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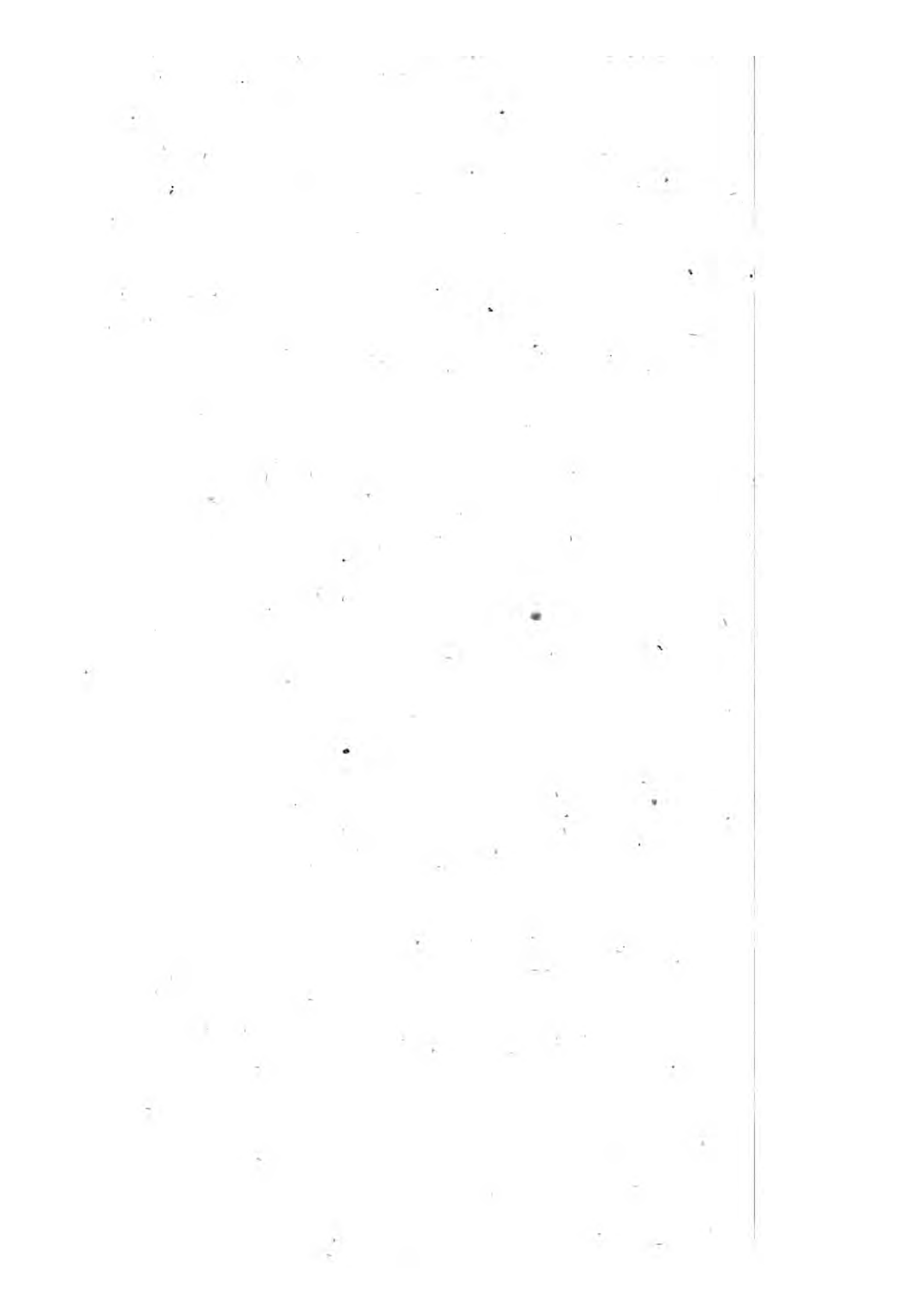


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An ABRIDGMENT of

Mr. LAW's

# SERIOUS CALL

*J. A. Bellamy* TO A *New Ed.* 1808

## HOLY LIFE.

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By JOHN WESLEY, M. A.

Late Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford.

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L O N D O N:

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# SERIOUS CALL, &c.

