men have; that they have as much reason to pretend, and as much necessity to aspire after the highest accomplishments of a Christian and solid virtue, as the gravest and wisest amongst Christian Philosophers.

They should consider, that they are abus'd and injur'd, and betray'd from their only perfection, whenever they are taught, that any thing is an ornament in them, that is not an

ornament in the wisest amongst mankind.

It is generally said, that women are naturally of little and vain minds; but this I look upon to be as false and unreasonable, as to say, that butchers are naturally cruel; for as their cruelty is not owing to their nature, but to their way of life, which has changed their nature; so whatever littleness and vanity is to be observed in the minds of women, it is like the cruelty of butchers, a temper that is wrought

wrought into them by that life which they

are taught and accustomed to lead.

At least thus much must be said, that we cannot charge any thing upon their *nature*, till we take care that it is not *perverted* by their education.

And on the other hand, if it were true, that they were thus naturally vain and light, then how much more blameable is that education, which seems contriv'd to *strengthen* and *increase* this folly and weakness of their minds?

For if it were a virtue in a woman to be proud and vain in herself, we could hardly take better means to raise this passion in her, than those that are now used in their education.

Matilda is a fine woman, of good breeding, great sense, and much religion. She has three daughters that are educated by herself. She will not trust them with any one else, or at any school, for fear they should learn any thing ill. She stays with the Dancing-master all the time he is with them, because she will hear every thing that is said to them. She has heard them read the Scriptures so often, that they can repeat great part of it without book: And there is scarce a good book of devotion, but you may find it in their closets.

Had *Matilda* liv'd in the first ages of Christianity, when it was practis'd in the *fulness* and *plainness* of its doctrines, she had in all probability been one of its greatest saints.

Bu

But as she was born in corrupt times, where she wants examples of Christian perfection, and hardly ever saw a piety higher than her own; so she has many defects, and communicates them all to her daughters.

Matilda never was meanly dress'd in her life; and nothing pleases her in dress, but that which is very rich, and beautiful to the eye.

Her daughters see her great zeal for Religion, but then they see an equal earnestness for all sorts of *finery*. They see she is not negligent of her *devotion*, but then they see her more careful to preserve her *complexion*, and to prevent those changes, which time and age threaten her with.

They are afraid to meet her, if they have miss'd the *Church*; but then they are more afraid to see her, if they are not *lac'd* as

straight as they can possibly be.

She often shews them her own picture, which was taken when their father fell in love with her. She tells them, how distracted he was with passion at the first sight of her, and that she had never had so fine a complexion, but for the diligence of her good mother, who took exceeding care of it.

Matilda is so intent upon all the arts of improving their dress, that she has some new fancy almost every day, and leaves no ornament untry'd, from the richest jewel to the poorest flower. She is so nice and critical in her judgment, so sensible of the smallest error, that the maid is often forced to dress and un-

dress

dress her daughters three or four times in a day, before she can be satisfy'd with it.

As to the patching, she reserves that to her self; for, she says, if they are not stuck on with judgment, they are rather a prejudice, than an advantage to the face.

The children see so plainly the temper of their mother, that they even affect to be more pleas'd with dress, and to be more fond of every little ornament, than they really are, merely to gain her favour.

They saw their eldest sister once brought to her tears, and her perverseness severely reprimanded, for presuming to say, that she thought it was better to cover the neck, than to go so far naked as the modern dress requires.

She stints them in their meals, and is very scrupulous of what they eat and drink, and tells them how many fine shapes she has seen spoil'd in her time for want of such care. If a pimple rises in their faces, she is in a great fright, and they themselves are as afraid to see her with it, as if they had committed some great sin.

Whenever they begin to look too sanguine and healthful, she calls in the assistance of the doctor; and if physick, or issues, will keep the complexion from inclining to coarse or ruddy,

she thinks them well imploy'd.

By this means they are poor, pale, sickly, infirm creatures, vapour'd through want of spirits, crying at the smallest accidents, swooning away at any thing that frights them, and hardly

hardly able to bear the weight of their best cloaths.

The eldest daughter liv'd as long as she could under this discipline, and dy'd in the

twentieth year of her age.

When her body was open'd, it appear'd that her ribs had grown into her liver, and that her other entrails were much hurt, by being crush'd together with her stays, which her mother had order'd to be twitch'd so strait, that it often brought tears into her eyes, whilst the maid was dressing her.

Her youngest daughter is run away with a gamester, a man of great beauty, who in

dressing and dancing has no superior.

Matilda says, she should die with grief at this accident; but that her conscience tells her, she has contributed nothing to it her self. She appeals to their closets, to their books of devotion, to testify what care she has taken to establish her children in a life of solid piety and devotion.

Now though I don't intend to say, that no daughters are brought up in a better way than this, for I hope there are many that are; yet thus much I believe may be said, that the much greater part of them, are not brought up so well, or accustomed to so much Religion, as in the present instance.

Their minds are turn'd as much to the care of their beauty and dress, and the indulgence of vain desires, as in the present case, without having such rules of devotion to stand

against

against it. So that if solid piety, humility, and a sober sense of themselves, is much wanted in that sex, it is the plain and natural consequence of a vain and corrupt education.

And if they are often too ready to receive the first fops, beauxs, and fine dancers, for their husbands; 'tis no wonder they should like that in men, which they have been taught to admire in themselves.

And if they are often seen to lose that little Religion they were taught in their youth, 'tis no more to be wonder'd at, than to see a little flower choak'd and kill'd amongst rank weeds.

For personal pride, and affectation, a delight in beauty, and fondness of finery, are tempers that must either kill all Religion in the soul, or be themselves kill'd by it; they can no more thrive together, than health and sickness.

Some people that judge hastily, will perhaps here say, that I am exercising too great

a severity against the sex.

But more reasonable persons will easily observe, that I entirely spare the sex, and only arraign their education; that I not only spare them, but plead their interest, assert their bonour, set forth their perfections, commend their natural tempers, and only condemn that education, which is so injurious to their interests, so debases their honour, and deprives them

them of the benefit of their excellent natures

and tempers.

Their education, I profess, I cannot spare; but the only reason is, because it is their greatest enemy, because it deprives the world of so many blessings, and the Church of so many saints, as might reasonably be expected from persons, so form'd by their natural tempers to all goodness and tenderness, and so fitted by the clearness and brightness of their minds, to contemplate, love and admire every thing that is holy, virtuous and divine.

If it should here be said, that I even charge too high upon their education, and that they are not so much hurt by it, as I imagine:

It may be answer'd, that though I don't pretend to state the *exact degree* of mischief that is done by it, yet its plain and natural tendency to do harm, is sufficient to justify the most *absolute* condemnation of it.

But if any one would know, how generally women are hurt by this education; if he imagines there may be no personal pride, or vain fondness of themselves, in those that are patch'd and dress'd out with so much glitter of art and ornament:

Let him only make the following experiment where-ever he pleases.

Let him only acquaint any such woman with his opinion of her: I don't mean that he should tell her to her face, or do it in any

rude

rude publick manner; but let him contrive the most civil, secret, friendly way that he can think of, only to let her know his opinion, that he thinks she is neither bandsome, nor dresses well, nor becomes her finery; and I dare say he will find there are but very few fine dress'd women, that will like him never the worse for his bare opinion, though known to none but themselves; and that he will not be long without seeing the effects of her resentment.

But if such an experiment would shew him that there are but few such women that could bear with his friendship, after they knew he had such an opinion of them, surely it is time to complain, of, and accuse that education. which so generally corrupts their hearts.

For though it is hard to judge of the hearts of people, yet where they declare their resentment, and uneasiness at any thing, there they pass the judgment upon themselves. If a woman can't forgive a man who thinks she has no beauty, nor any ornament from her dress, there she infallibly discovers the state of her own heart, and is condemn'd by her own. and not another's judgment.

For we never are angry at others, but when their opinions of us are contrary to that which

we have of our selves.

A man that makes no pretences to scholarship, is never angry at those that don't take him to be a scholar: So if a woman had no opinion of her own person and dress, she would never be angry at those, who are of the same opinion with her self.

So that the general bad effects of this education are too much known, to admit of any

reasonable doubt.

But how possible it is to bring up daughters in a more excellent way, let the following character declare.

Eusebia is a pious widow, well born, and well bred, and has a good estate for five daughters, whom she brings up as one entrusted by God, to fit five Virgins for the kingdom of Heaven. Her family has the same regulation as a religious house, and all its orders tend to the support of a constant regular devotion.

She, her daughters, and her maids, meet together at all the hours of prayer in the day, and chant Psalms, and other devotions, and spend the rest of their time in such good works, and innocent diversions, as render them fit to return to their Psalms and Prayers.

She loves them as her spiritual children, and they reverence her as their spiritual mother, with an affection far above that of the fondest friends.

She has divided part of her estate amongst them, that every one may be charitable out of their own stock, and each of them take it in their turns to provide for the poor and sick of the Parish.

Eusebia brings them up to all kinds of labour that are proper for women, as sowing, knitting knitting, spinning, and all other parts of house-wifery; not for their amusement, but that they may be serviceable to themselves and others, and be sav'd from those temptations which attend an idle life.

She tells them, she had rather see them reduced to the necessity of maintaining themselves by their own work, than to have riches to excuse themselves from labour. For though, says she, you may be able to assist the poor without your labour, yet by your labour you will be able to assist them more.

If Eusebia has liv'd as free from sin as it is possible for human nature, it is because she is always watching and guarding against all instances of pride. And if her virtues are stronger and higher than other people's, 'tis because they are all founded in a deep humility.

My children, says she, when your father dy'd, I was much pity'd by my friends, as having all the care of a family, and the ma-

nagement of an estate fallen upon me.

But my own grief was founded upon another principle; I was griev'd to see my self depriv'd of so faithful a friend, and that such an eminent example of Christian virtues, should be taken from the eyes of his children, before they were of an age to love and follow it.

But as to worldly cares, which my friends thought so heavy upon me, they are most of them them of our own making, and fall away as soon as we know our selves.

If a person in a *dream* is disturb'd with strange appearances, his trouble is over as soon as he is *awake*, and sees that it was the

folly of a dream.

Now when a right knowledge of our selves enters into our minds, it makes as great a change in all our thoughts and apprehensions, as when we awake from the wandrings of a dream.

We acknowledge a man to be mad, or melancholy, who fancies himself to be glass, and so is afraid of stirring; or taking himself to be wax, dare not let the Sun shine upon him.

But, my children, there are things in the world which pass for wisdom, politeness, grandeur, happiness, and fine breeding, which shew as great ignorance of our selves, and might as justly pass for thorough madness, as when a man fancies himself to be glass, or ice.

A woman that dares not appear in the world without *fine cloaths*, that thinks it a happiness to have a face *finely colour'd*, to have a skin *delicately fair*, that had rather die than be reduc'd to poverty, and be forc'd to work for a poor maintenance, is as ignorant of her self to the full, as he that fancies himself to be *glass*.

For this reason, all my discourse with you, has been to acquaint you with your selves, and to accustom you to such books and devo-

tions

tions, as may best instruct you in this greatest

of all knowledge.

You would think it hard, not to know the family into which you was born, what ancestors you were descended from, and what estate was to come to you. But, my children, you may know all this with exactness, and yet be as ignorant of your selves, as he that takes himself to be wax.

For though you were all of you born of my body, and bear your father's name, yet you are all of you pure spirits. I don't mean that you have not bodies that want meat and drink, and sleep, and cloathing, but that all that deserves to be called you, is nothing else but spirit. A being spiritual and rational in its nature, that is as contrary to all fleshly or corporeal beings, as life is contrary to death; that is made in the image of God, to live for ever, never to cease any more, but to enjoy life, and reason, and knowledge, and happiness in the presence of God, and the society of Angels, and glorious Spirits, to all eternity.

Every thing that you call yours, besides this spirit, is but like your *cloathing*; something that is only to be us'd for a while, and then to *end*, and *die*, and *wear away*, and to signify no more to you, than the *cloathing* and

bodies of other people.

But, my children, you are not only in this manner *spirits*, but you are *fallen* spirits, that began your life in a state of corruption and

disor-

disorder, full of tempers and passions, that blind and darken the reason of your mind, and incline you to that which is hurtful.

Your bodies are not only poor and perishing like your cloaths, but they are like infected cloaths, that fill you with ill diseases and distempers, which oppress the soul with sickly appetites, and vain cravings.

So that all of us are like two beings, that have, as it were, two hearts within us; with the one we see, and taste, and admire reason, purity and holiness; with the other we incline to pride, and vanity, and sensual delights.

This internal war we always feel within us more or less; and if you would know the one thing necessary to all the world, it is this; to preserve and perfect all that is rational, holy and divine in our nature, and to mortify, remove and destroy all that vanity, pride and sensuality, which springs from the corruption of our state?

Could you think, my children, when you look at the world, and see what customs, and fashions, and pleasures, and troubles, and projects, and tempers, employ the hearts and time of mankind, that things were thus, as I have told you?

But don't you be affected at these things, the world is in a great *dream*, and but few

people are awake in it.

We fancy that we fall into darkness, when we die; but alas, we are most of us in the dark 'till then; and the eyes of our souls on-

ly then begin to see, when our bodily eyes

are closing.

You see then your state, my children; you are to honour, improve and perfect the spirit that is within you, you are to prepare it for the kingdom of Heaven, to nourish it with the love of God, and of virtue, to adorn it with good-works, and to make it as holy and heavenly as you can. You are to preserve it from the errors and vanities of the world; to save it from the corruptions of the body, from those false delights, and sensual tempers, which the body tempts it with.

You are to nourish your spirits with pious readings, and holy meditations, with watchings, fastings, and prayers, that you may taste, and relish, and desire that eternal state,

which is to begin when this life ends.

As to your bodies, you are to consider them as poor, perishing things, that are sickly and corrupt at present, and will soon drop into common dust. You are to watch over them as enemies, that are always trying to tempt and betray you, and so never follow their advice and counsel; you are to consider them as the place and habitation of your souls, and so keep them pure, and clean, and decent; you are to consider them as the servants and instruments of action, and so give them food, and rest, and raiment, that they may be strong and healthful to do the duties of a charitable, useful, pious life.

Whilst you live thus, you live like your selves; and whenever you have less regard to your souls, or more regard to your bodies, than this comes to; whenever you are more intent upon adorning your persons, than upon the perfecting of your souls, you are much more beside yourselves, than he, that had rather have a lac'd coat, than an healthful body.

For this reason, my children, I have taught you nothing that was dangerous for you to learn; I have kept you from every thing that might betray you into weakness and folly; or make you think any thing fine, but a fine mind; any thing happy, but the favour of God; or any thing desirable, but to do all the good

you possibly can.

Instead of the vain, immodest entertainment of *Plays* and *Opera's*, I have taught you to delight in visiting the *sick* and *poor*. What *musick*, and *dancing*, and *diversions* are to many in the world, that prayers, and devotions, and Psalms are to you. Your hands have not been employ'd in plaiting the hair, and adorning your persons; but in making cloaths for the naked. You have not wasted your fortunes upon yourselves, but have added your labour to them, for to do more good to other people.

Instead of forc'd shapes, patch'd faces, genteel airs, and affected motions, I have taught you to conceal your bodies with modest garments, and let the world have nothing to view of you, but the plainness, the sincerity, and bu-

mility of all your behaviour.

You know, my children, the high perfection, and the great rewards, of virginity; you know how it frees from worldly cares and troubles, and furnishes means and opportunities of higher advancements in a divine life; therefore love, and esteem, and honour virginity: bless God for all that glorious company of holy virgins, that from the beginning of Christianity have, in the several ages of the Church, renounced the cares and pleasures of matrimony, to be perpetual examples of solitude, contemplation, and prayer.

But as every one has their proper gift from God, as I look upon you all to be so many great blessings of a married state; so I leave it to your choice, either to do as I have done, or to aspire after higher degrees of perfection in

a virgin state of life.

I desire nothing, I press nothing upon you, but to make the most of human life, and to aspire after perfection in whatever state of life

you chuse.

Never therefore consider yourselves as persons that are to be seen, admir'd and courted by men; but as poor sinners, that are to save yourselves from the vanities and follies of a miserable world, by humility, devotion, and self-denial. Learn to live for your own sakes, and the service of God; and let nothing in the world be of any value with you, but that which

which you can turn into a service to God, and

a means of your future happiness.

Consider often how powerfully you are called to a virtuous life, and what great and glorious things God has done for you, to make you in love with every thing that can promote his glory.

Think upon the vanity and shortness of human life, and let death and eternity be often in your minds; for these thoughts will strengthen and exalt your minds, make you wise and judicious, and truly sensible of the

littleness of all human things.

Think of the happiness of prophets and apostles, saints and martyrs, who are now rejoicing in the presence of God, and see themselves possessors of eternal glory. And then think how desirable a thing it is, to watch and pray, and do good as they did, that when you dye you may have your lot amongst them.

Whether marry'd therefore, or unmarry'd, consider yourselves as mothers and sisters, as friends and relations to all that want your assistance; and never allow yourselves to be idle, whilst others are in want of any thing that your hands can make for them.

This useful, charitable, humble employment of yourselves, is what I recommend to you with great earnestness, as being a substantial part of a wise and pious life. And besides the good you will thereby do to other

people

people, every virtue of your own heart will

be very much improv'd by it.

For next to reading, meditation, and prayer, there is nothing that so secures our hearts from foolish passions, nothing that preserves so holy and wise a frame of mind, as some useful,

humble employment of ourselves.

Never therefore consider your labour as an amusement, that is to get rid of your time, and so may be as trifling as you please; but consider it as something that is to be serviceable to yourselves and others, that is to serve some sober ends of life, to save and redeem your time, and make it turn to your account, when the works of all people shall be try'd by fire.

When you was little, I left you to fittle amusements, to please yourselves in any things that were free from harm; but as you are now grown up to a knowledge of God, and your selves; as your minds are now acquainted with the worth and value of virtue, and exalted with the great doctrines of Religion, you are now to do nothing as children, but despise every thing that is poor, or vain, and imperiment; you are now to make the labours of your hands suitable to the piety of your hearts, and employ yourselves for the same ends, and with the same spirit, as you watch and pray.

For if there is any good to be done by your labour, if you can possibly employ yourselves usefully to other people, how silly is it, how contrary to the wisdom of Religion, to make that a mere amusement, which might as easily be made an exercise of the greatest charity?

What would you think of the wisdom of him, that should employ his time in distilling of waters, and making liquors which no body could use, merely to amuse himself with the variety of their colour and clearness, when with less labour and expence he might satisfy the wants of those, who have nothing to drink?

Yet he would be as wisely employ'd, as those that are amusing themselves with such tedious works as they neither need, nor hardly know how to use when they are finish'd; when with less labour and expence they might be doing as much good, as he that is *cloathing* the naked, or visiting the sick.

Be glad therefore to know the wants of the poorest people, and let your hands be employ'd in making such *mean* and *ordinary* things for them, as their necessities require. By thus making your labour a gift and service to the poor, your ordinary work will be changed into a holy service, and made as acceptable to God, as your devotions.

And as charity is the greatest of all virtues, as it always was the *chief temper* of the greatest saints; so nothing can make your own charity more amiable in the sight of God, than this method of adding your labour to it.

The humility also of this employment will be as beneficial to you, as the charity of it.

It will keep you from all vain and proud thoughts of your own state and distinction in life, and from treating the poor as creatures of a different species. By accustoming yourselves to this labour and service for the poor, as the representatives of Jesus Christ, you will soon find your heart soften'd into the greatest meekness and lowliness towards them. You will reverence their estate and condition, think it an bonour to serve them, and never be so pleas'd with yourself, as when you are most bumbly employ'd in their service.

This will make you true disciples of your meek Lord and Master, who came into the world not to be ministred unto, but to minister; and tho' he was Lord of all, and amongst the creatures of his own making, yet was amongst

them, as one that serveth.

Christianity has then had its most glorious effects upon your hearts, when it has thus changed your spirit, removed all the pride of life from you, and made you delight in humbling yourselves beneath the lowest of all your fellow-creatures.

Live therefore, my children, as you have begun your lives, in humble labour for the good of others; and let ceremonious visits, and vain acquaintances, have as little of your time as you possibly can. Contract no foolish friendships, or vain fondnesses for particular persons; but love them most, that most turn your love towards God, and your compassion towards all the world.

But above all, avoid the conversation of fine-bred fops and beaux, and hate nothing more than the idle discourse, the flattery and compliments of that sort of men; for they are the shame of their own sex, and ought to be the abhorrence of ours.

When you go abroad, let humility, modesty, and a decent carriage, be all the *state* that you take upon you; and let tenderness, compassion, and good nature, be all the *fine* 

breeding that you shew in any place.

If evil speaking, scandal, or backbiting, be the conversation where you happen to be, keep your heart and your tongue to yourself; be as much griev'd as if you was amongst cursing and swearing, and retire as soon as you can.

Though you intend to marry, yet let the time never come, till you find a man that has those perfections, which you have been labouring after yourselves; who is likely to be a friend to all your virtues, and with whom it is better to live, than to want the benefit of his example.

Love poverty, and reverence poor people; as for many reasons, so particularly for this, because our blessed Saviour was one of the number, and because you may make them all so many friends and advocates with God for you.

Visit and converse with them frequently; you will often find simplicity, innocence, patience, fortitude, and great piety amongst them;

and

and where they are not so, your good exam-

ple may amend them.

Rejoice at every opportunity of doing an humble action, and exercising the meekness of your minds; whether it be, as the Scripture expresses it, in washing the saints feet, that is, in waiting upon, and serving those that are below you; or in bearing with the haughtiness and ill-manners of those that are your equals, or above you. For there is nothing better than humility; it is the fruitful soil of all virtues; and every thing that is kind and good, naturally grows from it.

Therefore, my children, pray for, and practise humility, and reject every thing in *dress*, or *carriage*, or *conversation*, that has any ap-

pearance of pride.

Strive to do every thing that is praise-worthy, but do nothing in order to be praised; nor think of any reward for all your labours of love and virtue, till Christ cometh with all

his holy angels.

And above all, my children, have a care of vain and proud thoughts of our own virtues. For as soon as ever people live different from the common way of the world, and despise its vanities, the devil represents to their minds the height of their own perfections; and is content they should excel in good works, provided that he can but make them proud of them.

Therefore watch over your virtues with a jealous eye, and reject every vain thought, as you would reject the most wicked imagination; and think what a loss it would be to you, to have the fruit of all your good works devour'd by the vanity of your own minds.

Never therefore allow yourselves to despise those who do not follow your rules of life; but force your hearts to love them, and pray to God for them; and let humility be always whispering it into your ears, that you your selves will fall from those rules to-morrow, if God should leave you to your own strength and wisdom.

When therefore you have spent days and weeks well, don't suffer your hearts to contemplate any thing as your own, but give all the glory to the goodness of God, who has carry'd you through such rules of holy living, as you were not able to observe by your own strength; and take care to begin the next day, not as proficients in virtue, that can do great matters, but as poor beginners, that want the daily assistance of God to save you from the grossest sing.

Your dear father was an humble, watchful, pious, wise man. Whilst his sickness would suffer him to talk with me, his discourse was chiefly about your education. He knew the benefits of humility, he saw the ruins which pride made in our sex; and therefore he conjur'd me with the tenderest expressions, to renounce the fashionable ways of educating daughters in pride and softness, in the care of their beauty and dress; and to bring you all up in

in the plainest, simplest instances of an humble,

holy, and industrious life.

He taught me an admirable rule of humility, which he practis'd all the days of his life; which was this; to let no morning pass, without thinking upon some frailty and infirmity of our own, that may put us to confusion, make us blush inwardly, and entertain a mean

opinion of our selves.

Think therefore, my children, that the soul of your good father, who is now with God, speaks to you through my mouth; and let the double desire of your father, who is gone, and I, who am with you, prevail upon you to love God, to study your own perfection, to practise humility, and with innocent labour and charity, to do all the good that you can to all your fellow-creatures, 'till God calls you to another life.

Thus did the pious widow educate her

daughters.

The spirit of this education speaks so plainly for its self, that, I hope, I need say nothing in its justification. If we could see it in life, as well as read of it in books, the world would soon find the happy effects of it.

A daughter thus educated, would be a blessing to any family that she came into; a fit companion for a wise man, and make him happy in the government of his family, and

the education of his children.

And she that either was not inclin'd, or could not dispose of her self well in marriage, would would know how to live to great and excel-

lent ends in a state of virginity.

A very ordinary knowledge of the spirit of Christianity, seems to be enough to convince us, that no education can be of true advantage to young women, but that which trains them up in humble industry, in great plainness of life, in exact modesty of dress, manners and carriage, and in strict devotion. For what should a Christian woman be, but a plain, unaffected, modest, humble creature, averse to every thing in her dress and carriage, that can draw the eyes of beholders, or gratify the passions of lewd and amorous persons?

How great a stranger must he be to the Gospel, who does not know that it requires this to be the spirit of a pious woman?

Our blessed Saviour saith, Whosoever looketh

St. Matth. v. hath already committed adultery
with her in his heart.

Need an education which turns women's minds to the arts and ornaments of dress and beauty, be more strongly condemn'd, than by these words? For surely, if the eye is so easily and dangerously betray'd, every art and ornament is sufficiently condemn'd, that naturally tends to betray it.

And how can a woman of piety more justly abhor and avoid any thing, than that which makes her person more a *snare* and *temptation* to other people? If *lust*, and *wanton eyes* are the death of the soul, can any women think

them-

themselves innocent, who with naked breasts, patch'd faces, and every ornament of dress,

invite the eye to offend?

And as there is no pretence for innocence in such a behaviour, so neither can they tell how to set any bounds to their guilt. For as they can never know how much, or how often they have occasion'd sin in other people, so they can never know how much guilt will be plac'd to their own account.

This one would think should sufficiently deter every pious woman from every thing that might render her the occasion of loose

passions in other people.

St. Paul, speaking of a thing entirely innocent, reasons after this manner: But take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to those that are weak.——And through thy knowledge thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died. But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will I Cor. viii. eat no flesh while the world standeth, 9, 11. lest I make my brother to offend.

Now if this is the spirit of Christianity; if it requires us to abstain from things thus lawful, innocent and useful, when there is any danger of betraying our weak brethren into any error thereby: Surely it cannot be reckon'd too nice or needless a point of conscience, for women to avoid such things, as are neither innocent nor useful, but naturally tend to

corrupt

corrupt their own hearts, and raise ill passions

in other people.

Surely every woman of christian piety ought to say, in the spirit of the Apostle, if patching and paint, or any vain adorning of my person, be a natural means of making weak, unwary eyes to offend, I will renounce all these arts as long as I live, lest I should make my fellow-creatures to offend.

I shall now leave this subject of *humility*; having said enough, as I hope, to recommend the necessity of making it the constant, chief subject of your devotion at this hour of

prayer.

I have consider'd the nature and necessity of humility, and its great importance to a religious life. I have shown you how many difficulties are form'd against it from our natural tempers, the spirit of the world, and the com-

mon education of both sexes.

These considerations will, I hope, instruct you how to form your prayers for it to the best advantage; and teach you the necessity of letting no day pass, without a serious earnest application to God, for the whole spirit of humility. Fervently beseeching him to fill every part of your soul with it, to make it the ruling, constant habit of your mind, that you may not only feel it, but feel all your other tempers arising from it; that you may have no thoughts, no desires, no designs, but such as are the true fruits of an humble, meek, and lowly heart.

That

That you may always appear poor, and little, and mean in your own eyes, and fully content that others should have the same opi-

nion of you.

That the whole course of your life, your expence, your house, your dress, your manner of eating, drinking, conversing, and doing every thing, may be so many continual proofs of the true unfeigned humility of your heart.

That you may look for nothing, claim nothing, resent nothing; that you may go through all the actions and accidents of life calmly and quietly, as in the presence of God, looking wholly unto him, acting wholly for him; neither seeking vain applause, nor resenting neglects, or affronts, but doing and receiving every thing in the meek and lowly spirit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

#### CHAP, XX

Recommending Devotion at twelve o' Clock, call'd in Scripture the sixth hour of the day. This frequency of Devotion equally desirable by all orders of people. Universal love is here recommended to be the subject of prayer at this hour. Of intercession, as an act of universal love

IT will perhaps be thought by some people, that these hours of prayer come too thick; that they can only be observ'd by people of great leisure, and ought not to be press'd upon the generality of men, who have the cares of families, trades and employments; nor upon the gentry, whose state and figure in the world cannot admit of this frequency of Devotion. And that it is only fit for Monasteries and Nunneries, or such people as have no more to do in the world than they have.

To this it is answer'd.

First, That this method of Devotion is not press'd upon any sort of people, as absolutely necessary, but recommended to all people, as the best, the happiest, and most perfect way of life.

And if a great and exemplary Devotion is as much the greatest happiness and perfection

of a Merchant, a Soldier, or a man of Quality, as it is the greatest happiness and perfection of the most retir'd contemplative life, then it is as proper to recommend it without any abatements to one order of men, as to another. Because happiness and perfection are of the

same worth and value to all people.

The Gentleman and Tradesman may, and must spend much of their time differently from the pious Monk in the cloyster, or the contemplative Hermit in the desart: But then, as the Monk and Hermit lose the ends of retirement, unless they make it all serviceable to Devotion; so the Gentleman and Merchant fail of the greatest ends of a social life, and live to their loss in the world, unless Devotion be their chief and governing temper.

It is certainly very honest and creditable for people to engage in trades and employments; it is reasonable for Gentlemen to manage well their estates and families, and take such recreations as are proper to their state. But then every Gentleman and Tradesman loses the greatest happiness of his creation, is robb'd of something that is greater than all employments, distinctions and pleasures of the world, if he does not live more to Piety and Devotion, than to any thing else in the world.

Here are therefore no excuses made for men of business and figure in the world. First, Because it would be to excuse them from that which is the greatest end of living; and be only

only finding so many reasons for making them less beneficial to themselves, and less serviceable to God and the world.

Secondly, Because most men of business and figure engage too far in worldly matters; much farther than the reasons of human life, or the necessities of the world require.

Merchants and Tradesmen, for instance, are generally ten times farther engag'd in business than they need; which is so far from being a reasonable excuse for their want of time for Devotion, that it is their crime, and must be censur'd as a blameable instance of covetousness and ambition.

The Gentry, and people of Figure, either give themselves up to State-employments, or to the gratifications of their passions, in a life of gaiety and debauchery; and if these things might be admitted as allowable avocations from Devotion, Devotion must be reckon'd a

poor circumstance of life.

Unless Genilemen can shew that they have another God, than the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; another Nature, than that which is deriv'd from Adam; another Religion than the Christian, 'tis in vain to plead their state, and dignity, and pleasures, as reasons for not preparing their souls for God, by a strict and regular Devotion.

For since Piety and Devotion are the *com*mon unchangeable means of saving all the souls in the world that shall be saved, there is no-

thing left for the Gentleman, the Soldier, and the Tradesman, but to take care that their several states be, by care and watchfulness, by meditation and prayer, made states of an exact and solid piety.

If a *Merchant*, having forbore from too great business, that he might quietly attend on the service of God, should therefore dye worth twenty, instead of fifty thousand pounds, could any one say that he had mistaken his calling, or gone a loser out of the world?

If a Gentleman should have killed fewer foxes, been less frequent at balls, gaming, and merry-meetings, because stated parts of his time had been given to retirement, to meditation and devotion, could it be thought, that when he left the world, he would regret the loss of those hours that he had given to the care and improvement of his soul?

If a Tradesman by aspiring after Christian perfection, and retiring himself often from his business, should instead of leaving his children fortunes to spend in luxury and idleness, leave them to live by their own honest labour; could it be said, that he had made a wrong use of the world, because he had shewn his children, that he had more regard to that which is eternal, than to this which is so soon to be at an end?

Since therefore devotion is not only the best and most desirable practice in a *Cloyster*, but the best and most desirable practice of men, as men, and in *every state* of life, they that desire to be excus'd from it, because they are men of figure, and estates, and business, are no wiser than those that should desire to be excus'd from health and happiness, because they were men of figure and estates.

I can't see why every Gentleman, Merchant, or Soldier, should not put these questions seri-

ously to himself:

What is the best thing for me to intend and drive at in all my actions? How shall I do to make the most of human life? What ways shall I wish that I had taken, when I am leaving the world?

Now to be thus wise, and to make thus much use of our reason, seems to be but a small and necessary piece of wisdom. For how can we pretend to sense and judgment, if we dare not seriously consider, and answer, and govern our lives by that which such questions require of us?

Shall a Nobleman think his birth too high a dignity to condescend to such questions as these? Or a Tradesman think his business too great, to take any care about himself?

Now here is desir'd no more devotion in any one's life, than the answering these few ques-

tions, requires.

Any devotion that is not to the greater advantage of him that uses it, than any thing that he can do in the *room* of it; any devotion that does not procure an *infinitely greater* good, than can be got by neglecting it, is freely yielded up, here is no demand of it.

But

But if people will live in so much ignorance, as never to put these questions to themselves, but push on a blind life at all chances, in quest of they don't know what, nor why; without ever considering the worth, or value, or tendency of their actions, without considering what God, reason, eternity, and their own happiness require of them; it is for the honour of devotion, that none can neglect it, but those who are thus inconsiderate, who dare not enquire after that which is the best, and most worthy of their choice.

It is true, Claudius, you are a man of figure and estate, and are to act the part of such a station in human life; you are not call'd as Elijah was to be a Prophet, or as St. Paul, to

be an Apostle.

But will you therefore not love yourself? Will you not seek and study your own happiness, because you are not call'd to preach up

the same things to other people?

You would think it very absurd, for a man not to value his own *health*, because he was not a *Physician*; or the preservation of his *limbs*, because he was not a *bone-setter*. Yet it is more absurd for you, *Claudius*, to neglect the improvement of your soul in piety, because you are not an Apostle, or a Bishop.

Consider this text of Scripture,
If ye live after the flesh, ye shall
dye; but if through the spirit
ye do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall
live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of

Z B

God, they are the sons of God. Do you think that this Scripture does not equally relate to all mankind? Can you find any exception here for men of figure and estates? Is not a spiritual and devout life here made the common condition, on which all men are to become sons of God? Will you leave hours of prayer, and rules of devotion, to particular states of life, when nothing but the same spirit of devotion can save you, or any man, from eternal death?

Consider again this text: For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Now if your estate would excuse you from appearing before this judgment-seat; if your figure could protect you from receiving according to your works, there would be some pretence for your leaving devotion to other people. But if you, who are now thus distinguished, must then appear naked amongst common souls, without any other distinction from others, but such as your virtues or sins give you; does it not as much concern you, as any Prophet, or Apostle, to make the best provision for the best rewards at that great day?

Again, consider this doctrine of the Apostle:

Rom. xiv. 7,
8.
8.
6 livet to himself, and no man dieth to himself: For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we dye

dye, we dye unto the Lord. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the

living.

Now are you, Claudius, excepted out of the doctrine of this text? Will you, because of your condition, leave it to any particular sort of people, to live and dye unto Christ? If so, you must leave it to them, to be redeemed by the death and resurrection of Christ. For it is the express doctrine of the text, that for this end Christ dy'd and rose again, that none of us should live to himself. 'Tis not that Priests, or Apostles, or Monks, or Hermits, should live no longer to themselves; but that none of us, that is, no Christian of what state soever, should live unto himself.

If therefore there be any instances of piety, any rules of devotion, which you can neglect, and yet live as truly unto Christ, as if you observed them, this text calls you to no such devotion. But if you forsake such devotion, as you yourself know is expected from some particular sorts of people; such devotion as you know becomes people that live wholly unto Christ, that aspire after great piety; if you neglect such devotion for any worldly consideration, that you may live more to your own temper and taste, more to the fashions and ways of the world, you forsake the terms on which all Christians are to receive the benefit of Christ's death and resurrection.

Observe farther, how the same doctrine is taught by St. Peter; As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy

in all manner of conversation.

If therefore, Claudius, you are one of those that are here called, you see what it is that you are called to. It is not to have so much religion as suits with your temper, your business, or your pleasures; it is not to a particular sort of piety, that may be sufficient for Gentlemen of figure and estates; but it is, first, to be holy, as he which hath called you is holy; secondly, it is to be thus holy in all manner of conversation; that is, to carry this spirit and degree of holiness into every part, and thro' the whole form of your life.

And the reason the Apostle immediately gives, why this spirit of holiness must be the common spirit of Christians, as such, is very affecting, and such as equally calls upon all sorts of Christians. For as much as ye know, says he, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation—but with the precious blood of

Christ, &c.

As if he had said, Forasmuch as ye know ye were made capable of this state of holiness, enter'd into a society with Christ, and made heirs of his glory, not by any human means, but by such a mysterious instance of love, as infinitely exceeds every thing that can be thought of in this world; since God has redeemed you to himself, and your own happi-

ness at so great a price, how base and shameful must it be, if you don't henceforth devote yourselves wholly to the glory of God, and become holy, as he who hath called you is

holy?

If therefore, Claudius, you consider your figure and estate; or if, in the words of the text, you consider your gold and silver, and the corruptible things of this life, as any reason why you may live to your own humour and fancy, why you may neglect a life of strict piety and great devotion; if you think any thing in the world can be an excuse for your not imitating the holiness of Christ in the whole course and form of your life, you make yourself as guilty, as if you should neglect the holiness of Christianity for the sake of picking straws.

For the greatness of this new state of life to which we are called in Christ Jesus, to be for ever as the Angels of God in heaven, and the greatness of the price by which we are made capable of this state of glory, has turned every thing that is worldly, temporal, and corruptible into an equal littleness; and made it as great baseness and folly, as great a contempt of the blood of Christ, to neglect any degrees of holiness, because you are a man of some estate and quality, as it would be to negglect it, because you had a fancy to pick straws.