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## CHAPTER I.

*Concerning the Nature and Extent of Christian Devotion.*

**D**EVOTION is neither *private* nor *public* prayer; but prayers, whether private or public, 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.

2. 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. 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*.

3. 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 we ought 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.

4. It is for want of knowing, or at least considering this, that we see such a *mixture* of 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

unto God, till the time of prayer returns again; but live by the same *humour* and *fancy*, and in as full an enjoyment of all the follies of life as other people. This 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*.

5. *Julias* is very fearful of missing prayers; all the parish supposes *Julias* 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* or *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 he gives himself up to an *idle, gossiping* conversation? Why he lives in foolish friendships and fondness for particular persons, that neither want nor deserve any particular kindness? If you ask him why he never puts his *conversation, his time, and fortune*, under the Rules of Religion, *Julias* 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 *Julias*, 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, *Julias* would think such an one to be no Christian, and that he ought to avoid his company: but if a person only tell 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 temper and passions

as most people do, *Julias* never suspects that man to want a christian spirit, or that he is doing the Devil's work.

6. The short of the matter is this. Either Reason and Religion prescribe *rules* and *ends* to all the ordinary actions of our lives, 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 ourselves, he must be very weak that can think these parts of Religion are not to be observed with as much *exactness* as any doctrines that relate to prayers.

7. 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 ourselves; 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, and to love  
mankind

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.

8. 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* affection, we do not live the life of Christians.

9. But yet, tho' 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 pleased 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, fears, and joys; they have the same *turn* of mind, are equally *vain* in their desires. You see the same *pride* and vanity of *dress*, the same foolish *friendships* and groundless *hatreds*, the same *levity* of mind and *trifling* spirits, the same idle dispositions, and vain ways of spending their time in visiting and conversation, as in the rest of the world, that make no pretences to devotion.

10. I do not mean this comparison betwixt people seemingly good and professed *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 through 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 displeas'd 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 herself 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 trifle away her time ? And does the other study all the arts of improving it, living in prayer and watching, and such good works as may make all her time turn to her advantage, and be plac'd to her account at the last day ? Is the one careless of expence, and glad to be able to adorn herself with every costly ornament of dress ? And does the other consider her fortune as a talent given her by God, which is to be improved 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

any sense be said, the one is a *good* Christian, and the other not?

11. Take another instance among 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 concerned 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 a matter of great concern.

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



temper with relation to these things, what can we say it has done for him ?

\* 12. Every body that is capable of any reflection, must have observed, 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 a *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 clothed? 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 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, they who add devotion to such a life, must be said to *pray as Christians, but live as Heathens.*

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## C H A P. II.

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

1. **I**T may now be reasonably enquired, 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

fire it may also be enquired, how it comes to pass, that *swearing* is so common a vice among Christians? It is indeed yet not 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 thro' 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 exprefs 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.

2. 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.

3. It seems but a small and necessary part of piety to have such a *sincere intention* as this; and 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

devotion, yet living in all the vanity and folly of *dress*, and wasting their 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 no more desire to shine at *balls* and *assemblies*, or make a figure amongst those that are most finely dressed, 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.

4. 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 yourself, 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 any 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 public worship.

5. Now, who that wants this general sincere *intention*, can be reckoned 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

\* Let a *Clergyman* 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 *laced coat*, or a *running-horse*. 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 *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 does 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

without it, who can be shewn to be a follower of Jesus Christ?

6. 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* or *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 *praiseworthy*. He does not ask whether God will forgive the *folly* of our lives, the *madness* of our pleasures, the *vanity* of our expences, 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 inquire, 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 relieved; but he asks whether God has required these things at our hands: whether we shall be called to account at the last day for the neglect of them: because it is not his intent to live in such ways as, for ought we know, God may *perhaps* pardon, but to be diligent in such ways as we know that God will *infallibly* reward.

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 scripture, and make every *doctrine*, *parable*, *precept*, or *instruction* that relates to rich men, a *law* to himself in the use of his estate.

He

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 waste no money in gilded roofs, or costly furniture: he will not be carried from pleasure to pleasure in expensive state and equipage, because an inspired Apostle hath said, that *all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, the desire 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, and they will find themselves unable to stop short of it.