Again; the same Apostle saith, 1 Cor. vi. 19. Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in

you, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

How poorly therefore, Claudius, have you read the Scripture, how little do you know of Christianity, if you can yet talk of your estate and condition, as a pretence for a freer kind of life?

Are you any more your own, than he that has no estate or dignity in the world? Must mean and little people preserve their bodies as temples of the Holy Ghost, by watching, fasting, and prayer; but may you indulge yours in idleness, in lusts and sensuality, because you have so much rent, or such a title of distinction? How poor and ignorant are such thoughts as these?

And yet you must either think thus, or else acknowledge, that the holiness of Saints, Prophets, and Apostles, is the holiness that you are to labour after with all the diligence and care that you can.

And if you leave it to others, to live in such piety and devotion, in such self-denial, humility and temperance, as may render them able to glorify God in their body, and in their spirit; you must leave it to them also, to have the benefit of the blood of Christ.

Again; the Apostle saith, You know how I Thess. ii. 11. we exhorted, comforted, and charged every one of you, that you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory.

You

You perhaps, *Claudius*, have often heard these words, without ever thinking how much they requir'd of you. And yet you can't consider them, without perceiving to what an eminent state of holiness they call you.

For how can the holiness of the Christian life be set before you in higher terms, than when it is represented to you, as walking worthy of God? Can you think of any abatements of virtue, any neglects of Devotion, that are well consistent with a life, that is to be made worthy of God? Can you suppose that any man walks in this manner, but he that watches over all his steps; and considers how every thing he does, may be done in the spirit of holiness? And yet as high as these expressions carry this holiness, it is here plainly made the necessary holiness of all Christians. the Apostle does not here exhort his fellow Apostles and Saints to this holiness, but he commands all Christians to endeavour after it, We charged, says he, every one of you, that you would walk worthy of God, who bath called you to his kingdom and glory.

Again, St. Peter saith, If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it, as of the ability that God giveth; that God

in all things may be glorify'd in Jesus Christ.

Do you not here, Claudius, plainly perceive your high calling? Is he that speaketh, to have such regard to his words, that he appear to speak as by the direction of God? Is he

that

that giveth, to take care that he so giveth, that what he disposeth of may appear to be a gift that he hath of God? And is all this to be done, that God may be glorify'd in all

things?

Must it not then be said, Has any man Nobility, dignity of State, or figure in the world? let him so use his Nobility, or figure of life, that it may appear he uses these as the gifts of God, for the greater setting forth of his Glory. Is there now, Claudius, anything forc'd, or far-fetch'd in this conclusion? Is it not the plain sense of the words, that every thing in life is to be made a matter of holiness unto God? If so, then your estate and dignity is so far from excusing you from great piety and holiness of life, that it lays you under a greater necessity of living more to the glory of God, because you have more of his gifts that may be made serviceable to it.

For people therefore of figure, or business, or dignity in the world, to leave great piety, and eminent devotion to any particular orders of men, or such as they think have little else to do in the world, is to leave the kingdom of

God to them.

For it is the very end of Christianity to redeem all orders of men into one holy society, that rich and poor, high and low, masters and servants, may in one and the same spirit of piety, become a chosen generation, a royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People, that

that are to shew forth the praises of him, who hath called them out of darkness,

into his marvellous light.

ı Pet, ii, q.

Thus much being said to snew, that great Devotion and Holiness is not to be left to any particular sort of people, but to be the common spirit of all that desire to live up to the terms of common Christianity; I now proceed to consider the nature and necessity of universal love, which is here recommended to be the subject of your Devotion at this hour. You are here also call'd to Intercession, as the most proper exercise to raise and preserve that love.

By intercession is meant a praying to God, and interceding with him for our fellow-creatures.

Our blessed Lord hath recommended his love to us, as the pattern and example of our love to one another. As therefore he is continually making intercession for us all, so ought we to intercede and pray for one another.

A new commandment, saith he, I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that ye are my

Disciples, if ye love one another.

The newness of this precept did not consist in this, that men were commanded to love one another; for this was an old precept, both of the law of Moses, and of nature. But it was new in this respect, that it was to imitate a new, and till then unheard-of example

ample of love; it was to love one another, as Christ had loved us.

And if men are to know that we are Disciples of Christ, by thus loving one another according to his new example of love, then it is certain, that if we are void of this love, we make it as plainly known unto men, that we are none of his Disciples.

There is no principle of the heart that is more acceptable to God, than an universal fervent love to all mankind, wishing and praying for their happiness; because there is no principle of the heart that makes us more like God, who is love and goodness it self, and created all beings for their enjoyment of happiness.

The greatest *Idea* that we can frame of God is, when we conceive him to be a Being of infinite love and goodness; using an infinite wisdom and power for the common good and hap-

piness of all his creatures.

The highest notion therefore, that we can form of man is, when we conceive him as like to God in this respect as he can be; using all his finite faculties, whether of wisdom, power, or prayers, for the common good of all his fellow-creatures: Heartily desiring they may have all the happiness they are capable of, and as many benefits and assistances from him, as his state and condition in the world will permit him to give them.

And on the other hand, what a baseness and iniquity is there in all instances of hatred, en-

vy, spight and ill-will; if we consider, that every instance of them is so far acting in opposition to God, and intending mischief and harm to those creatures, which God favours, and protects, and preserves, in order to their happiness? An ill-natur'd man amongst God's creatures, is the most perverse creature in the world, acting contrary to that love, by which himself subsists, and which alone gives subsistence to all that variety of beings, that enjoy life in any part of the creation.

Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto

you, even so do unto them.

Now though this is a Doctrine of strict justice, yet it is only an universal love that can comply with it. For as love is the measure of our acting towards our selves, so we can never act in the same manner towards other people, till we look upon them with that love with which we look upon our selves.

As we have no degrees of spight, or envy, or ill-will to our selves, so we cannot be dispos'd towards others as we are towards our selves, 'till we *universally* renounce all instances of spight, and envy, and ill-will, even in the *smallest* degrees.

If we had any imperfection in our eyes, that made us see any one thing wrong, for the same reason they would shew us an hundred

things wrong.

So if we have any temper of our hearts, that makes us envious, or spightful, or illnatur'd towards any one man, the same temper will make us envious, and spightful, and ill-natur'd towards a great many more.

If therefore we desire this divine virtue of love, we must exercise and practise our hearts in the love of *all*, because it is not *Christian* love, till it is the love of *all*.

If a man could keep this whole law of love, and yet offend in *one point*, he would be guilty of all. For as one *allow'd* instance of injustice destroys the justice of all our other actions, so one allow'd instance of envy, spight, and ill-will, renders all our other acts of benevolence and affection nothing worth.

Acts of love that proceed not from a principle of *universal love*, are but like acts of justice, that proceed from a heart not dispos'd to

universal justice.

A love which is not universal, may indeed have *tenderness* and *affection*, but it hath nothing of *righteousness* or *piety* in it; it is but humour, and temper, or interest, or such a love as *Publicans* and *Heathens* practise.

All particular envies and spights, are as plain departures from the spirit of Christianity, as any particular acts of injustice. For it is as much a law of Christ, to treat every body as your neighbour, and to love your neighbour as your self, as 'tis a law of Christianity, to abstain from theft.

Now the noblest motive to this universal tenderness and affection, is founded in this Doctrine, God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God.

Who

Who therefore, whose heart has any tendency towards God, would not aspire after this divine temper, which so changes and exalts our nature into an union with him?

How should we rejoice in the exercise and practice of this love, which so often as we feel it, is so often an assurance to us, that God is in us, that we act according to his spirit, who is love it self? But we must observe, that love has then only this mighty power of uniting us to God, when it is so pure and universal, as to imitate that love, which God beareth to all his creatures.

God willeth the happiness of all beings, though it is no happiness to himself. Therefore we must desire the happiness of all beings, though no happiness cometh to us from

it.

God equally delighteth in the perfections of all his creatures, therefore we should rejoice in those perfections, where-ever we see them, and be as glad to have other people perfect as our selves.

As God forgiveth all, and giveth Grace to all, so we should forgive all those injuries and affronts which we receive from others, and do

all the good that we can to them.

God almighty, besides his own great example of love, which ought to draw all his creatures after it, has so provided for us, and made our happiness so *common* to us all, that we have no occasion to envy or hate one another.

For

For we cannot stand in one anothers way, or by enjoying any particular good, keep another from his full share of it.

As we cannot be happy, but in the enjoyment of God, so we cannot rival, or rob one

another of this happiness.

And as to other things, the *enjoyments* and *prosperities* of this life, they are so little in themselves, so foreign to our happiness, and, generally speaking, so *contrary* to that which they appear to be, that they are no foundation for envy, or spight, or hatred.

How silly would it be to envy a man, that was drinking poison out of a *golden* cup? And yet who can say, that he is acting wiser than thus, when he is envying any instance of

worldly greatness?

How many saints has adversity sent to Heaven? And how many poor sinners has prosperity plung'd into everlasting misery? A man seems then to be in the most glorious state, when he has conquer'd, disgrac'd, and humbled his enemy; though it may be, that same conquest has sav'd his adversary, and undone himself.

This man had perhaps never been debauch'd, but for his fortune and advancement; that had never been pious, but through his poverty and

disgrace.

She that is envy'd for her beauty, may perchance owe all her *misery* to it; and *another* may be for ever happy, for having had no admirers of her *person*.

One

One man succeeds in every thing, and so loses all: Another meets with nothing but crosses and disappointments, and thereby gains more than all the world is worth.

This Clergyman may be undone by his being made a Bishop; and that may save both himself and others, by being fix'd to his first

poor vicaridge.

How envy'd was Alexander when conquering the world, he built towns, set up his statues, and left marks of his glory in so many

kingdoms!

And how despis'd was the poor preacher St. Paul when he was beaten with rods! And yet how strangely was the world mistaken in their judgment! How much to be envy'd was St. Paul! How much to be pity'd was Alexander!

These few reflections sufficiently shew us, that the different conditions of this life have nothing in them to excite our uneasy passions, nothing that can reasonably interrupt our love and affection to one another.

To proceed now to another motive to this

universal love.

Our power of doing external acts of love and goodness, is often very narrow and restrain'd. There are, it may be, but few people to whom we can contribute any worldly relief.

But though our outward means of doing good are often thus limited, yet if our hearts are but full of love and goodness, we get as it were an infinite power; because God will attribute to us those good works, those acts of love, and tender charities, which we sincerely desir'd, and would gladly have perform'd, had it been in our power.

You cannot heal all the *sick*, relieve all the *poor*; you cannot comfort all in distress, nor be a father to all the fatherless. You cannot, it may be, deliver many from their misfortunes, or teach them to find comfort in God.

But if there is a love and tenderness in your heart, that delights in these good works, and excites you to do all that you can: If your love has no bounds, but continually wishes and prays for the relief and happiness of all that are in distress, you will be received by God as a benefactor to those, who have had nothing from you but your good will, and tender affections.

You cannot build hospitals for the incurable; you cannot erect monasteries for the education of persons in holy solitude, continual prayer and mortification; but if you join in your heart with those that do, and thank God for their pious designs; if you are a friend to these great friends to mankind, and rejoice in their eminent virtues, you will be received by God as a sharer of such good works as, though they had none of your hands, yet had all your heart.

This consideration surely is sufficient to make us look to, and watch over our hearts with all diligence; to study the improvement of our *inward tempers*, and aspire after every height

height and perfection of a loving, charitable, and benevolent mind.

And on the other hand, we may hence learn the great evil and mischief of all avrong turns of mind, of envy, spight, hatred, and ill-will. For if the goodness of our hearts will entitle us to the reward of good actions, which we never performed; it is certain that the badness of our hearts, our envy, ill-nature, and hatred, will bring us under the guilt of actions that we have never committed.

As he that lusteth after a woman shall be reckon'd an adulterer, though he has only committed the crime in his heart; so the malicious, spightful, ill-natur'd man, that only secretly rejoices at evil, shall be reckon'd a mur-

derer, though he has shed no blood.

Since therefore our hearts, which are always naked and open to the eyes of God, give such an exceeding extent and increase either to our virtues or vices, it is our *best* and *greatest* business to govern the motions of our hearts, to watch, correct, and improve the inward state

and temper of our souls.

Now there is nothing that so much exalts our souls, as this heavenly love; it cleanses and purifies like a holy fire, and all ill tempers fall away before it. It makes room for all virtues, and carries them to their greatest height. Every thing that is good and holy grows out of it, and it becomes a continual source of all holy desires, and pious practices.

2 c By

By love, I don't mean any natural tenderness, which is more or less in people, according to their constitutions; but I mean a larger principle of the soul, founded in reason and piety, which makes us tender, kind, and benevolent to all our fellow-creatures, as creatures of God, and for his sake.

It is this love that loves all things in God, as his creatures, as the images of his power, as the creatures of his goodness, as parts of his family, as members of his society, that becomes a holy principle of all great and good actions.

The love therefore of our neighbour is only a branch of our love to God. For when we love God with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our strength, we shall necessarily love those beings that are so nearly related to God, that have every thing from him, and are created by him, to be objects of his own eternal love. If I hate or despise any one man in the world, I hate something that God cannot hate, and despise that which he loves.

And can I think that I love God with all my heart, whilst I hate that which belongs only to God, which has no other master but him, which bears his image, is part of his family, and exists only by the continuance of his love towards it?

It was the impossibility of this that made St. John say, That if any man saith, he loweth God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.

These

These reasons sufficiently shew us, that no love is holy, or religious, till it becomes universal.

For if Religion requires me to love all persons, as God's creatures, that belong to him, that bear his image, enjoy his protection, and make parts of his family and houshold; if these are the great and necessary reasons why I should live in love and friendship with any one man in the world, they are the same great and necessary reasons why I should live in love and friendship with every man in the world; and consequently I offend against all these reasons, and break through all these ties and obligations, whenever I want love towards any one man. The sin therefore of hating or despising any one man, is like the sin of hating all God's creation; and the necessity of loving any one man, is the same necessity of loving every man in the world. And though many people may appear to us ever so sinful, odious, or extravagant in their conduct, we must never look upon that as the least motive for any contempt or disregard of them; but look upon them with the greater compassion, as being in the most pitiable condition that can be.

As it was the Sins of the World, that made the Son of God become a compassionate, suffering Advocate for all mankind; so no one is of the Spirit of Christ, but he that has the utmost compassion for sinners. Nor is there any greater sign of your own perfection, than when you find yourself all love and compassion towards them that are very weak and defective. And on the other hand, you have never less reason to be pleas'd with yourself, than when you find yourself most angry and offended at the behaviour of others. All sin is certainly to be hated and abhorred where-ever it is; but then we must set ourselves against sickness and diseases, by shewing ourselves tender and compassionate to the sick and diseased.

All other hatred of sin, which does not fill the heart with the *softest*, *tenderest* affections towards persons miserable in it, is the servant of sin at the same time that it seems to be

hating it.

And there is no temper which even good men ought more carefully to watch and guard against than this. For it is a temper that lurks and hides itself under the cover of many virtues, and by being unsuspected does the more mischief.

A man naturally fancies, that it is his own exceeding love of virtue that makes him not able to bear with those that want it. And when he *abhors* one man, *despises* another, and can't bear the *name* of a third, he supposes it all to be a proof of his own *high sense* of virtue, and *just hatred* of sin.

And yet one would think, that a man needed no other cure for his temper, than

this one reflection:

That if this had been the Spirit of the Son of God, if he had hated sin in this manner, there had been no redemption of the World: That if God had hated sinners in this manner day and night, the world itself had

ceased long ago.

This therefore we may take for a certain rule, that the more we partake of the divine nature, the more improved we are ourselves, and the higher our sense of virtue is, the more we shall pity and compassionate those that want it. The sight of such people will then, instead of raising in us a haughty contempt, or peevish indignation towards them, fill us with such bowels of compassion, as when we see the miseries of an hospital.

That the follies therefore, crimes, and ill behaviour of our fellow-creatures, may not lessen that love and tenderness which we are to have for all mankind, we should often consider the reasons on which this duty of love is

founded.

Now we are to love our neighbour, that is, all mankind, not because they are wise, holy, virtuous, or well-behav'd; for all mankind neither ever was, nor ever will be so; therefore it is certain, that the reason of our being obliged to love them, cannot be founded in their virtue.

Again; if their virtue or goodness were the reason of our being oblig'd to love people, we should have no *rule* to proceed by; because tho' some peoples virtues or vices are very no-

torious

torious, yet, generally speaking, we are but very ill judges of the virtue and merit of other people.

Thirdly, We are sure that the virtue or merit of persons, is not the reason of our being oblig'd to love them, because we are commanded to pay the highest instances of love to our worst enemies; we are to love, and bless, and pray for those that most injuriously treat us. This therefore is demonstration, that the merit of persons is not the reason on which our obligation to love them is founded.

Let us farther consider, what that love is, which we owe to our neighbour. It is to love him as ourselves, that is, to have all those sentiments towards him, which we have towards ourselves; to wish him every thing that we may lawfully wish to ourselves; to be glad of every good, and sorry for every evil that happens to him; and to be ready to do him all such acts of kindness, as we are always ready to do to ourselves.

This love therefore, you see, is nothing else but a love of benevolence; it requires nothing of us, but such good wishes, tender affections, and such acts of kindness, as we shew to ourselves.

This is all the love that we owe to the best of men; and we are never to want any degree of this love to the worst, or most unreasonable man in the world.

Now what is the reason why we are to love every man in this manner? It is answer'd, that our obligation to love all men in this manner, is founded upon many reasons.

First, Upon a reason of equity; for if it is just, to love our selves in this manner, it must be unjust to deny any degree of this love to others, because every man is so exactly of the same nature, and in the same condition as our selves.

If therefore your own crimes and follies do not lessen your obligation to seek your own good, and wish well to your self; neither do the follies and crimes of your neighbour, lessen your obligation to wish and seek the good of your neighbour.

Another reason for this love, is founded in the authority of God, who has commanded us to love every man as our self.

Thirdly, We are oblig'd to this love, in imitation of God's goodness, that we may be children of our Father which is in Heaven, who willeth the happiness of all his creatures, and maketh his Sun to rise on the evil, and on the good.

Fourthly, Our redemption by Jesus Christ, calleth us to the exercise of this love, who came from Heaven, and laid down his life, out of love to the whole sinful world.

Fifthly

Fifthly, By the command of our Lord and Saviour, who has requir'd us to love one another, as he has loved us.

These are the great, perpetual reasons, on which our obligation to love all mankind as

our selves, is founded.

These reasons never vary, or change, they always continue in their full force; and therefore equally oblige at all times, and in regard

to all persons.

God loves us, not because we are wise, and good, and holy, but in pity to us, because we want this happiness: He loves us, in order to make us good. Our love therefore must take this course; not looking for, or requiring the merit of our brethren, but pitying their disorders, and wishing them all the good that they want, and are capable of receiving.