8. 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 in *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.

9. You see two persons, one is regular in *public* 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.

10. Here therefore let us judge ourselves sincerely; let us not vainly content ourselves 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 through 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 ourselves 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*.

11. And if any one was to ask himself how it comes to pass, that there are any *degrees* of sobriety

briety 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 it is possible for a man to observe *times* of prayer.

12. This doctrine does not suppose, that we have no need of divine grace, or that it is in our own power to make ourselves 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.

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 do not so much as *intend to be exact and exemplary* in these virtues.

### C H A P. 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.*

1. **A**LTHOUGH the goodness of God, and his rich mercy in Christ Jesus, are a sufficient assurance to us, that he will be merciful to our unavoidable weaknesses and infirmities; yet we have no reason to expect the same mercy towards those sins which we live 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 ; 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.

2. But now, if this be right reasoning in the case of a *common swearer*, why do we not carry this way of reasoning to its true extent ? Why do not we as much condemn every other error of life, that has no more weakness to plead in its excuse than common swearing ?

For instance, you perhaps have made no progress in the most important Christian Virtues, in *Humility* and *Charity*. Now, if your failure in these is purely owing to your want of *intention* of performing them in any true degree, have you not then as little to plead for yourself ? And are you not as much without all excuse as the *common swearer* ?

3. Why therefore do not 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 it is 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 blamable in one case as another ?

You, it may be, are as far from *Christian perfection* as the common swearer is from keeping the *third Commandment*. Are you not therefore as much condemned 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 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 attained ; 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 laboured to advance yourself in all Christian virtues.

4. The salvation of our souls is set forth in scripture as a thing of difficulty, that requires *all our diligence*, that is to be *worked out with fear and trembling*.

We are told, *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there are 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 care and pains 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 the Commandments: for these doctrines are as plain marks of our condition as the Commandments are.

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.

5. 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, 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, 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 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?

9. 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, and with all our mind, and with all our strength*. And when we cease to live with this regard to virtue, instead of being able to plead our *infirmities*, we stand chargeable with wilful 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 *holy 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, and 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 examined by fire, will find that *fear and trembling* are proper tempers for those that are drawing near to so great a trial.

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

neglect of such virtues as they will want at the day of judgment.

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 attained, either were already perfected;—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 arrived; surely it is much more necessary for us, who are born in the dregs of time, to be thus minded; that is, thus earnest and striving after such degrees of a holy and divine life, as we have not yet attained.

7. 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 forced 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 ourselves, 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?

\* 8. 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; yet at death, it will appear 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 forced to charge it all upon himself, as his own act and deed, against the nature and reason of things, and contrary to the advice of all his friends.

Now by this we may in some degrees guess, how terrible the pain of that self-condemnation will be, when a man shall find himself in the misery 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.

\* 9. *Cives* 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 spoke 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

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, delivered 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 am to die young, or before I have raised an estate.

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 myself 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 reflections?

10. When we consider death as a misery, we only think of it as a miserable separation from the enjoyment 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 yourselves look upon me with pity, not that I am going unprepared 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 consequence 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* died, you know, as he was dressing himself for a *feast*. Do you think  
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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 happened 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*, and 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 delivered me up to evil spirits, to be dragged by them to places of torment, could it be any comfort to me, that they found me upon a *bed of state*?

11. 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 go 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 clothes that I wore before I could speak.

But, my friends, how am I surpris'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

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!

12. Just as you came into my chamber, I was thinking with myself, what numbers of souls there are now in the world, in my condition at this very time, surprised 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 seized at an hour when they thought not of it; frightened at the approach of death, confounded at the vanity of all their labours, designs and projects, astonished 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 remembrance, tormenting them with the deepest convictions of their own folly, presenting them with the sight of the angry Judge, the worm that never dies, the fire that is never quenched, the gates of hell, the powers of darkness, and the bitter pains of eternal death.

O my friends! bless God that you are not of this number, that you have time and strength so to employ yourselves, as may bring you peace at the last.

13. 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 lived free from scandal and debauchery, and in communion of the Church, wonder to see me so full of remorse and self-condemnation at the approach of death.

It is true, I have lived in the communion of the Church, and generally frequented its worship  
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and service on *Sundays*, when I was not too *idle*, or not otherwise disposed of by my *business* and *pleasures*: but then, my conformity to the public worship has been rather a thing of course, than from 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.

14. But the thing that now surprises 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 entered into my head or my heart. I never once in my life considered, whether I was living as the Laws of Religion direct, or whether my way of life was such as would secure me the mercy of God at this hour.

Can it be thought, that I have pleased God with such a life as he requires, though I have lived 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 thought about it, as about any one common bargain that I have made?

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 lays all this folly to his charge, when it shews 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 lived without any reflection, without any rules in things of such eternal moment, as no heart can sufficiently conceive?

O my friends! a careless life, unconcerned and inattentive 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, and to reflect upon it.

*Cives*

*Cives* was here going on, but had his mouth stopped by a *convulsion*, which never suffered him to speak any more. He lay convulsed for about twelve hours, and then gave up the ghost.

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#### C H A P. IV.

*We can please God in no State or Employment of Life, but by intending and devoting it all to his Glory.*

1. **H**AVING already stated the general nature of devotion, and shewn, that it implies not any *form of prayer*, but a certain form of life, that is offered 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 devout our *labour* and *employment*, our *time* and *fortunes*, to 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 offered unto God.

The profession of a *Clergyman* is a holy profession because it is a ministration in *holy things*, an attendance at the Altar. And worldly business is to be made holy, by being done as a service to God, and in conformity to his 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 it is the duty of those who are devoted to divine service.

2. 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 obliged 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 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 and pious performance of their several callings.

3. *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 unto him in their several callings.

This is the only difference between *Clergymen* and people of other callings.

When it can be shewn, that men may 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, though these tempers are most odious and most criminal

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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 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 to the glory of God.

\* 4. 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 *heaven* or *earth*, whether they be *thrones* or *principalities*, *men* or *angels*, 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 imperinences 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 called. It is therefore absolutely necessary for all Christians, whether *men* or *women*, to consider themselves as persons that are *devoted* to holiness, and to order their *common ways of life* by such rules of reason and piety, as may turn it into a *continual service* unto Almighty God.

5. 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. That 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 *devotions*. 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 employments. 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 reckoned a service to him, but when  
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it is performed with the *same* temper and piety of heart.

6. 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, or where it will, it must have no more of our *hands*, our *hearts*, or our *time*, than is consistent with a hearty, daily, careful preparation of ourselves 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 desired, but only to be endured and suffered, till death and the resurrection have carried us to an eternal state of real happiness.

7. 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*?

\* 8. The *Husbandman* that tilleth the ground, is employed 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 *horses* 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 *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* and *ambition*. For such a one turns the necessities of his employment into pride and covetousness, just as the *Sot* and *Epicure* turn the necessities of eating and drinking into *gluttony* and *drunkenness*. 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 *admired*, *Charity* is then but like the *vanity of fine clothes*. In like manner, if the same motives make some people painful and industrious in their *trades*, which make others constant at *gaming*, such pains are but like the pains of *gaming*.

\* 9. *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 o'clock. He is always forced to drink a good *heartly glass*, to  
drive

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-house*. His prayers are a short *ejaculation* or two, which he never misses in *stormy* 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 killed 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 *melancholy*, 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 used 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 *Heretics* and *Infidels*; that he has always been civil to the *Minister* of his parish, and very often given something to the *Charity-Schools*.

10. 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* (a); that he is in *Christ a new creature* (b); that he lives here as a *stranger and pilgrim, setting his affections upon things above, and laying up treasures in heaven* (c). 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 owned, that the *generality* of trading people, especially in *great towns*, are too  
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(a) John iii. 5. (b) 2 Cor. v. 17. (c) Collos. iii. 2.



much like *Calidus*. You see them all the week buried in business, unable to think of any thing else; and then spending the *Sunday* in idleness and refreshment, in wandering into the country, in such visits and jovial meetings as make it often the worst day of the week.

11. 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* 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 public prayer.

Now the only way to do this, is for people to consider their trade as something that they are obliged 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 eye-service; as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.\* With good will, doing service as unto the Lord, and not unto 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 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

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\* Ephes. vi. 5.

† Colos. iii. 22, 23.

as much obliged to go through 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.