It appears now plainly from what has been said, that the love which we owe to our brethren, is only a love of benevolence. Secondly, That this duty of benevolence is founded upon such reasons as never vary or change; such as have no dependance upon the qualities of persons. From whence it follows, that it is the same great sin, to want this love to a bad man, as to want it to a good man. Because he that denies any of this benevolence to a bad man, offends against all the same reasons of love, as he does that denies any benevolence to a good man: And consequently it is the same sin.

When

When therefore, you let loose any ill-natur'd passion, either of hatred or contempt towards (as you suppose) an ill man, consider what you would think of another, that was doing the same towards a good man, and be assur'd that you are committing the same sin.

You will perhaps say, How is it possible to love a good and a bad man in the same

degree?

Just as it's possible to be as just and faithful to a good man, as to an evil man. Now are you in any difficulty about performing justice and faithfulness to a bad Man? Are you in any doubts, whether you need be so just and faithful to him, as you need be to a good man? Now why is it, that you are in no doubt about it? "Tis because you know, that justice and faithfulness are founded upon reasons that never vary or change, that have no dependance upon the merits of men, but are founded in the nature of things, in the laws of God, and therefore are to be observ'd with an equal exactness towards good and bad men.

Now do but think thus justly of charity, or love to your neighbour, that it is founded upon reasons, that vary not, that have no dependance upon the merits of men, and then you will find it as possible to perform the same exact charity, as the same exact justice to all

men, whether good or bad.

You will perhaps farther ask, if you are not to have a particular esteem, veneration and reverence for good men? It is answer'd; Yes. But then this high esteem and veneration, is a thing very different from that love of benevolence which we owe to our neighbour.

The high esteem and veneration which you have for a man of eminent piety, is no act of charity to him; it is not out of pity and compassion that you so reverence him, but it is rather an act of charity to your self, that such esteem and veneration may excite you to

follow his example.

You may and ought to love, like, and approve the life which the good man leads; but then this is only the loving of virtue, where-ever we see it. And we don't love virtue with the love of benevolence, as any thing that wants our *good wishes*, but as something that is our proper good.

The whole of the matter is this. The actions which you are to love, esteem, and admire, are the actions of good and pious men; but the persons to whom you are to do all the good you can, in all sorts of kindness and compassion, are all persons, whether good or bad.

This distinction betwixt love of benevolence, and esteem or veneration, is very plain and obvious. And you may perhaps still better see the plainness and necessity of it, by this following instance.

No man is to have a *high esteem*, or *honour* for his own accomplishments, or behaviour; yet every man is to love himself, that is, to wish well to himself; therefore this distinction betwixt love and esteem, is not only plain, but very necessary to be observ'd.

Again, if you think it hardly possible to dislike the actions of unreasonable men, and yet have a true love for them: Consider this

with relation to your self.

It is very possible, I hope, for you not only to dislike, but to detest and abbor a great many of your own past actions, and to accuse your self of great folly for them. But do you then lose any of those tender sentiments towards your self, which you us'd to have? Do you then cease to wish well to your self? Is not the love of your self as strong then, as at any other time?

Now what is thus possible with relation to our selves, is in the same manner possible with relation to others. We may have the highest good wishes towards them, desiring for them every good that we desire for our selves, and yet at the same time dislike their way of

life.

To proceed; all that love which we may justly have for our selves, we are in *strict justice* oblig'd to exercise towards all other men; and we offend against the great law of our nature, and the greatest laws of God, when our tempers towards others are different from those which we have towards our selves.

Now that self-love which is just and reasonable, keeps us constantly tender, compassionate, and well-affected towards our selves; if therefore you don't feel these kind dispositions towards all other people, you may be assur'd, that you are not in that state of charity, which is the very life and soul of christian piety.

You know how it hurts you, to be made the jest and ridicule of other people; how it grieves you to be robb'd of your reputation, and depriv'd of the favourable opinion of your neighbours: If therefore you expose others to scorn and contempt in any degree; if it pleases you to see or hear of their frailties and infirmities; or if you are only loth to conceal their faults, you are so far from loving such people as your self, that you may be justly suppos'd to have as much hatred for them, as you have love for your self. For such tempers are as truly the proper fruits of hatred, as the contrary tempers are the proper fruits of love.

And as it is a certain sign that you love your self, because you are tender of every thing that concerns you; so it is as certain a sign that you hate your neighbour, when you are pleas'd with any thing that hurts him.

But now, if the want of a true and exact charity be so great a want, that, as St. Paul saith, it renders our greatest virtues but empty sounds, and tinkling cymbals, how highly does it concern us to study every art, and practise every method of raising our souls to this

this state of charity? It is for this reason, that you are here desir'd, not to let this hour of prayer pass, without a full and solemn supplication to God, for all the instances of an universal love and benevolence to all mankind.

Such daily constant devotion, being the only likely means of preserving you in such a state of love, as is necessary to prove you to

be a true follower of Jesus Christ.

#### CHAP. XXI

Of the necessity and benefit of Intercession, consider'd as an exercise of universal love. How all orders of men are to pray and intercede with God for one another. How naturally such intercession amends and reforms the hearts of those that use it

THAT intercession is a great and necessary part of christian Devotion, is

very evident from Scripture.

The first followers of Christ seem to support all their love, and to maintain all their intercourse and correspondence, by mutual prayers with one another.

St. Paul, whether he writes to churches, or particular persons, shews his *intercession* to be perpetual for them, that they are the constant

subject of his prayers.

Thus

Thus to the Philippians, I thank my God
Phil. i. 4, 5.

upon every remembrance of you.
Always in every prayer of mine for
you all, making request with joy. Here we see,
not only a continual intercession, but perform'd with so much gladness, as shews that it
was an exercise of love, in which he highly
rejoic'd.

His Devotion had also the same care for particular persons; as appears by the following passage. I thank my God, whom I serve from my fore-fathers, with a pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day. How holy an acquaintance and friendship was this, how worthy of persons that were rais'd above the world, and related to one another, as new members of a kingdom of heaven!

Apostles and great Saints did not only thus benefit, and bless particular Churches, and private persons; but they themselves also received graces from God by the prayers of others. Thus saith St. Paul to the Corinthians,

2 Cor. i. 11. You also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

This was the antient friendship of Christians, uniting and cementing their hearts, not by worldly considerations, or human passions, but by the mutual communication of spiritual

bles-

blessings, by prayers and thanksgivings to God for one another.

It was this holy intercession that rais'd Christians to such a state of mutual love, as far exceeded all that had been prais'd and admir'd in human friendship. And when the same spirit of *intercession* is again in the world, when Christianity has the same power over the hearts of people, that it then had, this holy friendship will be again in fashion, and Christians will be again the wonder of the world, for that exceeding love which they bear to one another.

For a frequent intercession with God, earnestly beseeching him to forgive the sins of all mankind, to bless them with his providence, enlighten them with his Spirit, and bring them to everlasting happiness, is the divinest exercise that the heart of man can be engaged in.

Be daily therefore on your knees in a solemn, deliberate performance of this devotion, praying for others in such forms, with such length, importunity, and earnestness, as you use for yourself; and you will find all little, ill-natur'd passions dye away, your heart grow great and generous, delighting in the common happiness of others, as you used only to delight in your own.

For he that daily prays to God, that all men may be happy in heaven, takes the likeliest way to make them wish for, and delight in their happiness on earth. And it is hardly possible

possible for you to be eech and intreat God to make any one happy in the highest enjoyments of his glory to all eternity, and yet be troubled to see him enjoy the much smaller gifts of God in this short and low state of human life.

For how strange and unnatural would it be, to pray to God to grant *health* and a *longer* life to a *sick man*, and at the same time to *envy* him the poor pleasure of *agreeable medicines*?

Yet this would be no more strange, or unnatural, than to pray to God that your neighbour may enjoy the highest degrees of his mercy and favour, and yet at the same time envy him the little credit and figure he hath amongst his fellow-creatures.

When therefore you have once habituated your heart to a serious performance of this holy intercession, you have done a great deal to render it incapable of *spight* and *envy*, and to make it *naturally* delight in the happiness of all mankind.

This is the natural effect of a general intercession for all mankind. But the greatest benefits of it are then receiv'd, when it descends to such particular instances, as our state and condition in life more particularly require of us.

Though we are to treat all mankind as neighbours and brethren, as any occasion offers; yet as we can only live in the actual society of a few, and are by our state and condition more particularly related to some than others; so when

when our intercession is made an exercise of love and care for those amongst whom our *lot* is fallen, or who belong to us in a *nearer relation*, it then becomes the greatest benefit to ourselves, and produces its best effects in our own hearts.

If therefore you should always change and alter your intercessions, according as the needs and necessities of your neighbours or acquaintance seem to require; beseeching God to deliver them from such or such particular evils, or to grant them this or that particular gift, or blessing; such intercessions, besides the great charity of them, would have a mighty effect upon your own heart, as disposing you to every other good office, and to the exercise of every other virtue towards such persons, as have so often a place in your prayers.

This would make it pleasant to you to be courteous, civil, and condescending to all about you; and make you unable to say, or do a rude, or hard thing to those, for whom you had used yourself to be so kind and compas-

sionate in your prayers.

For there is nothing that makes us love a man so much, as praying for him; and when you can once do this sincerely for any man, you have fitted your soul for the performance of every thing that is kind and civil towards him. This will fill your heart with a generosity and tenderness, that will give you a better and sweeter behaviour, than any thing that is called *fine breeding*, and *good manners*.

2 D By

By considering yourself as an advocate with God for your neighbours and acquaintance, you would never find it hard to be at peace with them yourself. It would be easy to you to bear with, and forgive those, for whom you particularly implor'd the divine mercy and

forgiveness.

Such prayers as these amongst neighbours and acquaintance, would unite them to one another in the strongest bonds of love and tenderness. It would exalt and ennoble their souls, and teach them to consider one another in a higher state, as members of a spiritual society, that are created for the enjoyment of the common blessings of God, and fellowheirs of the same future glory.

And by being thus desirous, that every one should have their full share of the favours of God, they would not only be content, but glad to see one another happy in the little

enjoyments of this transitory life.

These would be the natural effects of such an intercession amongst people of the same town or neighbourhood, or that were acquainted

with one another's state and condition.

Ouranius is a holy Priest, full of the spirit of the Gospel, watching, labouring, and praying for a poor country village. Every soul in it is as dear to him as himself; and he loves them all, as he loves himself; because he prays for them all, as often as he prays for himself.

If his whole life is one continual exercise of great zeal and labour, hardly ever satisfy'd with any degrees of care and watchfulness, 'tis because he has learn'd the great value of souls, by so often appearing before God, as an intercessor for them.

He never thinks he can love, or do enough for his flock; because he never considers them in any other view, than as so many persons, that by receiving the gifts and graces of God, are to become his *bope*, his *joy*, and his *crown* 

of rejoicing.

He goes about his Parish, and visits every body in it; but visits in the same spirit of piety that he preaches to them; he visits them to encourage their virtues, to assist them with his advice and counsel, to discover their manner of life, and to know the state of their souls, that he may intercede with God for them, according to their particular necessities.

When Ouranius first entred into holy orders, he had a haughtiness in his temper, a great contempt and disregard for all foolish and unreasonable people; but he has pray'd away this spirit, and has now the greatest tenderness for the most obstinate sinners; because he is always hoping, that God will sooner or later hear those prayers that he makes for their repentance.

The rudeness, ill-nature, or perverse behaviour of any of his flock, used at first to betray him into impatience; but it now raises no other passion in him, than a desire of be-

ing upon his knees in prayer to God for them. Thus have his *prayers* for others, *alter'd* and *amended* the state of his own heart.

It would strangely delight you to see with what spirit he converses, with what tenderness he reproves, with what affection he exhorts, and with what vigor he preaches; and 'tis all owing to this, because he reproves, exhorts, and preaches to those, for whom he first prays to God.

This devotion softens his heart, enlightens his mind, sweetens his temper, and makes every thing that comes from him, instructive,

amiable, and affecting.

At his first coming to his little Village, it was as disagreeable to him as a prison, and every day seem'd too tedious to be endured in so retir'd a place. He thought his Parish was too full of poor and mean people, that were none of them fit for the conversation of a Gentleman.

This put him upon a close application to his studies. He kept much at home, writ notes upon Homer and Plautus, and sometimes thought it hard to be called to pray by any poor body, when he was just in the midst of one of Homer's battels.

This was his polite, or I may rather say, poor, ignorant turn of mind, before devotion

had got the government of his heart.

But now his days are so far from being tedious, or his Parish too great a retirement, that he now only wants more time to do that

variety

variety of good which his soul thirsts after. The solitude of his little Parish is become matter of great comfort to him, because he hopes that God has plac'd him and his flock

there, to make it their way to heaven.

He can now not only converse with, but gladly attend and wait upon the poorest kind of people. He is now daily watching over the weak and infirm, humbling himself to perverse, rude, ignorant people, where-ever he can find them; and is so far from desiring to be considered as a Gentleman, that he desires to be used as the servant of all; and in the spirit of his Lord and Master girds himself, and is glad to kneel down and wash any of their feet.

He now thinks the poorest creature in his Parish good enough, and great enough, to deserve the humblest attendances, the kindest friendships, the tenderest offices, he can possi-

bly shew them.

He is so far now from wanting agreeable company, that he thinks there is no better conversation in the world, than to be talking with *poor* and *mean* people about the kingdom

of heaven.

All these noble thoughts and divine sentiments are the effects of his great devotion; he presents every one so often before God in his prayers, that he never thinks he can esteem, reverence, or serve those enough, for whom he implores so many mercies from God.

Ouranius is mightily affected with this pas-Jam. v. 16. sage of holy Scripture, The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

This makes him practise all the arts of holy living, and aspire after every instance of piety and righteousness, that his prayers for his flock may have their full force, and avail much with God.

For this reason he has sold a small estate that he had, and has erected a charitable retirement for antient, poor people to live in prayer and piety, that his prayers being assisted by such good works, may pierce the clouds, and bring down blessings upon those souls committed to his care.

Ouranius reads how God himself said unto

Abimelech concerning Abraham, He
is a Prophet; he shall pray for thee,
and thou shalt live.

And again, how he said of Job, And my Job xlii. 8. servant Job shall pray for you; for

bim will I accept.

From these passages *Ouranius* justly concludes, that the prayers of men eminent for holiness of life, have an extraordinary power with God; that he grants to other people such pardons, reliefs and blessings, through their prayers, as would not be granted to men of less piety and perfection. This makes *Ouranius* exceeding studious of christian perfection, searching after every grace and holy temper, purifying his heart all manner of ways, fear-

ful

ful of every error and defect in his life, lest his prayers for his flock should be less availing with God, through his own defects in holiness.

This makes him careful of every temper of his heart, give alms of all that he hath, watch, and fast, and mortify, and live according to the strictest rules of temperance, meekness, and humility, that he may be in some degree like an Abraham, or a Job in his Parish, and make such prayers for them, as God will hear and accept.

These are the happy effects, which a devout intercession hath produc'd in the life of Oura-

nius.

And if other people in their several stations, were to imitate this example, in such a manner as suited their particular state of life, they would certainly find the same happy effects from it.

If *Masters*, for instance, were thus to remember their *servants* in their prayers, beseeching God to bless them, and suiting their petitions to the particular wants and necessities of their servants; letting no day pass, without a *full performance* of this part of Devotion, the benefit would be as great to themselves, as to their servants.

No way so likely as this, to inspire them with a true sense of that power which they have in their hands, to make them delight in doing good, and becoming exemplary in all the parts of a wise and good master.

The

The presenting their servants so often before God, as equally related to God, and entitled to the same expectations of Heaven, as themselves, would naturally incline them to treat them, not only with such bumanity as became fellow-creatures, but with such tenderness, care, and generosity, as became fellow-beirs of the same glory. This Devotion would make masters inclin'd to every thing that was good towards their servants; be watchful of their behaviour, and as ready to require of them an exact observance of the duties of Christianity, as of the duties of their service.

This would teach them to consider their servants as God's servants, to desire their perfection, to do nothing before them that might corrupt their minds, to impose no business upon them that should lessen their sense of Religion, or hinder them from their full share of Devotion, both publick and private. This praying for them, would make them as glad to see their servants eminent in piety as themselves, and contrive that they should have all the opportunities and encouragements, both to know and perform all the duties of the christian life.

How natural would it be for such a Master, to perform every part of Family-Devotion; to have constant prayers, to excuse no ones absence from them; to have the Scriptures, and books of piety often read amongst his servants; to take all opportunities of instructing

structing them, of raising their minds to God, and teaching them to do all their business, as a service to God, and upon the hopes and ex-

pectations of another life?

How natural would it be for such a one to pity their weakness and ignorance, to bear with the dulness of their understandings, or the perverseness of their tempers; to reprove them with tenderness, exhort them with affection, as hoping that God would hear his prayers for them?

How impossible would it be for a Master, that thus interceded with God for his servants, to use any unkind threatnings towards them, to damn and curse them as dogs and scoundrels, and treat them only as the dregs

of the creation.

This Devotion would give them another spirit, and make them consider how to make proper returns of care, kindness, and protection to those, who had spent their strength and time in service and attendance upon them.

Now if Gentlemen think it too low an employment for their state and dignity, to exercise such a Devotion as this for their servants, let them consider how far they are from the spirit of Christ, who made himself not only an intercessor, but a sacrifice for the whole race of sinful mankind.

Let them consider how miserable their greatness would be, if the Son of God should think it as much below him to pray for them, as they do to pray for their fellow-creatures.

Let them consider how far they are from that spirit, which prays for its most unjust enemies, if they have not kindness enough to pray for those, by whose labours and service

they live in ease themselves.

Again, if *Parents* should thus make themselves advocates and intercessors with God for their children, constantly applying to Heaven in behalf of them, nothing would be more likely, not only to bless their children, but also to form and dispose their own minds to the performance of every thing that was ex-

cellent and praise-worthy.

I don't suppose, but that the generality of Parents remember their children in their prayers, and call upon God to bless them. But the thing here intended, is not a general remembrance of them, but a regular method of recommending all their particular needs and necessities unto God; and of praying for every such particular grace and virtue for them, as their state and condition of life shall seem to require.

The state of Parents is a holy state, in some degree like that of the Priesthood, and calls upon them to bless their children with their prayers and sacrifices to God. Thus it was that holy Job watch'd over, and blessed his Job i. 5. children, he sanctify'd them, he rose up early in the morning, and of-

fer'd

fer'd burnt-offerings, according to the number of them all.

If Parents therefore, considering themselves in this light, should be daily calling upon God in a solemn, deliberate manner, altering and extending their intercessions, as the state and growth of their children requir'd, such Devotion would have a mighty influence upon the rest of their lives; it would make them very circumspect in the government of themselves; prudent and careful of every thing they said or did, lest their example should hinder that, which they so constantly desir'd in their prayers.

If a father was daily making particular prayers to God, that he would please to inspire his children with true piety, great humility, and strict temperance, what could be more likely to make the father himself become exemplary in these virtues? How naturally would he grow asham'd of wanting such virtues, as he thought necessary for his children? So that his prayers for their piety, would be a certain means of exalting his own to its

greatest height.