12. 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, having redeemed 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 the *greater damnation*. Take away this from *Tradesmen*, and shops are but so many houses of greediness and filthy lucre. Take 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 turned 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 pleasures of Christians.

13. 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  
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consider whether they use them, as they are to use every thing, as strangers and pilgrims, that are baptized into the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that are to follow him in a *wise and heavenly* course of life, in the mortification of all worldly desires, and in purifying and preparing their souls for the blessed enjoyment of God.

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 required 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 contrary to these, are as contrary to Christianity, as *cheating* is contrary to *honesty*.

14. All this is only to shew us the absolute necessity of such a regular and uniform piety, as extends itself 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 life.

That we must be *honest*, not only on particular occasions, and in *such* instances as are *applauded* in the world, easy to be performed, 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*, and 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

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

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 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 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.

15. Enough, I hope, has been said, to shew you the necessity of thus introducing religion into *all the actions* of our *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 the ages of the world, has turned this *ordinary* action of the 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 used to call upon God at the beginning and end of their meals: but indeed

deed it is generally now so performéd, 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 used at such times, and are proofs that religion has formerly belonged to this part of *common life*.

But to such a pass are we now come, that though the custom is still preserved, 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 it 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 ourselves 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.

16. If every *head* of a family would, at the return of every meal, 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

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 appealed 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 our *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.

## C H A P. V.

*Persons that are free from the Necessity of Labour and Employments, are to consider themselves as devoted to God in a higher degree.*

1. **G**REAT part of the world are free from the necessities of labour, and have their *time* and *fortune* 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 time and fortune as they please, that they are under greater obligations of living wholly unto God in all their actions.

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

They are those, of whom *much will be required*, because *much is given unto them*.

A *slave* can only live unto God in one particular

lar 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, 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 *resigned* unto God in his state of slavery.

\* 2. You are no *Labourer*, or *Tradesman* ; you are neither *Merchant* nor *Soldier* ; consider yourself therefore as placed in a state, in some degree like that of *good angels*, who are sent into the world as *ministering 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 clothes for your maintenance, 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 received with a *well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*, Matth. xxv.

But as God has given you *five talents*, as he has placed you above the necessities of life, as he has

left

left you in the hands of yourself, in the happy liberty of chusing the most exalted ways of virtue : as he has enriched 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 best 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 lived, 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.

3. 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.

\* 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 *patience*, 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* : who, though they attend on the lowest of mankind, yet *always behold the face of our Father who is in heaven*, Matth. xviii. 10.

This, *Serena*, is your profession. For as sure as God is one God, so sure it is, 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 in all his *gifts*, and dedicate every condition of life to his service. This



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 obliged to be thus reasonable, and holy, and pious in the use of all your time and all your fortune.

4. As we have always the *same natures*, and are every where the servants of the same God; as every place is 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 used which belongs to God.

Either this piety, and wisdom, and devotion is to go through 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 *ourselves*, or forget God; if we might disregard our reason, and live by *humour* or *fancy* in any thing, or at any time, or in any place, it would be as lawful to do the same in every thing, and every time, and every place.

5. If any one can 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, or 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 in all places. If we are to use any thing as the gift of God, we are to use every thing as his gift. If we are to do any thing by strict rules of reason and piety, we ought 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,

*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 indued 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 their 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, 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 do not think it desirable to be *always* wise. He has not learned 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?

9 Farther, as God is one and the same Being,

always acting like himself, and suitable 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 itself.

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*, or 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, and against God the author of that nature.

They, therefore, who plead 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.

7. When, therefore, you are guilty of any *folly*, or *extravagance*, or indulge any *vain* temper, do not consider it as a small matter, because it may seem so, if compared to some other sins : 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 whom can be any longer agreeable to God, than so far as they act according to the reason and excellency 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 *foolies*, and indulge ourselves in the luxury of *food*, or the vanities of *dress*,  
than

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 though 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 turned our thoughts this way by making this petition, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. A plain proof, that 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.

8. And as 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 obliged 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 pull 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.

9. *First*, because the manner of using our money, or spending our estates, 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

gion govern us in this, then reason and religion have 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.