If a father thus consider'd himself as an intercessor with God for his children, to bless them with his prayers, what more likely means to make him aspire after every degree of holiness, that he might thereby be fitter to obtain blessings from Heaven for them? How would such thoughts make him avoid every thing 'hat was sinful and displeasing to God

God, lest when he pray'd for his children,

God should reject his prayers?

How tenderly, how religiously would such a father converse with his children, whom he consider'd as his little spiritual flock, whose virtues he was to form by his example, encourage by his authority, nourish by his counsel, and prosper by his prayers to God for them?

How fearful would he be of all greedy and unjust ways of raising their fortune, of bringing them up in pride and indulgence, or of making them too fond of the world, lest he should thereby render them incapable of those graces, which he was so often beseeching God

to grant them?

These being the plain, natural, happy effects of this intercession, all parents, I hope, who have the real welfare of their children at heart, who desire to be their true friends and benefactors, and to live amongst them in the spirit of wisdom and piety, will not neglect so great a means, both of raising their own virtue, and doing an eternal good to those, who are so near and dear to them, by the strongest ties of nature.

Lastly, If all people, when they feel the first approaches of resentment, envy, or contempt, towards others; or if in all little disagreements, and misunderstandings whatever, they should, instead of indulging their minds with little low reflections, have recourse at such times to a more particular and extraor-

dinary

dinary intercession with God, for such persons as had rais'd their envy, resentment, or discontent; this would be a certain way to prevent the growth of all uncharitable tempers.

If you was also to form your prayer, or intercession at that time, to the greatest degree of *contrariety* to that temper which you was then in, it would be an excellent means of raising your heart to the greatest state of perfection.

As for instance, when at any time you find in your heart motions of envy towards any person, whether on account of his riches, power, reputation, learning, or advancement, if you should immediately betake your self at that time to your prayers, and pray to God to bless and prosper him in that very thing, which rais'd your envy; if you should express and repeat your petitions in the strongest terms, beseeching God to grant him all the happiness from the enjoyment of it, that can possibly be receiv'd, you would soon find it to be the best antidote in the world, to expel

This would be such a triumph over your self, would so humble and reduce your heart into obedience and order, that the devil would even be afraid of tempting you again in the same manner, when he saw the temptation turn'd into so great a means of amending and

reforming the state of your heart.

the venom of that poisonous passion.

Again, If in any little difference or misunderstandings that you happen'd to have at any time with a relation, a neighbour, or any one else, you should then pray for them in a more extraordinary manner, than you ever did before; beseeching God to give them every grace, and blessing, and happiness you can think of, you would have taken the speediest method that can be, of reconciling all differences, and clearing up all misunderstandings. You would then think nothing too great to be forgiven; stay for no condescensions, need no mediation of a third person, but be glad to testify your love and good-will to him, who had so high a place in your secret prayers.

This would be the mighty power of such Christian devotion; it would remove all peevish passions, soften your heart into the most tender condescensions, and be the best arbitrator of all differences that happened betwixt

you and any of your acquaintance.

The greatest resentments amongst friends and neighbours most often arise from poor punctilio's, and little mistakes in conduct. A certain sign that their friendship is merely human, not founded upon religious considerations, or supported by such a course of mutual prayer for one another, as the first Christians used.

• For such devotion must necessarily either destroy such tempers, or be itself destroyed by them.

You cannot possibly have any ill temper, or shew any unkind behaviour to a man, for whose welfare you are so much concerned, as to be his advocate with God in private.

Hence we may also learn the odious nature and exceeding guilt of all spight, hatred, contempt, and angry passions; they are not to be considered as defects in good nature, and sweetness of temper, not as failings in civility of manners, or good breeding, but as such base tempers as are entirely inconsistent with the charity of intercession.

You think it a small matter to be peevish or ill-natur'd to such or such a man; but you should consider, whether it be a small matter to do that, which you could not do, if you had but so much charity as to be able to recommend him to God in your prayers.

You think it a small matter to ridicule one man, and despise another; but you should consider, whether it be a small matter to want that charity towards these people, which Christians are not allowed to want towards their most inveterate enemies.

For be but as charitable to these men, do but bless and pray for them, as you are oblig'd to bless and pray for your enemies, and then you will find that you have charity enough, to make it impossible for you to treat them with any degree of scorn or contempt.

For you cannot possibly despise and ridicule that man, whom your private prayers recom-

mend to the love and favour of God.

When

When you despise and ridicule a man, it is with no other end, but to make him ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of other men, and in order to prevent their esteem of him. How therefore can it be possible for you sincerely to beseech God to bless that man with the honour of his love and favour, whom you desire men to treat as worthy of their contempt?

Could you out of love to a neighbour, desire your *Prince* to honour him with every mark of his esteem and favour, and yet at the same time expose him to the scorn and derisi-

on of your own servants?

Yet this is as possible, as to expose that man to the scorn and contempt of your fellowcreatures, whom you recommend to the favour

of God in your secret prayers.

From these considerations we may plainly discover the reasonableness and justice of this Matth. v. 22. doctrine of the Gospel, Whosoever shall say unto his brother, Racha, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

We are not, I suppose, to believe that every hasty word, or unreasonable expression, that slips from us by *chance*, or *surprize*, and is contrary to our intention and *tempers*, is the

great sin here signified.

But he that says, Racha, or thou fool, must chiefly mean him that allows himself in deliberate, design'd acts of scorn and contempt towards

wards his brother, and in that temper speaks to him, and of him, in reproachful language.

Now since it appears, that these tempers are at the bottom the most rank uncharitableness, since no one can be guilty of them, but because he has not charity enough to pray to God for his brother; it cannot be thought hard, or rigorous justice, that such tempers should endanger the salvation of Christians. For who would think it hard, that a Christian cannot obtain the favour of God for himself, unless he reverence and esteem his brother Christian, as one that bears the image of God, as one for whom Christ dy'd, as a member of Christ's body, as a member of that holy society on earth, which is in union with that triumphant Church in heaven?

Yet all these considerations must be forgot, all these glorious privileges disregarded, before a man can treat him that has them, as an ob-

ject of scorn and contempt.

So that to scorn, or despise a brother, or, as our blessed Lord says, to call him Racha, or fool, must be look'd upon, as amongst the most odious, unjust, and guilty tempers, that can be supported in the heart of a Christian, and justly excluding him from all his hopes in the salvation of Jesus Christ.

For to despise one for whom Christ dy'd, is to be as contrary to Christ, as he that despises any thing that Christ has said, or done.

If a Christian that had liv'd with the holy Virgin Mary, should, after the death of our

Lord, have taken any occasion to treat her with contempt, you would certainly say, that he had lost his piety towards our blessed Lord. For a true reverence for Christ must have forced him to treat her with respect, who was so

nearly related to him.

I dare appeal to any man's mind, whether it does not tell him, that this relation of the Virgin *Mary* to our blessed Lord, must have obliged all those that lived and convers'd with her, to treat her with great respect and esteem. Might not a man have justly dreaded the vengeance of God upon him, for any scorn or contempt that he had shewn to her?

Now if this be plain and obvious reasoning, if a contempt offer'd to the Virgin *Mary* must have been interpreted a contempt of Christ, because of her near relation to him, then let the same reasoning shew you the great impiety

of despising any brother.

You cannot despise a brother, without despising him that stands in a high relation to God, to his Son Jesus Christ, and to the holy

Trinity.

You would certainly think it a mighty impiety to treat a writing with great contempt, that had been written by the finger of God; and can you think it a less impiety to contemn and vilify a brother, who is not only the workmanship, but the image of God?

You would justly think it great prophaneness to contemn and trample upon an *Aitar*, because it was appropriated to holy uses, and

had

had had the body of Christ so often placed upon it; and can you suppose it to be less prophaneness to scorn and trample upon a brother, who so belongs to God, that his very body is to be considered as the temple of the Holy Ghost?

Had you despis'd and ill-treated the Virgin Mary, you had been chargeable with the impiety of despising her, of whom Christ was born. And if you scorn and despise a brother, you are chargeable with the impiety of despising him, for whom Christ laid down his life.

And now if this scornful temper is founded upon a disregard of all these relations, which every Christian bears to God, and Christ, and the Holy Trinity, can you wonder, or think it hard, that a Christian who thus allows himself to despise a brother, should be in danger of hell fire?

Secondly, It must here be observed, that tho' in these words, whosoever shall say, Thou fool, &c. the great sin there condemned is an allowed temper of despising a brother; yet we are also to believe, that all hasty expressions, and words of contempt, tho' spoken by surprize or accident, are by this text condemned as great sins, and notorious breaches of Christian charity.

They proceed from great want of Christian love and meekness, and call for great repentance. They are only little sins, when compar'd with *habits* and *settled tempers* of treat-

ing a brother despightfully, and fall as directly under the condemnation of this text, as the grossest habits of uncharitableness.

And the reason why we are always to apprehend great guilt, and call ourselves to a strict repentance for these hasty expressions of anger and contempt, is this; because they seldom are what they seem to be, that is, mere starts of temper, that were occasion'd purely by surprize or accident, but are much more our own proper acts, than we generally imagine.

A man says a great many bitter things; he presently forgives himself, because he supposes it was only the *suddenness* of the occasion, or something *accidental*, that carry'd him so

far beyond himself.

But he should consider, that perhaps the accident, or surprize, was not the occasion of his angry expressions, but might only be the occasion of his angry temper shewing itself.

Now as this is, generally speaking, the case, as all haughty, angry language generally proceeds from some secret habits of pride in the heart; so people that are subject to it, tho' only now and then as accidents happen, have great reason to repent of more than their present behaviour, to charge themselves with greater guilt than accidental passion, and to bring themselves to such penance and mortification, as is proper to destroy habits of a haughty spirit.

And this may be the reason, why the text looks no farther than the outward language; why it only says, Whosever shall say, Thou fool; because few can proceed so far, as to the accidental use of haughty, disdainful language, but they whose hearts are more or less possess'd with habits and settled tempers of pride and haughtiness.

But to return. *Intercession* is not only the best arbitrator of all differences, the best promoter of true friendship, the best cure and preservative against all unkind tempers, all angry and haughty passions, but is also of great use to discover to us the true state of our own

hearts.

There are many tempers which we think lawful and innocent, which we never suspect of any harm; which, if they were to be try'd by this devotion, would soon shew us how we have deceiv'd ourselves.

Susurrus is a pious, temperate, good man, remarkable for abundance of excellent qualities. No one more constant at the service of the Church, or whose heart is more affected with it. His charity is so great, that he almost starves himself, to be able to give greater alms to the poor.

Yet Susurrus had a prodigious failing along

with these great virtues.

He had a mighty inclination to hear and discover all the defects and infirmities of all about him. You was welcome to tell him any thing of any body, provided that you did

not do it in the *stile* of an enemy. He never dislik'd an *evil-speaker*, but when his language was *rough* and *passionate*. If you would but whisper any thing gently, though it was ever so bad in it self, *Susurrus* was ready to receive it.

When he visits, you generally hear him relating, how sorry he is for the defects and failings of such a neighbour. He is always letting you know how tender he is of the reputation of his neighbour; how loth to say that which he is forc'd to say, and how gladly he would conceal it, if it could be conceal'd.

Susurrus had such a tender, compassionate manner of relating things the most prejudicial to his neighbour, that he even seem'd, both to himself and others, to be exercising a christian charity, at the same time that he was indulging a whispering, evil - speaking temper.

Susurrus once whisper'd to a particular friend in great secrecy, something too bad to be spoke of publickly. He ended with saying, how glad he was, that it had not yet took wind, and that he had some hopes it might not be true, though the suspicions were very strong. His friend made him this reply:

You say, Susurrus, that you are glad it has not yet taken wind; and that you have some hopes it may not prove true. Go home therefore to your closet, and pray to God for this man, in such a manner, and with such

earnest-

earnestness, as you would pray for your self on the like occasion.

Beseech God to interpose in his favour, to save him from false accusers, and bring all those to shame, who by *uncharitable whispers*, and *secret stories*, wound him, like those that stab in the dark. And when you have made this prayer, then you may, if you please, go tell the same secret to some other friend, that you have told to me.

Susurrus was exceedingly affected with this rebuke, and felt the force of it upon his conscience in as lively a manner, as if he had seen the books open'd at the day of Judg-

ment.

All other arguments might have been resisted; but it was impossible for *Susurrus* either to reject, or to follow this advice, without being equally self-condemn'd in the highest degree.

From that time to this, he has constantly us'd himself to this method of intercession; and his heart is so entirely chang'd by it, that he can now no more privately whisper any thing to the prejudice of another, than he can openly pray to God to do people hurt.

Whisperings and evil-speakings now hurt his ears, like oaths and curses; and he has appointed one day in the week, to be a day of penance as long as he lives, to humble himself before God, in the sorrowful confession of his former guilt. It may well be wonder'd, how a man of so much piety as Susurrus, could be so long deceiv'd in himself, as to live in such a state of scandal and evil-speaking, without suspecting himself to be guilty of it. But it was the tenderness and seeming compassion with which he heard and related every thing, that deceiv'd both himself and others.

This was a falseness of heart, which was only to be fully discover'd, by the true charity

of intercession.

And if people of virtue, who think as little harm of themselves, as *Susurrus* did, were often to try their spirit by such an *intercession*, they would often find themselves to be such,

as they least of all suspected.

I have laid before you, the many and great advantages of intercession. You have seen what a divine friendship it must needs beget amongst Christians, how dear it would render all relations, and neighbours to one another; how it tends to make Clergymen, Masters, and Parents, exemplary and perfect in all the duties of their station; how certainly it destroys all envy, spight, and ill-natur'd passions; how speedily it reconciles all differences, and with what a piercing light it discovers to a man the true state of his heart.

These considerations will, I hope, persuade you to make such intercession as is proper for your state, the *constant*, *chief* matter of your

devotion at this hour of prayer.

#### CHAP. XXII

Recommending Devotion at three o' Clock, call'd in Scripture the ninth hour of the day. The subject of prayer at this hour, is resignation to the divine pleasure. The nature and duty of conformity to the will of God in all our actions and designs

I HAVE recommended certain subjects to be made the fix'd and chief matter of your Devotions, at all the hours of prayer that

have been already consider'd.

As thanksgiving, and oblation of your self to God, at your first prayers in the morning. At nine, the great virtue of Christian humility is to be the chief part of your petitions; at twelve, you are call'd upon to pray for all the graces of universal love, and to raise it in your heart by such general and particular intercessions, as your own state, and relation to other people, seem more particularly to require of you.

At this *hour* of the afternoon, you are desir'd to consider the necessity of *resignation* and *conformity* to the will of God, and to make this great virtue the principal matter of your

prayers.

There is nothing wise, or holy, or just, but the great will of God. This is as strictly true in the most rigid sense, as to say, that no-

thing is infinite and eternal but God.

No beings therefore, whether in Heaven, or on earth, can be wise, or holy, or just, but so far as they conform to this will of God. It is conformity to this will, that gives virtue and perfection to the highest services of angels in Heaven; and it is conformity to the same will, that makes the ordinary actions of men on earth, become an acceptable service unto God.

The whole nature of virtue consists in conforming, and the whole nature of vice in declining from the will of God. All God's creatures are created to fulfil his will; the Sun and Moon obey his will, by the necessity of their nature; Angels conform to his will, by the perfection of their nature: If therefore you would shew your self not to be a rebel and apostate from the order of the creation, you must act like beings both above and below you; it must be the great desire of your soul, that God's will may be done by you on earth, as it is done in heaven. It must be the settled purpose and intention of your heart, to will nothing, design nothing, do nothing, but so far as you have reason to believe, that it is the will of God, that you should so desire, design and do.

'Tis as just and necessary to live in this state of heart, to think thus of God and your self, as to think that you have any dependance upon him. And it is as great a rebel-

lion

lion against God, to think that your will may ever differ from his, as to think that you have not receiv'd the power of willing from him.

You are therefore to consider your self as a being, that has no other business in the world, but to be that which God requires you to be; to have no tempers, no rules of your own, to seek no self-designs, or self-ends, but to fill some place, and act some part in strict conformity, and thankful resignation to the divine

pleasure.

To think that you are your own, or at your own disposal, is as absurd as to think that you created, and can preserve your self. It is as plain and necessary a first principle, to believe you are thus God's, that you thus belong to him, and are to act and suffer all in a thankful resignation to his pleasure, as to believe, that in him you live, and move, and have your being.

Resignation to the divine will, signifies a chearful approbation, and thankful acceptance of every thing that comes from God. It is not enough patiently to submit, but we must thankfully receive, and fully approve of every thing, that by the order of God's providence

happens to us.

For there is no reason why we should be patient, but what is as good and strong a reason why we should be thankful. If we were under the hands of a wise and good Physician, that could not mistake, or do any thing to us, but what certainly tended to our benefit;

it.

it would not be enough to be patient, and abstain from murmuring against such a Physician; but it would be as great a breach of duty and gratitude to him, not to be pleas'd and thankful for what he did, as it would be to murmur at him.

Now this is our true state with relation to God; we can't be said so much as to believe in him, unless we believe him to be of infinite wisdom. Every argument therefore for patience under his disposal of us, is as strong an argument for approbation and thankfulness for every thing that he does to us. And there needs no more to dispose us to this gratitude towards God, than a full belief in him, that he is this being of infinite wisdom, love and goodness.

Do but assent to this truth, in the same manner as you assent to things of which you have no doubt, and then you will chearfully approve of every thing, that God has already

approv'd for you.

For as you cannot possibly be pleas'd with the behaviour of any person towards you, but because it is for your good, is wise in its self, and the effect of his love and goodness towards you; so when you are satisfy'd that God does not only do that which is wise, and good, and kind, but that which is the effect of an infinite wisdom and love in the care of you; it will be as necessary, whilst you have this faith, to be thankful and pleas'd with

every

every thing which God chuses for you, as to

wish your own happiness.

Whenever therefore you find your self dispos'd to uneasiness, or murmuring at any thing, that is the effect of God's providence over you, you must look upon your self as denying either the wisdom or goodness of God. For every complaint necessarily supposes this. You would never complain of your neighbour, but that you suppose you can shew either his unwise, unjust, or unkind behaviour towards you.

Now every murmuring, impatient reflection under the providence of God, is the same accusation of God. A complaint always sup-

poses ill usage.

Hence also you may see the great necessity and piety of this thankful state of heart, because the want of it implies an accusation of God's want either of wisdom, or goodness, in his disposal of us. It is not therefore any high degree of perfection, founded in any uncommon nicety of thinking, or refin'd notions, but a plain principle, founded in this plain belief, that God is a being of infinite wisdom and goodness.

Now this resignation to the divine will, may be consider'd in two respects; First, As it signifies a thankful approbation of God's general providence over the world: Secondly, As it signifies a thankful acceptance of his

particular providence over us.