\* 10. 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 do not 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.* 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 ourselves, 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 ourselves in such expensive enjoyments, as have no *real use* in them, such as satisfy no *real want,* rather than to entitle ourselves to an eternal reward, by disposing of our 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.

\* 11. *Secondly*

\* 11. *Secondly*, 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 ourselves this farther harm, that we turn this useful talent into a powerful means of corrupting ourselves; 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 only trifled away and lost, but will expose those that have them to greater follies, if they are not strictly devoted to piety; so *money*, if it is not used 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 they would have done without it. If therefore you do not spend your money in doing good to others, you must spend it to the hurt of yourself. You will act like a man that should refuse to give 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 yourself, in something that you do not want, it only *inflames* and disorders your mind, and makes you worse than you would be without it.

\* 12. Consider again the fore-mentioned 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 ourselves 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,

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 *clothes*, 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 nourishment of all the folly and weakness of our nature, and are certain means to make us vain and worldly in 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 relished divine things; they are like so many weights upon our mind, that make us less able, and less inclined 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 ourselves.

For so much as is spent in the vanity of *dress*, may be reckoned so much laid out to *fix* vanity in our minds. So much as is laid out for *idleness* and *indulgence*, may be reckoned so much given to render our hearts *dull* and *sensual*. So much as is spent in *state* and *equipage*, may be reckoned so much spent to *dazzle* your own eyes, and render you the idol of your own imaginations. And so in every thing, when you go from *reasonable* wants, you only support some unreasonable *temper*, some *turn* of mind, which every 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* it enables us to do, or the great harm that it does to ourselves, if 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.

13. I shall only produce one 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 his holy Angels with him, then he shall sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered 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 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 clothed 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 clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.”

14. I have quoted this passage at length, because if one looks at the way of the world, one would hardly think that Christians in general had ever read this part of scripture.

Some people 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 there is no salvation but in the performance of these good works. Who is it, therefore,



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 performed the duties of *devotion*, who had sometimes 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 those works of charity, who lives in the *habitual exercise* of them to the utmost of his power. He only has performed 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 performed 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.

15. 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 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. If therefore a man ceases to forgive his brother, because he has forgiven him *often* already;

ready; 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.

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 account yourself as much obliged to continue relieving those that continue in want, as you are 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 something given him, does not *give* like a disciple of Christ.

16. 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 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 ourselves 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* expences 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 ourselves in some degree capable of doing them; it is as necessary to our salvation to take care to make ourselves as capable as we can be, of performing them in all the parts of our life.

17. Either therefore you must so far renounce your christianity, as to say, that you need 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, nor 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 yourself 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 or drink.

18. 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  
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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 yourself 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 a *life of sobriety*. When therefore any one tells you of the lawfulness of expensive apparel, or the innocency of pleasing yourself 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 to 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.

## C H A P. VI.

*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.*

1. **I**T has already been observed, that a prudent and religious care is to be used 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 rendered 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

they make no farther 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 its precepts.

\* 2. If it be asked, 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 preserves them from such disorders.

But it is because their *hearts* are constantly *employed, perverted, and kept in a wrong state*, by the *indiscreet use* of such things as are *lawful* to be used.

The use and enjoyment of their states 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 sin*, yet so *disorders* the heart and supports it in such *sensuality and dullness*, 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 rendered incapable of all virtue, merely by the use of *innocent and lawful* things.

3. What is more innocent than *rest and retirement*? And yet what more dangerous than *loth 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 rendered incapable of all virtue, by a worldly and solicitous temper?

Now, it is for want of a 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 ourselves, as to these things, that the *art* of holy living chiefly consists.

\* 4. *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* 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 herself, can hardly be persuaded that the spirit of religion cannot subsist in such a way of life.

These persons, as has been observed, 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 exercise 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.

\* 5. *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 surprising a figure on 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 *diversions*. *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*, who she takes to be a great deal finer than she need to be. If any one asks *Flavia* to do something in charity, if she likes the person that 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.

6. As for *poor* people themselves, she will admit of no complaints from them: she is very positive they are all *cheats* and *liars*, 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*.

7. 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 *style* 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 her morning-devotions are not *always* rightly performed.

*Flavia* would be a *miracle* of piety, if she was  
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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 do not 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*.