First, Every man is by the law of his creation, by the first article of his creed, oblig'd to consent to, and acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of God, in his general providence over the whole world. He is to believe that it is the effect of God's great wisdom and goodness, that the world it self was form'd at such a particular time, and in such a manner. That the general order of nature, the whole frame of things, is contriv'd and form'd in the best manner. He is to believe that God's providence over states and kingdoms, times and seasons, is all for the best. That the revolutions of state, and changes of empire, the rise and fall of monarchies, persecutions, wars, famines, and plagues, are all permitted, and conducted by God's providence, to the general good of man in this state of trial.

A good man is to believe all this, with the same fulness of assent, as he believes that God is in every place, though he neither sees, nor can comprehend the manner of his pre-

sence.

This is a noble magnificence of thought, a true religious greatness of mind, to be thus affected with God's general providence, admiring and magnifying his wisdom in all things; never murmuring at the course of the world, or the state of things, but looking upon all around, at heaven and earth, as a pleas'd spectator; and adoring that invisible hand, which gives laws to all motions, and over-rules

rules all events to ends suitable to the highest wisdom and goodness.

It is very common for people to allow themselves great liberty in finding fault with such things, as have only God for their cause.

Every one thinks he may justly say, what a wretched, abominable climate he lives in. This man is frequently telling you, what a dismal, cursed day it is, and what intolerable seasons we have. Another thinks he has very little to thank God for, that it is hardly worth his while to live in a world so full of changes and revolutions. But these are tempers of great impiety, and shew that religion has not yet its seat in the heart of those that have them.

It sounds indeed much better to murmur at the course of the world, or the state of things, than to murmur at providence; to complain of the seasons and weather, than to complain of God; but if these have no other cause but God and his providence, it is a poor distinction to say, that you are only angry at the things, but not at the cause and director of them.

How sacred the whole frame of the world is, how all things are to be consider'd as God's, and referr'd to him, is fully taught by our blessed Lord in the case of oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; matth. v. 37. nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King

King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black; that is, because the whiteness or blackness of

thy hair is not thine, but God's.

Here you see all things in the whole order of nature, from the highest heavens to the smallest hair, are always to be considered, not separately as they are in themselves, but as in some relation to God. And if this be good reasoning, thou shalt not swear by the earth, a city, or thy hair, because these things are God's, and in a certain manner belong to him; is it not exactly the same reasoning to say, Thou shalt not murmur at the seasons of the earth, the states of cities, and the change of times, because all these things are in the hands of God, have him for their Author, are directed and governed by him to such ends, as are most suitable to his wise Providence?

If you think you can murmur at the state of things without murmuring at Providence, or complain of seasons without complaining of God; hear what our blessed Lord says farther upon oaths: Whoso shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon: and whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by him that dwelleth therein: and he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

Now does not this Scripture plainly oblige us to reason after this manner: Whoso murmurs at the course of the world, murmurs at

God

God that governs the course of the world. Whoso repines at seasons and weather, and speaks impatiently of times and events, repines and speaketh impatiently of God, who is the sole Lord and Governor of times, seasons, and events.

As therefore when we think of God himself, we are to have no sentiments but of praise and thanksgiving; so when we look at those things which are under the direction of God, and govern'd by his Providence, we are to receive them with the same tempers of praise

and gratitude.

And though we are not to think all things right, and just, and lawful, which the Providence of God permits; for then nothing could be unjust, because nothing without his permission: yet we must adore God in the greatest publick calamities, the most grievous persecutions, as things that are suffer'd by God, like plagues and famines, for ends suitable to his wisdom and glory in the government of the world.

There is nothing more suitable to the piety of a reasonable creature, or the spirit of a Christian, than thus to approve, admire, and glorify God in all the acts of his general Providence: considering the whole world as his particular family, and all events as directed by his wisdom.

Every one seems to consent to this, as an undeniable truth, That all things must be as God pleases; and is not this enough to make

2 F every

every man pleas'd with them himself? And how can a man be a peevish complainer of any thing that is the effect of Providence, but by shewing that his own self-will and self-wisdom is of more weight with him, than the will and wisdom of God? And what can Religion be said to have done for a man, whose heart is in this state.

For if he cannot thank and praise God, as well in calamities and sufferings, as in prosperity and happiness, he is as far from the piety of a Christian, as he that only loves them that love him, is from the charity of a Christian. For to thank God only for such things as you like, is no more a proper act of piety, than to believe only what you see, is an act of faith.

Resignation and thanksgiving to God are only acts of piety, when they are acts of faith, trust and confidence in the divine Goodness.

The faith of Abraham was an act of true piety, because it stopp'd at no difficulties, was not alter'd or lessen'd by any human appearances. It first of all carry'd him, against all shew of happiness, from his own kindred and country, into a strange land, not knowing whither he went. It afterwards made him against all appearances of nature, when his body was abead, when he was about an hundred years old, depend upon the promise of God, being fully persuaded, that what God had promis'd he was able to perform. It was this same faith, that against so many pleas of nature, so many appear-

appearances of reason, prevail'd upon him to offer up Isaac——accounting that God was able to raise him up from Heb. xi. 17, 19. the dead.

Now this faith is the true pattern of Christian resignation to the divine pleasure; you are to thank and praise God, not only for things agreeable to you, that have the appearance of happiness and comfort; but when you are like Abraham, called from all appearances of comfort, to be a pilgrim in a strange land, to part with an only son; being as fully persuaded of the divine Goodness in all things that happen to you, as Abraham was of the divine promise, when there was the least appearance of its being performed.

This is true Christian resignation to God, which requires no more to the support of it, than such a plain assurance of the goodness of God, as *Abraham* had of his veracity. And if you ask yourself, what greater reason *Abraham* had to depend upon the divine Veracity, than you have to depend upon the divine Goodness, you will find that none can be

given.

You cannot therefore look upon this as an unnecessary, high pitch of perfection, since the want of it implies the want not of any high notions, but of a plain and ordinary faith in the most certain doctrines both of natural and reveal'd religion.

Thus much concerning resignation to the divine Will, as it signifies a thankful appro-

bation

bation of God's general providence: It is now to be consider'd as it signifies a thankful acceptance of God's particular providence over us.

Every man is to consider himself as a particular object of God's providence; under the same care and protection of God, as if the world had been made for him alone. It is not by chance that any man is born at such a time, of such parents, and in such place and condition. It is as certain, that every soul comes into the body at such a time, and in such circumstances, by the express designment of God, according to some purposes of his will, and for some particular ends; this is as certain, that it is by the express designment of God, according to some purposes of his will, and for some particular ends; this is as certain, that it is by the express designment of God, that some beings are Angels, and others are men.

It is as much by the counsel and eternal purpose of God, that you should be born in your particular state, and that *Isaac* should be the son of *Abraham*, as that *Gabriel* should be

an Angel, and Isaac a man.

The Scriptures assure us, that it was by divine appointment, that our blessed Saviour was born at Bethlehem, and at such a time. Now altho' it was owing to the dignity of his person, and the great importance of his birth, that thus much of the divine counsel was declared to the world concerning the time and manner of it; yet we are as sure from the same Scriptures, that the time and manner of every man's coming into the world, is according to some eternal purposes and direction of Divine

Divine Providence, and in such time, and place, and circumstances, as are directed and governed by God for particular ends of his wisdom and

goodness.

This we are as certain of from plain revelation, as we can be of any thing. For if we are told, that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father; can any thing more strongly teach us, that much greater beings, such as human souls, come not into the world without the care and direction of our heavenly Father? If it is said, the very hairs of your head are all number'd; is it not to teach us, that nothing, not the smallest things imaginable, happen to us by chance? But if the smallest things we can conceive, are declar'd to be under the divine direction, need we, or can we be more plainly taught, that the greatest things of life, such as the manner of our coming into the world, our pcrents, the time, and other circumstances of our birth and condition, are all according to the eternal purposes, direction and appointment of Divine Providence?

When the disciples put this question to our blessed Lord concerning the blind man, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? He that was the eternal Wisdom of God made this answer, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. Plainly declaring, that the particular circumstances of every man's

man's birth, the body that he receives, and the condition and state of life into which he is born, are appointed by a secret Providence, which directs all things to their particular times and seasons, and manner of existence, that the wisdom and works of God may be made manifest in them all.

As therefore it is thus certain, that we are what we are, as to birth, time, and condition of entring into the world; since all that is particular in our state, is the effect of God's particular providence over us, and intended for some particular ends both of his glory and our own happiness, we are by the greatest obligations of gratitude, called upon to conform and resign our will to the will of God in all these respects; thankfully approving and accepting every thing that is particular in our state. Praising and glorifying his name for our birth of such parents, and in such circumstances of state and condition; being fully assur'd, that it was for some reasons of infinite wisdom and goodness, that we were so born into such particular states of life.

If the man above-mention'd, was born blind, that the works of God might be manifested in him, had he not great reason to praise God, for appointing him in such a particular manner, to be the instrument of his Glory? And if one person is born here, and another there; if one falls amongst riches, and another into poverty; if one receives his flesh and blood from these parents, and another from

from those, for as particular ends, as the man was born blind; have not all people the greatest reason to bless God, and to be thankful for their particular state and condition, because all that is particular in it, is as directly intended for the glory of God, and their own good, as the particular blindness of that man, who was so born, that the works of God might be mani-

fested in him?

How noble an idea does this give us of the divine Omniscience presiding over the whole world, and governing such a long chain and combination of seeming accidents and chances, to the common and particular advantage of all beings? So that all persons, in such a wonderful variety of causes, accidents and events, should all fall into such particular states, as were foreseen, and fore-ordain'd to their best advantage, and so as to be most serviceable to the wise and glorious ends of God's government of all the world.

Had you been any thing else than what you are, you had, all things consider'd, been less wisely provided for than you are now; you had wanted some circumstances and conditions, that are best fitted to make you happy your self, and serviceable to the glory

of God.

Could you see all that which God sees, all that happy chain of causes and motives which are to move and invite you to a right course of life, you would see something to make you like that state you are in, as fitter for you than any other.

But as you cannot see this, so it is here that your Christian *faith* and *trust* in God, is to exercise it self, and render you as grateful and thankful for the happiness of your state, as if you saw every thing that contributes to it with your own eyes.

But now if this is the case of every man in the world, thus blessed with some particular state that is most convenient for him, how reasonable is it for every man to will that which God has already will'd for him? And by a pious faith and trust in the divine goodness, thankfully adore and magnify that wise providence, which he is sure has made the best choice for him of those things, which he could not chuse for himself.

Every uneasiness at our own state, is founded upon comparing it with that of other people. Which is full as unreasonable, as if a man in a *dropsy* should be angry at those that prescribe different things to him, from those which are prescrib'd to people in *health*. For all the different states of *life* are like the different states of *diseases*, what is a remedy to one man in his state, may be poison to another.

So that to murmur because you are not as some others are, is as if a man in one disease should murmur that he is not treated like him that is in another. Whereas if he was to

have

have his will, he would be kill'd by that, which will prove the cure of another.

It is just thus in the various conditions of life; if you give your self up to uneasiness, or complain at any thing in your state, you may, for ought you know, be so ungrateful to God, as to murmur at that very thing, which is to prove the cause of your salvation.

Had you it in your power to get that which you think it so grievous to want, it might perhaps be that very thing, which of all others, would most expose you to eternal damnation.

So that whether we consider the infinite goodness of God, that cannot chuse amiss for us, or our own great ignorance of what is most advantageous to us, there can be nothing so reasonable and pious, as to have no will but that of God's, and desire nothing for our selves, in our persons, our state, and condition, but that which the good providence of God appoints us.

Farther, as the good providence of God thus introduces us into the world, into such states and conditions of life, as are most convenient for us, so the same unerring wisdom orders all events and changes in the whole course of our lives, in such a manner, as to render them the fittest means to exercise and

improve our virtue.

Nothing hurts us, nothing destroys us, but the ill use of that liberty, with which God has entrusted us.

We are as sure that nothing happens to us by chance, as that the world it self was not made by chance; we are as certain that all things happen, and work together for our good, as that God is goodness it self. So that a man has as much reason to will every thing that happens to him, because God wills it, as to think that is wisest, which is directed by infinite wisdom.

This is not cheating or soothing our selves into any false content, or imaginary happiness; but is a satisfaction grounded upon as great a certainty, as the being and attributes of God.

For if we are right in believing God to act over us with infinite wisdom and goodness, we cannot carry our notions of conformity and resignation to the divine will too high; nor can we ever be deceiv'd, by thinking that to be best for us, which God has brought upon us.

For the providence of God is not more concern'd in the government of night and day, and the variety of seasons, than in the common course of events, that seem most to depend upon the mere wills of men. So that it is as strictly right, to look upon all worldly accidents and changes, all the various turns and alterations in your own life, to be as truly the effects of Divine Providence, as the rising

and

and setting of the Sun, or the alterations of the seasons of the year. As you are therefore always to adore the wisdom of God in the direction of these things; so it is the same reasonable duty, always to magnify God, as an equal Director of every thing that happens to

you in the course of your own life.

This holy resignation and conformity of your will to the will of God, being so much the true state of piety, I hope you will think it proper to make this hour of prayer, a constant season of applying to God for so great a gift. That by thus constantly praying for it, your heart may be habitually dispos'd towards it, and always in a state of readiness to look at every thing as God's, and to consider him in every thing; that so every thing that befals you, may be receiv'd in the spirit of piety, and made a means of exercising some virtue.

There is nothing that so powerfully governs the heart, that so strongly excites us to wise and reasonable actions, as a true sense of God's presence. But as we cannot see, or apprehend the essence of God, so nothing will so constantly keep us under a lively sense of the presence of God, as this holy resignation, which attributes every thing to him, and receives every thing as from him.

Could we see a *miracle* from God, how would our thoughts be affected with an holy awe and veneration of his presence! But if we consider every thing as God's doing, either

by order or permission, we shall then be affected with common things, as they would be who saw a miracle.

For as there is nothing to affect you in a miracle, but as it is the action of God, and bespeaks his presence; so when you consider God, as acting in all things, and all events, then all things will become venerable to you, like miracles, and fill you with the same awful sentiments of the divine presence.

Now you must not reserve the exercise of this pious temper, to any particular times or occasions, or fancy how resign'd you will be to God, if such or such trial should happen. For this is amusing your self with the notion or idea of resignation, instead of the virtue it self.

Don't therefore please your self with thinking, how piously you would act and submit to God in a plague, a famine, or persecution, but be intent upon the perfection of the present day; and be assur'd, that the best way of shewing a true zeal, is to make little

things the occasions of great piety.

Begin therefore in the smallest matters, and most ordinary occasions, and accustom your mind to the daily exercise of this pious temper, in the lowest occurrences of life. And when a contempt, an affront, a little injury, loss, or disappointment, or the smallest events of every day, continually raise your mind to God in proper acts of resignation, then you may justly hope, that you shall be number'd

amongst

amongst those that are resign'd and thankful to God in the greatest trials and afflictions.

### CHAP. XXIII

Of Evening prayer. Of the nature and necessity of examination. How we are to be particular in the confession of all our sins. How we are to fill our minds with a just horror and dread of all sin

I AM now come to six o'clock in the evening, which according to the Scripture account, is call'd the twelfth, or last hour of the day. This is a time so proper for Devotion, that I suppose nothing need be said to recommend it as a season of prayer, to all people that profess any regard to piety.

As the labour and action of every state of life is generally over at this hour, so this is the proper time for every one to call himself to account, and review all his behaviour, from the first action of the day. The necessity of this examination, is founded upon the necessity of repentance. For if it be necessary to repent of all our sins, if the guilt of unrepented sins still continues upon us, then it is necessary, not only that all our sins, but the particular circumstances and aggravations of them

them, be known and recollected, and brought

to repentance.

The Scripture saith, If we confess our sins,

1 John i. 9. he is faithful and just to forgive us
our sins, and to cleanse us from all
unrighteousness. Which is as much as to say,
that then only our sins are forgiven, and we
cleans'd from the guilt and unrighteousness of
them, when they are thus confess'd, and repented of.

There seems therefore to be the greatest necessity, that all our daily actions be constantly observ'd, and brought to account, lest by a negligence we load our selves with the guilt of

unrepented sins.

This examination therefore of ourselves every evening, is not only to be consider'd as a commendable rule, and fit for a wise man to observe, but as something that is as necessary as a daily confession and repentance of our sins; because this daily repentance is of very little significancy, and loses all its chief benefits, unless it be a particular confession and repentance of the sins of that day. This examination is necessary to repentance in the same manner as time is necessary; you cannot repent or express your sorrow, unless you allow some time for it; nor can you repent, but so far as you know what it is that you are repenting of. So that when it is said, that it is necessary to examine and call your actions to account; it is only saying, that it is necessary

to know what, and how many things you are

to repent of.

You perhaps have hitherto only used your self to confess yourself a sinner in *general*, and ask forgiveness in the *gross*, without any *particular remembrance*, or contrition for the particular sins of that day. And by this practice you are brought to believe, that the same short, general form of confession of sin in general, is a sufficient repentance for every day.

Suppose another person should hold, that a confession of our sins in general once at the end of every week was sufficient; and that it was as well to confess the sins of seven days all together, as to have a particular repentance at

the end of every day.

I know you sufficiently see the unreasonableness and impiety of this opinion, and that you think it is easy enough to shew the danger and

folly of it.

Yet you cannot bring one argument against such an opinion, but what will be as good an argument against such a daily repentance, as does not call the particular sins of that day to a strict account.

For as you can bring no express text of Scripture against such an opinion, but must take all your arguments from the nature of repentance, and the necessity of a particular repentance for particular sins, so every argument of that kind, must as fully prove the necessity of being very particular in our repentance of the sins of every day. Since nothing can be justly said

said against leaving the sins of the whole week to be repented for in the gross, but what may as justly be said against a daily repentance, which considers the sins of that day only in

the gross.

Would you tell such a man, that a daily confession was necessary to keep up an abhorrence of sin, that the mind would grow harden'd and senseless of the guilt of sin without it? And is not this as good a reason for requiring that your daily repentance be very express and particular for your daily sins? For if confession is to raise an abhorrence of sin, surely that confession which considers and lays open your particular sins, that brings them to light with all their circumstances and aggravations, that requires a particular sorrowful acknowledgment of every sin, must in a much greater degree fill the mind with an abhorrence of sin, than that which only in one and the same form of words confesses you only to be a sinner in general. For as this is nothing but what the greatest Saint may justly say of himself, so the daily repeating of only such a confession, has nothing in it to make you truly ashamed of your own way of life.

Again; must you not tell such a man, that by leaving himself to such a weekly, general confession, he would be in great danger of forgetting a great many of his sins? But is there any sense or force in this argument, unless you suppose that our sins are all to be remember'd, and brought to a particular repentance? And

is it not as necessary, that our particular sins be not forgotten, but particularly remember'd in our daily, as in a repentance at any other time?

So that every argument for a daily confession and repentance, is the same argument for the confession and repentance of the *particular* 

sins of every day.

Because daily confession has no other reason or necessity, but our daily sins; and therefore is nothing of what it should be, but so far as it is a repentance and sorrowful acknowledg-

ment of the sins of the day.