8. 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 mean't 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 *played* 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-natured*, 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 *clothes* 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 *ill-natured* things he says to her when *nobody* hears him; if you would know how they hate one another in their *hearts*, though they appear so kind in public, you must visit *Flavia* on the *Sunday*. But still she has so great a regard for the holiness of the day, that she has turned a poor old widow out of her house, as a *profane wretch*, for having been found once *mending her clothes* on the *Sunday-night*.

Thus



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 clothes. Out of these *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 she is *up* thus spent, except about an *hour* and a half that is disposed of at Church, most *Sundays* in the year. With great management, and under mighty rules of œconomy, 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.

9. 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 fasting 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 Saint's feet*, as that she has lived in christian *humility* and *poverty* of spirit; and as reasonably think, that

that she has taught a *charity school*, as that she has lived in *works of charity*. She has as much reason to think, that she has been a *sentinel* 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 has *given all diligence to make her calling and election sure*.

10. 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 died, she had no thoughts about her two hundred pounds a year; but that she had so much money to do what she would with, to spend upon herself, to 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 *flattered*, 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*, and careless of every thing that might benefit her soul; it was because she had *purchased* all these tempers with the yearly revenue of her fortune.

11. 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 forced all the contrary tempers upon her.

And it was no wonder that she should turn her *time*, her *mind*, her *health* and *strength* to the same  
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uses that she turned 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.

\* 12. And as *Flavia* seems to be undone by the unreasonable use of her fortune; so the *lowness* of most people's virtues, the *imperfections* of their piety, and the disorders of their *passions*, are generally owing to their imprudent use and enjoyment of lawful 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 of piety, through too *great a concern* for worldly goods, than through *direct injustice*.

\* 13. 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 *hinderances* of a pious spirit.

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 allowed actions of life under the rules of discretion and piety.

## C H A P. VII.

*How the wise and pious use of an estate carrieth us to all the virtues of the christian life; represented in the character of Miranda.*

\* 1. **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 required 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 had 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 called the *fine lady*, to the true Christian; *Miranda* thinks too well, to be taken with the sound of such silly words. She has renounced the world, to follow Christ in the exercise of humility, charity, devotion, abstinence, and heavenly affections; and that is *Miranda's* fine breeding.

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 loaded with *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 public 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 maintain a contrary behaviour.

2. *Miranda* does not divide her duty between God, her neighbour, and herself; but she considers all as due to God, and so does every thing  
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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 herself and several other poor people, and she has only her part of *relief* from it. She thinks it the same folly to indulge herself in needless 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 to see a *puppet-show*; neither will she allow herself any to spend in the same manner, thinking it very proper to be as *wise* herself as she expects poor men should be. For is it 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 clothes*? 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 received 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, like the poor man, waste that which he wants himself; but he wastes that which is wanted for the most noble uses, 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 would buy bread and clothes for our 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*

people that are *relieved* out of her fortune; and she only differs from them in the *blessedness* of giving.

4. If you was to see her, you would wonder what poor body it was, that was so surprisingly *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 suffered 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 time lie heavy upon her hands.

4. 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 herself, or necessary for others 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 observed 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 whatsoever*

ever 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 forced 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, disordered 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 ballance: so much as gives a proper strength to her body, and renders it 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.

5. The holy scriptures, especially of the New Testament, are her daily study; these she reads with a watchful attention, constantly casting an eye upon herself, and trying herself by every doctrine that is there. When she has the New Testament in her hand, she supposes herself 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 herself every day by the doctrines of scripture, is the only possible way to be ready for her trial at the last day.

Of all human writings, the lives of pious persons, and eminent saints, are her greatest delight.

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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 heart stored 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, you must be made wiser and better, whether you will or no.

\* 6. 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 failed in their business, and saved as many from failing. She has educated several poor children, that were picked up in the streets, and put them in an honest employment. As soon as any labourer is confined 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 clothing. By this means there are many 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 ordinary wicked and reprobate, *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 straits 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 carried to prison, who immediately became a true penitent.

7. There is nothing in the Character of *Miranda* more to be admired than this temper. For this tenderness of affection towards the most abandoned



doned sinners, is the highest instance of a divine and god-like 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 ruined 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, and 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 saved himself, he may be zealous in the salvation of souls, and do to other miserable objects, as she has done to him.