You would, I suppose, think yourself chargeable with great impiety, if you was to go to bed without confessing yourself to be a sinner, and asking pardon of God; you would not think it sufficient that you did so yesterday. And yet if without any regard to the present day, you only repeat the same form of words that you used yesterday, the sins of the present day may justly be looked upon to have had no repentance. For if the sins of the present day require a new confession, it must be such a new confession as is proper to itself. For it is the state and condition of every day, that is to determine the state and manner of your repentance in the evening; otherwise the same general form of words is rather an empty formality, that has the appearance of a duty, than such a true performance of it, as is necessary to make it truly useful to you.

2 C Let

Let it be supposed, that on a certain day you have been guilty of these sins; that you have told a vain lye upon yourself, ascribing something falsely to yourself through pride; that you have been guilty of detraction, and indulg'd yourself in some degree of intemperance. Let it be supposed, that on the next day you have lived in a contrary manner; that you have neglected no duty of devotion, and been the rest of the day innocently employ'd in your proper business. Let it be supposed, that on the evening of both these days you only use the same confession in general, considering it rather as a duty that is to be perform'd every night, than as a repentance that is to be suited to the particular state of the day.

Can it with any reason be said, that each day has had its proper repentance? Is it not as good sense to say, there is no difference in the guilt of these days, as to say that there need be no different repentance at the end of them? Or how can each of them have its proper repentance, but by its having a repentance as large and extensive, and particular, as the

guilt of each day?

Again, let it be suppos'd, that in that day, when you had been guilty of the three notorious sins above-mention'd, that in your evening repentance, you had only call'd one of them to mind. Is it not plain, that the other two are unrepented of, and that therefore their guilt still abides upon you? So that

you are then in the state of him, who commits himself to the night without the repentance for such a day, as had betray'd him

into two such great sins.

Now these are not needless particulars, or such scrupulous niceties, as a man need not trouble himself about; but are such plain truths, as essentially concern the very life of piety. For if repentance is necessary, it is full as necessary that it be rightly performed, and in due manner.

And I have enter'd into all these particulars, only to show you in the plainest manner, that examination, and a careful review of all the actions of the day, is not only to be looked upon as a good rule, but as something as necessary as repentance itself.

If a man is to account for his expences at night, can it be thought a needless exactness in him, to take notice of every particular ex-

pence in the day?

And if a man is to repent of his sins at night, can it be thought too great a piece of scrupulosity in him, to know and call to mind

what sins he is to repent of?

Farther; tho' it should be granted, that a confession in *general* may be a sufficient repentance for the end of such days, as have only the unavoidable frailties of our nature to lament; yet even this fully proves the absolute necessity of this self-examination: for without this examination, who can know that he has gone thro' any day in this manner?

Again

Again; An evening repentance, which thus brings all the actions of the day to account, is not only necessary to wipe off the guilt of sin, but is also the most certain way to amend and perfect our lives.

For it is only such a repentance as this, that touches the heart, awakens the conscience, and leaves an horror and detestation of sin

upon the mind.

For instance: If it should happen, that upon any particular evening, all that you could charge yourself with should be this, viz. a hasty, negligent performance of your devotions, or too much time spent in an impertinent conversation; if the unreasonableness of these things were fully reflected upon, and acknowledg'd; if you was then to condemn yourself before God for them, and implore his pardon and assisting grace, what could be so likely a means to prevent your falling into the same faults the next day?

Or if you should fall into them again the next day; yet if they were again brought to the same examination and condemnation in the presence of God, their happening again would be such a proof to you of your own folly and weakness, would cause such a pain and remorge in your mind, and fill you with such shame and confusion at yourself, as would in all probability make you exceedingly desirous of

greater perfection.

Now in the case of repeated sins, this would be the certain benefit that we should

receive

receive from this examination and confession; the mind would thereby be made humble, full of sorrow and deep compunction, and by

degrees forced into amendment.

Whereas a formal, general confession, that is only consider'd as an evening duty, that overlooks the particular mistakes of the day, and is the same whether the day be spent ill or well, has little or no effect upon the mind; a man may use such a daily confession, and yet go on sinning and confessing all his life, without any remorse of mind, or true desire of amendment.

For if your own particular sins are left out of your confession, your confessing of sin in general has no more effect upon your mind, than if you had only confess'd, that all men in general are sinners. And there is nothing in any confession to shew that it is yours, but so far as it is a self-accusation, not of sin in general, or such as is common to all others, but of such particular sins, as are your own proper shame and reproach.

No other confession, but such as thus discovers and accuses your own particular guilt, can be an act of true sorrow, or real concern at your own condition. And a confession that is without this sorrow and compunction of heart, has nothing in it either to atone for past sins, or to produce in us any true refor-

mation and amendment of life.

To proceed; in order to make this examination still farther beneficial, every man should oblige oblige himself to a certain method in it. As every man has something particular in his nature, stronger inclinations to some vices than others, some infirmities that stick closer to him, and are harder to be conquer'd than others; and as it is as easy for every man to know this of himself, as to know whom he likes or dislikes; so it is highly necessary, that these particularities of our natures and tempers should never escape a severe trial at our evening repentance: I say, a severe trial, because nothing but a rigorous severity against these natural tempers, is sufficient to conquer them.

They are the *right eyes*, that are not to be spared; but to be plucked out and cast from us. For as they are the infirmities of nature, so they have the strength of nature, and must be treated with great opposition, or they will

soon be too strong for us.

He therefore who knows himself most of all subject to anger and passion, must be very exact and constant in his examination of this temper every evening. He must find out every slip that he has made of that kind, whether in thought, or word, or action; he must shame, and reproach, and accuse himself before God, for every thing that he has said or done in obedience to his passion. He must no more allow himself to forget the examination of this temper, than to forget his whole prayers.

Again; if you find that vanity is your prevailing temper, that is always putting you upon the adornment of your person, and catching after every thing that compliments or flatters your abilities, never spare or forget this temper in your evening examination; but confess to God every vanity of thought, or word, or action, that you have been guilty of, and put your self to all the shame and confusion for it that you can.

In this manner should all people act with regard to their chief frailty, to which their nature most inclines them. And though it should not immediately do all that they would wish, yet by a constant practice it would certainly in a short time produce its desir'd

effect.

Farther; as all states and employments of life have their particular dangers and temptations, and expose people more to some sins than others, so every man that wishes his own improvement, should make it a necessary part of his evening examination, to consider how he has avoided, or fallen into such sins as are most common to his state of life.

For as our business and condition of life has great power over us, so nothing but such watchfulness as this, can secure us from those temptations to which it daily exposes us.

The poor man, from his condition of life, is always in danger of retining and uneasiness; the rich man is most expos'd to sensuality and indulgence; the tradesman to lying and unrea-

sonable

sonable gains; the scholar to pride and vanity; so that in every state of life, a man should always, in his examination of himself, have a strict eye upon those faults, to which his state

of life most of all exposes him.

Again; as it is reasonable to suppose, that every good man has enter'd into, or at least propos'd to himself some method of holy living, and set himself some such rules to observe, as are not common to other people, and only known to himself; so it should be a constant part of his night recollection, to examine how, and in what degree, he has observ'd them, and to reproach himself before God, for every neglect of them.

By rules, I here mean, such rules as relate to the well-ordering of our time, and the business of our common life. Such rules as prescribe a certain order to all that we are to do, our business, devotion, mortifications, readings, retirements, conversation, meals, refreshments,

sleep, and the like.

Now as good rules relating to all these things, are certain means of great improvement, and such as all serious Christians must needs propose to themselves, so they will hardly ever be observ'd to any purpose, unless they are made the *constant subject* of our evening examination.

Lastly, You are not to content your self with a hasty general review of the day, but you must enter upon it with deliberation; begin

begin with the *first action* of the day, and proceed step by step, through every particular matter that you have been concern'd in, and so let no *time*, place, or action be overlook'd.

An examination thus manag'd, will in a little time make you as different from your self, as a wise man is different from an ideot. It will give you such a newness of mind, such a spirit of wisdom, and desire of perfection, as you was an entire stranger to before.

Thus much concerning the evening examination.

I proceed now to lay before you such considerations, as may fill your mind with a just dread and horror of all sin, and help you to confess your own in the most passionate con-

trition, and sorrow of heart.

Consider first, how odious all sin is to God, what a mighty baseness it is, and how abominable it renders sinners in the sight of God. That it is sin alone that makes the great difference betwixt an angel, and the devil; and that every sinner is, so far as he sins, a friend of the devil's, and carrying on his work against God. That sin is a greater blemish and defilement of the soul, than any filth or disease is a defilement of the body. And to be content to live in sin, is a much greater baseness, than to desire to wallow in the mire, or love any bodily impurity.

Consider how you must abhor a creature that delighted in nothing but filth and nastiness, that hated every thing that was decent and clean; and let this teach you to apprehend, how odious that soul that delights in nothing but the impurity of sin, must appear unto God.

For all sins, whether of sensuality, pride, or falseness, or any other irregular passion, are nothing else but the filth, and impure diseases of the rational soul. And all righteousness is nothing else but the purity, the decency, the beauty and perfection of that spirit, which is made in the image of God.

Again; learn what horror you ought to have for the guilt of sin, from the greatness of that attonement which has been made for

it.

God made the world by the breath of his mouth, by a word speaking; but the redemption of the world has been a work of longer labour.

How easily God can create beings, we learn from the first chapter of *Genesis*; but how difficult it is for infinite mercy to forgive sins, we learn from that costly attonement, those bloody sacrifices, those pains and penances, those sicknesses and deaths, which all must be undergone, before the guilty sinner is fit to appear in the presence of God.

Ponder these great truths: That the Son of God was forc'd to become man, to be partaker of all our infirmities; to undergo a poor,

painful, miserable, and contemptible life, to be persecuted, hated, and at last nail'd to a Cross, that by such sufferings he might render God propitious to that nature in which he suffer'd.

That all the bloody sacrifices and attonements of the *Jewish* Law, were to represent the necessity of this *great sacrifice*, and the *great displeasure* God bore to sinners.

That the world is still under the curse of sin, and certain marks of God's displeasure at it; such as famines, plagues, tempests, sickness,

diseases and death.

Consider that all the sons of Adam are to go through a painful, sickly life, denying and mortifying their natural appetites, and crucifying the lusts of the flesh, in order to have a share in the attonement of our Saviour's death.

That all their penances and self-denials, all their tears and repentance, are only made available by that great Intercession, which is still making for them at the right hand of God.

Consider these great truths; that this mysterious redemption, all these sacrifices and sufferings, both of God and man, are only to remove the guilt of sin; and then let this teach you with what tears and contrition, you ought to purge your self from it.

After this general consideration of the guilt of sin, which has done so much mischief to your nature, and expos'd it to so great pu-

nishment

nishment, and made it so odious to God, that nothing less than so great an attonement of the Son of God, and so great repentance of our own, can restore us to the divine favour:

Consider next your own particular share in the guilt of sin. And if you would know with what zeal you ought to repent your self, consider how you would exhort another sinner to repentance; and what repentance and amendment you would expect from him, whom you judg'd to be the greatest sinner in the world.

Now this case every man may justly reckon to be his own. And you may fairly look upon your self to be the greatest sinner that you know in the world.

For though you may know abundance of people to be guilty of some gross sins, with which you cannot charge your self, yet you may justly condemn your self, as the greatest sinner that you know. And that for these following reasons:

First, Because you know more of the folly of your own heart, than you do of other peoples; and can charge your self with various sins, that you only know of your self, and cannot be sure that other sinners are guilty of them. So that as you know more of the folly, the baseness, the pride, the deceitfulness and negligence of your own heart, than you do of any one's else, so you have just reason

to consider your self as the greatest sinner that you know: Because you know more of the greatness of your own sins, than you do of other peoples.

Secondly, The greatness of our guilt arises chiefly from the greatness of God's goodness towards us, from the particular graces and blessings, the favours, the lights and instructions that we have receiv'd from him.

Now as these graces and blessings, and the multitude of God's favours towards us, are the great aggravations of our sins against God, so they are only known to our selves. And therefore every sinner knows more of the aggravations of his own guilt, than he does of other peoples; and consequently may justly look upon himself to be the greatest sinner that he knows.

How good God has been to other sinners, what *light* and *instruction* he has vouchsaf'd to them; what blessings and *graces* they have receiv'd from him; how often he has touch'd their hearts with holy inspirations, you cannot tell. But all this you know of your self, therefore you know greater aggravations of your own guilt, and are able to charge your self with greater ingratifude than you can charge upon other people.

And this is the reason, why the greatest saints have in all ages condemn'd themselves as the greatest sinners, because they knew

some aggravations of their own sins, which

they could not know of other peoples.

The right way therefore to fill your heart with true contrition, and a deep sense of your own sins, is this: You are not to consider, or compare the outward form, or course of your life, with that of other peoples, and then think your self to be less sinful than they, because the outward course of your life is less sinful than theirs.

But in order to know your own guilt, you must consider your own particular circumstances, your health, your sickness, your youth, or age, your particular calling, the happiness of your education, the degrees of light and instruction that you have receiv'd, the good men that you have convers'd with, the admonitions that you have had, the good books that you have read, the numberless multitude of divine blessings, graces and favours that you have receiv'd, the good motions of grace that you have resisted, the resolutions of amendment that you have often broken, and the checks of conscience that you have disregarded.

For it is from these circumstances, that every one is to state the *measure* and *greatness* of his own guilt. And as you know only these circumstances of your own sins, so you must necessarily know how to charge your self with higher degrees of guilt, than you

can charge upon other people.

God Almighty knows greater sinners, it may be, than you are; because he sees and knows the circumstances of all mens sins: But your own heart, if it is faithful to you, can discover no guilt so great as your own; because it can only see in you those circumstances, on which great part of the guilt of sin is founded.

You may see sins in other people, that you cannot charge upon yourself; but then you know a number of circumstances of your own guilt, that you cannot lay to their charge.

And perhaps that person that appears at such a distance from your virtue, and so odious in your eyes, would have been much better than you are, had he been altogether in your circumstances, and received all the same favours and graces from God that you have.

This is a very humbling reflection, and very proper for those people to make, who measure their virtue, by comparing the outward course of their lives with that of other peoples.

For look at whom you will, however different from you in his way of life, yet you can never know that he has resisted so much divine grace as you have; or that in all your circumstances, he would not have been much truer to his duty than you are.

Now this is the reason why I desir'd you to consider, how you would exhort that man to confess and bewail his sins, whom you look'd upon to be one of the greatest sinners.

Because if you will deal justly, you must fix the charge at *home*, and look no farther than *yourself*. For God has given no one any power of knowing the *true greatness* of any sins, but his own: and therefore the greatest sinner that every one *knows*, is himself.

You may easily see how such a one in the outward course of his life breaks the laws of God; but then you can never say, that had you been exactly in all his circumstances, that you should not have broken them more than

he has done.

A serious and frequent reflection upon these things, will mightily tend to humble us in our own eyes, make us very apprehensive of the greatness of our own guilt, and very tender in censuring and condemning other people.

For who would dare to be severe against other people, when for ought he can tell, the severity of God may be more due to him, than to them? Who would exclaim against the guilt of others, when he considers that he knows more of the greatness of his own guilt,

than he does of theirs?

How often you have resisted God's holy Spirit; how many motives to goodness you have disregarded; how many particular blessings you have sinn'd against; how many good resolutions you have broken; how many checks and admonitions of conscience you have stifled, you very well know: But how often this has been the case of other sinners, you know not.

And

And therefore the greatest sinner that you

know, must be yourself.

Whenever therefore you are angry at sin or sinners, whenever you read or think of God's indignation and wrath at wicked men, let this teach you to be the most severe in your censure, and most humble and contrite in the acknowledgment and confession of your own sins, because you know of no sinner equal to yourself.

Lastly, to conclude this chapter: Having thus examin'd and confess'd your sins at this hour of the evening, you must afterwards look upon yourself, as still oblig'd to betake yourself to prayer again just before you go to bed.

The subject that is most proper for your prayers at that time, is death. Let your prayers therefore then be wholly upon it, reckoning up all the dangers, uncertainties, and terrors of death; let them contain every thing that can affect and awaken your mind into just apprehensions of it. Let your petitions be all for right sentiments of the approach and importance of death; and beg of God, that your mind may be possess'd with such a sense of its nearness, that you may have it always in your thoughts, do every thing as in sight of it, and make every day, a day for preparation for it.

Represent to your imagination, that your bed is your grave; that all things are ready for your

your interment; that you are to have no more to do with this world; and that it will be owing to God's great mercy, if you ever see the light of the Sun again, or have another day

to add to your works of piety.

And then commit yourself to sleep, as into the hands of God; as one that is to have no more opportunities of doing good; but is to awake amongst spirits that are separate from the body, and waiting for the judgment of the last great day.

Such a solemn resignation of yourself into the hands of God every evening, and parting with all the world, as if you was never to see it any more, and all this in the silence and darkness of the night, is a practice that will soon have excellent effects upon your spirit.

For this time of the night is exceeding proper for such prayers and meditations; and the likeness which sleep and darkness have to death, will contribute very much to make your thoughts about it the more deep and affecting. So that I hope you will not let a time, so proper for such prayers, be ever pass'd over without them.

#### CHAP. XXIV

The Conclusion. Of the Excellency and Greatness of a devout Spirit

Have now finish'd what I intended in this Treatise. I have explain'd the nature of devotion, both as it signifies a life devoted to God, and as it signifies a regular method of daily prayer. I have now only to add a word or two in recommendation of a life governed by this spirit of devotion.

For though it is as reasonable to suppose it the desire of all Christians to arrive at Christian Perfection, as to suppose, that all sick men desire to be restor'd to perfect health; yet experience shews us, that nothing wants more to be press'd, repeated, and forc'd upon our minds, than the plainest rules of Christianity.

Voluntary poverty, virginity, and devout retirement, have been here recommended, as things not necessary, yet highly beneficial to those that would make the way to perfection the most easy and certain. But Christian perfection itself is ty'd to no particular form of life; but is to be attained, tho' not with the same ease, in every state of life.

This has been fully asserted in another place; where it has been shewn, that Christian perfection calls no one (necessarily) to a Cloyster, but to the full performance of those du-Christ. Perfect. ties, which are necessary for all p. 2.

Christians, and common to all states of life.

So that the whole of the matter is plainly this: Virginity, voluntary poverty, and such other restraints of lawful things, are not necessary to Christian perfection; but are much to be commended in those, who chuse them as helps and means of a more safe and speedy arrival at it.

It is only in this manner, and in this sense, that I would recommend any particularity of life; not as if perfection consisted in it, but because of its great tendency to produce and support the *true spirit* of Christian perfection.

But the thing which is here press'd upon all, is, a life of great and strict devotion; which, I think, has been sufficiently shewn to be equally the duty and happiness of all orders of men. Neither is there any thing in any particular state of life, that can be justly pleaded as a reason for any abatements of a devout spirit.

But because in this *polite* age of ours, we have so *liv'd away* the spirit of devotion, that many seem afraid even to be suspected of it, imagining *great devotion* to be great *bigotry*; that it is founded in *ignorance* and *poorness* of spirit, and that *little*, *weak*, and *dejected* minds, are generally the greatest proficients in it:

It shall here be fully shewn, that great devotion is the noblest temper of the greatest and noblest souls; and that they who think it receives any advantage from ignorance and poorness of spirit, are themselves not a little, but entirely ignorant of the nature of devotion,

the nature of God, and the nature of themselves.

People of fine parts and learning, or of great knowledge in worldly matters, may perhaps think it hard to have their want of devotion charged upon their ignorance. But if they will be content to be try'd by Reason and Scripture, it may soon be made appear, that a want of devotion, where-ever it is, either amongst the learned or unlearned, is founded in gross ignorance, and the greatest blindness and insensibility that can happen to a rational creature.

And that devotion is so far from being the effect of a *little* and *dejected* mind, that it must and will be always *highest* in the most *perfect* natures.

And first, Who reckons it a sign of a poor, little mind, for a man to be full of reverence and duty to his parents, to have the truest love and honour for his friend, or to excel in the highest instances of gratitude to his benefactor?

Are not these tempers in the highest degree in the most exalted and perfect minds?

And yet what is *high devotion*, but the highest exercise of these tempers, of *duty*, reverence, love, honour, and gratitude to the amiable, glorious parent, friend, and benefactor of all mankind?

Is it a true greatness of mind, to reverence the authority of your parents, to fear the displeasure of your friend, to dread the reproaches of your benefactor? and must not this fear,

and

and *dread*, and *reverence*, be much more just, and reasonable, and honourable, when they are in the *highest degree* towards God?

Now as the higher these tempers are, the more are they esteem'd amongst men, and are allow'd to be so much the *greater proofs* of a true greatness of mind; so the higher and greater these same tempers are towards God, so much the more do they prove the nobility, excellence, and greatness of the mind.

So that so long as *duty* to parents, *love* to friends, and *gratitude* to benefactors, are thought great and honourable tempers; devotion, which is nothing else but duty, love, and gratitude to God, must have the highest place amongst

our highest virtues.

If a Prince out of his mere goodness should send you a pardon by one of his slaves, would you think it a part of your duty to receive the slave with marks of love, esteem, and gratitude for his great kindness, in bringing you so great a gift; and at the same time think it a meanness and poorness of spirit, to shew love, esteem and gratitude to the Prince, who of his own goodness freely sent you the pardon?

And yet this would be as reasonable, as to suppose, that love, esteem, honour, and gratitude, are noble tempers, and instances of a great soul, when they are paid to our fellow-creatures; but the effects of a poor, ignorant, dejected mind, when they are paid to God.

Farther; that part of devotion which expresses itself in sorrowful confessions, and peni-

tential tears of a broken and a contrite heart, is very far from being any sign of a little and

ignorant mind.

For who does not acknowledge it an instance of an *ingenuous*, *generous*, and *brave* mind, to acknowledge a fault, and ask pardon for any offence? And are not the *finest* and *most improv'd* minds, the most remarkable for this excellent temper?

Is it not also allow d that the *ingenuity* and *excellence* of a man's spirit is much shewn, when his sorrow and indignation at himself rises in proportion to the folly of his crime, and the *goodness* and *greatness* of the person he

has offended?

Now if things are thus, then the greater any man's mind is, the more he knows of God and himself, the more will he be dispos'd to prostrate himself before God in all the humblest

acts and expressions of repentance.

And the greater the *ingenuity*, the *genero-sity*, *judgment*, and *penetration* of his mind is, the more will he exercise and indulge a *passio-nate*, *tender* sense of God's just displeasure; and the more he knows of the greatness, the goodness, and perfection of the divine nature, the fuller of shame and confusion will he be at his own sins and ingratitude.

And on the other hand, the more dull and ignorant any soul is, the more base and ungenerous it naturally is, the more senseless it is of the goodness and purity of God, so much

the

the more averse will it be to all acts of humble

confession and repentance.

Devotion therefore is so far from being best suited to little ignorant minds, that a true elevation of soul, a lively sense of honour, and great knowledge of God and our selves, are the greatest natural helps that our devotion hath.

And on the other hand, it shall here be made appear by variety of arguments, that indevotion is founded in the most excessive ignorance.

And, First, Our blessed Lord, and his Apostles, were eminent instances of great and frequent devotion. Now if we will grant, (as all Christians must grant) that their great devotion was founded in a true knowledge of the nature of devotion, the nature of God, and the nature of man; then it is plain, that all those that are insensible of the duty of devotion, are in this excessive state of ignorance, they neither know God, nor themselves, nor devotion.

For if a right knowledge in these three respects, produces great devotion, as in the case of our Saviour and his Apostles, then a neglect of devotion must be chargeable upon ignorance.

Again; how comes it that most people have recourse to devotion, when they are in sickness, distress, or fear of death? It is not because this state shews them more of the want

of God, and their own weakness, than they perceive at other times? Is it not because their infirmities, their approaching end convinces them of something, which they did not half perceive before?

Now if devotion at these seasons, is the effect of a *betier knowledge* of God, and our selves, then the neglect of devotion at other times, is always owing to great ignorance of

God, and our selves.

Farther; as indevotion is ignorance, so it is the most *shameful* ignorance, and such as is

to be charged with the greatest folly.

This will fully appear to any one that considers, by what rules we are to judge of the excellency of any knowledge, or the shamefulness of any ignorance.

Now knowledge it self would be no excellence, nor ignorance any reproach to us, but

that we are rational creatures.

But if this be true, then it follows plainly, that that knowledge which is most suitable to our rational nature, and which most concerns us, as such, to know, is our highest, finest knowledge; and that ignorance which relates to things that are most essential to us, as rational creatures, and which we are most concern'd to know, is, of all others, the most gross and shameful ignorance.

If therefore there be any things that concern us more than others, if there be any truths that are more to us than all others, he that has the fullest knowledge of these things,

that

that sees these truths in the clearest, strongest light, has, of all others, as a rational creature, the clearest understanding, and the

strongest parts.

If therefore our relation to God be our greatest relation, if our advancement in his favour be our highest advancement, he that has the highest notions of the excellence of this relation, he that most strongly perceives the highest worth, and great value of holiness and virtue, that judges every thing little, when compar'd with it, proves himself to be master of the best, and most excellent knowledge.

If a Judge had fine skill in painting, architecture, and musick, but at the same time had gross and confus'd notions of equity, and a poor, dull apprehension of the value of justice, who would scruple to reckon him a poor igno-

rant Judge?

If a Bishop should be a man of great address and skill in the arts of preferment, and understanding how to raise and enrich his family in the world, but should have no taste or sense of the maxims and principles of the saints and fathers of the Church; if he did not conceive the holy nature, and great obligations of his calling, and judge it better to be crucify'd to the world, than to live idly in pomp and splendor, who would scruple to charge such a Bishop with want of understanding?

If we do not judge, and pronounce after this manner, our reason and judgment are but

empty sounds.

But now, if a Judge is to be reckon'd ignorant, if he does not feel and perceive the value, and worth of justice; if a Bishop is to be look'd upon as void of understanding, if he is more experienc'd in other things, than in the exalted virtues of his Apostolical calling; then all common Christians are to be look'd upon as more or less knowing, accordingly as they know more or less of those great things, which are the common and greatest concern of all Christians.

If a Gentleman should fancy that the Moon is no bigger than it appears to the eye, that it shines with its own light, that all the Stars are only so many spots of light; if after reading books of Astronomy, he should still continue in the same opinion, most people would think he had but a poor apprehension.

But if the same person should think it better to provide for a short life here, than to prepare for a glorious eternity hereafter, that it was better to be rich, than to be eminent in piety, his ignorance and dulness would be too great to be compar'd to any thing else.

There is no knowledge that deserves so much as the name of it, but that which we

call judgment.

And that is the most clear and improv'd understanding, which judges best of the value and worth of things. All the rest is but the capacity of an animal, it is but meer seeing and hearing.

And there is no excellence of any knowledge in us, till we exercise our *judgment*, and judge well of the *value* and *worth* of things.

If a man had eyes that could see beyond the Stars, or pierce into the heart of the earth, but could not see the things that were before him, or discern any thing that was serviceable to him, we should reckon that he had a very had sight.

If another had *ears* that receiv'd sounds from the world in the *Moon*, but could hear nothing that was said or done upon earth, we should look upon him to be as *bad* as *deaf*.

In like manner, if a man has a memory that can retain a great many things; if he has a wit that is sharp and acute in arts and sciences, or an imagination that can wander agreeably in fictions, but has a dull, poor apprehension of his duty and relation to God, of the value of piety, or the worth of moral virtue, he may very justly be reckon'd to have a bad understanding. He is but like the man that can only see and bear such things as are of no benefit to him.

As certain therefore as piety, virtue, and eternal happiness are of the most concern to man, as certain as the immortality of our nature, and relation to God, are the most glorious circumstances of our nature, so certain is it, that he who dwells most in contemplation of them, whose heart is most affected with them, who sees farthest into them, who best comprehends the value and excellency of them,

who

who judges all worldly attainments to be mere bubbles and shadows, in comparison of them, proves himself to have of all others, the finest understanding, and the strongest judgment.

And if we don't reason after this manner, or allow this method of reasoning, we have no arguments to prove, that there is any such

thing as a wise man, or a fool.

For a man is prov'd to be a natural, not because he wants any of his senses, or is incapable of every thing, but because he has no judgment, and is entirely ignorant of the worth and value of things, he will perhaps chuse a fine coat, rather than a large estate.

And as the essence of stupidity consists in the entire want of judgment, in an ignorance of the value of things, so on the other hand, the essence of wisdom and knowledge must consist in the excellency of our judgment, or in the knowledge of the worth and value of

things.

This therefore is an undeniable proof, that he who knows most of the value of the best things, who judges most rightly of the things which are of most concern to him, who had rather have his soul in a state of christian perfection, than the greatest share of worldly happiness, has the highest wisdom, and is at the farthest distance from men that are naturals, that any knowledge can place him.

On the other hand, he that can talk the learned languages, and repeat a great deal of History

History, but prefers the indulgence of his body to the purity and perfection of his soul, who is more concern'd to get a name, or an estate here, than to live in eternal glory hereafter, is in the nearest estate to that natural, who chuses a painted coat, rather than a large estate.

He is not call'd a *natural* by men, but he must appear to God, and heavenly Beings, as in a more excessive state of stupidity, and will sooner or later certainly appear so to himself.

But now if this be undeniably plain, that we cannot prove a man to be a fool, but by shewing that he has no knowledge of things that are good and evil to himself, then it is undeniably plain, that we cannot prove a man to be wise, but by shewing that he has the fullest knowledge of things that are his greatest good, and his greatest evil.

If therefore God be our greatest good; if there can be no good but in his favour, nor any evil but in departing from him, then it is plain, that he who judges it the best thing he can do to please God to the utmost of his power, who worships and adores him with all his heart and soul, who had rather have a pious mind, than all the dignities and honours in the world, shews himself to be in the highest state of human wisdom.

Toproceed; we know how our blessed Lord acted in an human body; it was his meat and drink to do the will of his Father which is in heaven.

And

And if any number of heavenly spirits were to leave their habitations in the light of God, and be for a while united to human bodies, they would certainly tend towards God in all their actions, and be as heavenly as they could, in a state of flesh and blood.

They would certainly act in this manner, because they would know that God was the only good of all spirits; and that whether they were in the body, or out of the body, in heaven, or on earth, they must have every degree of their greatness and happiness from God alone.

All human spirits therefore, the more exalted they are, the more they know their divine Original, the nearer they come to heavenly spirits, by so much the more will they live to God in all their actions, and make their whole life a state of devotion.

Devotion therefore is the greatest sign of a great and noble *genius*, it supposes a soul in its *highest state* of knowledge; and none but *little* and *blinded* minds that are sunk into *ignorance* and *vanity*, are destitute of it.

If an human spirit should imagine some mighty Prince to be greater than God, we should take it for a poor, ignorant creature; all people would acknowledge such an imagination to be the height of stupidity.

But if this same human spirit should think it better to be devoted to some mighty Prince, than to be devoted to God, would not this still be a greater proof of a poor, ignorant, and blinded nature?

Yet

Yet this is what all people do, who think any thing better, greater, or wiser, than a devout life.

So that which way soever, we consider this matter, it plainly appears, that devotion is an instance of great judgment, of an elevated nature; and the want of devotion is a certain proof of the want of understanding.

The greatest spirits of the heathen world, such as *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Epictetus*, *Marcus Antoninus*, &c. ow'd all their greatness

to the spirit of devotion.

They were full of God; their wisdom and deep contemplations tended only to deliver men from the vanity of the world, the slavery of bodily passions, that they might act as spirits that came from God, and were soon to return to him.

Again; To see the dignity and greatness of a devout spirit, we need only compare it with other tempers, that are chosen in the room of it,

St. John tells us, that all in the world (that is, all the tempers of a worldly life) is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Let us therefore consider, what wisdom or excellency of mind there is required to qualify

a man for these delights.

Let us suppose a man given up to the pleasures of the body; surely this can be no sign of a *fine* mind, or an *excellent* spirit: For if

he has but the temper of an animal, he is

great enough for these enjoyments.

Let us suppose him to be devoted to honours and splendors, to be fond of glitter and equipage; now if this temper requir'd any great parts or fine understanding to make a man capable of it, it would prove the world to abound with great wits.

Let us suppose him to be in love with riches, and to be so eager in the pursuit of them, as never to think he has enough; now this passion is so far from supposing any excellent sense, or great understanding, that blindness and folly are the best supports that it hath.

Let us lastly suppose him in another light, not singly devoted to any of these passions, but, as it mostly happens, governed by all of them in their turns; does this show a more exalted nature, than to spend his days in the service of any one of them?

For to have a taste for these things, and to be devoted to them, is so far from arguing any tolerable parts or understanding, that they are suited to the dullest, weakest minds, and require only a great deal of pride and folly to be greatly admired.

But now let Libertines bring any such charge as this, if they can, against devotion. may as well endeavour to charge light with every thing that belongs to darkness.

Let them but grant that there is a God, and Providence, and then they have granted enough

enough to justify the wisdom, and support the honour of devotion.

For if there is an infinitely wise and good Creator, in whom we live, move, and have our being, whose Providence governs all things in all places, surely it must be the highest act of our *understanding* to conceive rightly of him; it must be the noblest instance of *judgment*, the most exalted temper of our nature, to worship and adore this universal Providence, to conform to its laws, to study its wisdom, and to live and act every where, as in the presence of this infinitely good and wise Creator.

Now he that lives thus, lives in the spirit of devotion.

And what can shew such great parts, and so fine an understanding, as to live in this

temper?

For if God is wisdom, surely he must be the wisest man in the world, who most conforms to the wisdom of God, who best obeys his Providence, who enters farthest into his designs, and does all he can, that God's will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.

A devout man makes a true use of his reason; he sees through the vanity of the world, discovers the corruption of his nature, and the blindness of his passions. He lives by a law which is not visible to vulgar eyes; he enters into the world of spirits; he compares the greatest things, sets eternity against time; and chuses rather to be for ever great in the pre-

sence of God when he dies, than to have the greatest share of worldly pleasures whilst he lives.

He that is devout is full of these great thoughts; he lives upon these noble reflections, and conducts himself by rules and principles, which can only be apprehended, admir'd and lov'd by reason.

There is nothing therefore that shews so great a genius, nothing that so raises us above vulgar spirits, nothing that so plainly declares an beroic greatness of mind, as

great devotion.

When you suppose a man to be a *saint*, or all devotion, you have rais'd him as much above all other conditions of life, as a *Philosopher* is above an *Animal*.

Lastly, Courage and bravery are words of a great sound, and seem to signify an beroick spirit; but yet humility, which seems to be the lowest, meanest part of devotion, is a more certain argument of a noble and courageous mind.

For humility contends with greater enemies, is more constantly engaged, more violently assaulted, bears more, suffers more, and requires greater courage to support it self, than any in-

stances of worldly bravery.

A man that dares be poor and contemptible in the eyes of the world, to approve himself to God; that resists and rejects all human glory, that opposes the clamour of his passions, that meekly puts up all injuries and wrongs,

and dares stay for his reward till the invisible hand of God gives to every one their proper places, endures a much greater trial, and exerts a nobler fortitude, than he that is bold and daring in the fire of battel.

For the boldness of a Soldier, if he is a stranger to the spirit of devotion, is rather weakness than fortitude; it is at best but mad passion, and heated spirits, and has no more true valour in it than the fury of a Tyger.

For as we cannot lift up a hand, or stir a foot, but by a power that is lent us from God; so bold actions that are not directed by the laws of God, or so many executions of his will, are no more true bravery, than sedate malice is Christian patience.

Reason is our *universal law*, that obliges us in all places, and at all times; and no actions have any honour, but so far as they are in-

stances of our obedience to reason.

And it is as *base* and *cowardly*, to be bold and daring against the principle of reason and justice, as to be bold and daring in *lying* and

perjury.

Would we therefore exercise a true fortitude, we must do all in the spirit of Devotion, be valiant against the corruptions of the world, the lusts of the flesh, and the temptations of the Devil: For to be daring and courageous against these enemies, is the noblest bravery that an human mind is capable of.

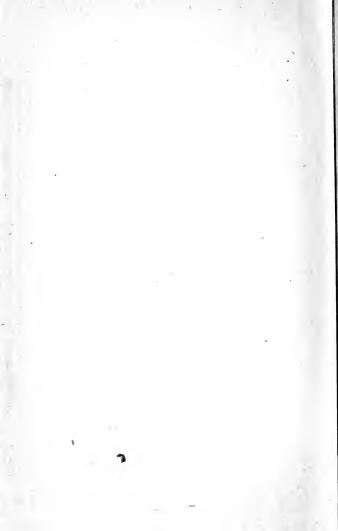
I have made this digression for the sake of those, who think a great Devotion to be big-

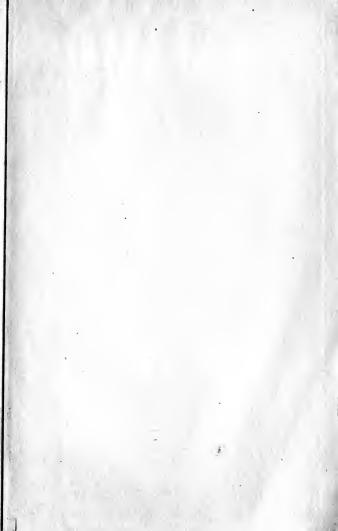
gotry and poorness of spirit; that by these considerations they may see, how poor, and mean all other tempers are, if compar'd to it. That they may see, that all worldly attainments, whether of greatness, wisdom or bravery, are but empty sounds; and that there is nothing wise, or great, or noble, in an human spirit, but rightly to know, and heartily worship and adore the great God, that is the support and life of all spirits, whether in heaven or on earth.

FINIS.

THE RIVERSIDE PRESS LIMITED, EDINBURGH







# Date Due

BV 4500 •L3 1920	Law, William, A serious call to a devout and holy life:
BV	
4500	2 mg to the
. L3	
- 1920	
100	