8. *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  
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her charities and exhortations to holiness, spend their last days in great piety and devotion.

9. *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 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*, and 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 carried 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 restored 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  
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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 Son 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.*

10. 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 *spite* and *malice*, surely *merit* is no measure of charity. If I am not to with-hold 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.

\* 11. 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. The 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  
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the unjust, evil and unjust men are *encouraged* in their wicked ways. The same may be said against clothing 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 yourself this question, Do I sincerely wish these poor creatures may be as happy as *Lazarus*, who was carried 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 assured 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 be *witnesses* of our charity, to be *monuments* of our love, to be our *advocates* with God, to *appear* for us at the day of judgment, and to help us to a blessedness greater than our alms can bestow on them.

12. 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 hundred* pounds in charity:

charity: for that which she allows herself, may fairly be reckoned 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 amongst those that have fought the good fight, and finished their course with joy.

13. 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 *baptized*, or receive the *Sacrament*.

Her spirit is that which animated the *Saints* of former ages: and it is because they lived 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 described, is a right and proper instance of a solid and real piety.

14. 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, 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*.

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,

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 ornaments of dress, and yet seem to be in other respects 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 clothes, 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 edified by her great piety, would you expect to find her dressed out and adorned in fine and expensive clothes? 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* finely dressed, is as great nonsense, as an *Apostle* in an *embroidered suit*. Every one's own natural sense convinces him of the inconsistency of these things.

15. 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? And is not this therefore a demonstration, that were such vanity is admitted, there a right state of heart must needs be wanted? For as certainly as the holy *Virgin Mary* could not indulge herself, 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 owned, that in needless  
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and expensive finery of dress is the effect of a disordered heart.

*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 clothes, but because the expensive ornaments of clothing shew a *foolish* and *unreasonable* state of heart, that is fallen from right notions of human nature, that abuses the end of clothing, and turns the necessities of life into so many instances of pride and folly.

16. 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 clothes, 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 *clothe* 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 *clothes*? 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 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.

17. Some persons perhaps, who admire the life of *Miranda*, may say, How can it be proposed as  
common

common example? How can we that are married, 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, were more different from yours than that of *Miranda's* is; and yet their life 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.

18. Do not think therefore, that you cannot 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 forced 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 married, you say; therefore you have not your *time* and *fortune* in your power as she has.

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



money in such a manner, but that she is careful to make the best use of all that time and money which she has. Do you this, 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?

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C H A P. VIII.

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

1. **I** 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 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 people to the just discharge of its several duties. When he is grave, he will tell you that he did not enter into  
holy

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, 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.

• 2. 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 do not commit, a small crime, you do not break a small trust; but you break the *law* of your nature, you rebel against God who gave you that nature, and put yourself among those whom the God of *reason* and *order* will punish as *apostates* and *deserters*.

Though you have no employment, yet as you are baptized into the profession of the Christian religion, you are as much obliged to live according to the holiness of the Christian spirit, as any man is obliged 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 you.

3. No man therefore must think himself excused from the *exactness* of piety, because he has chosen to be *idle* and *independent* 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*.

\* 4. 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 against God, and on the same account subject to his wrath.

5. Let us suppose that this man, instead of putting out his eyes, had only employed 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 lived more to the glory of God?  
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Could he any more be said to act the part for which God has 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.

6. If we consider mankind as a redeemed order of *fallen spirits*, that are baptized 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.

7. Nothing therefore can be more foolish, than to imagine, that because we are private persons who 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 holiness, for it is as good an excuse for *cheating* and *dishonesty*: because he that abuses his *reason*, that indulges himself in *sloth* 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 episcure*, than to be *unfaithful*; if you rather chuse to live in *sensuality*, than to enjure your neighbour in his goods, you have made no better a provision for the favour 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.

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 self-denial 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 most difficult to sacrifice all our corrupt tempers, 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 the *Church* or in our *closet*.

Every sober reader will easily perceive, that I do not intend to lessen the true and great value of prayers, either public or private; but only to shew him, that they are but a very slender part of devotion, when compared to a devout life.

9. 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

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 reckoned *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 abhorred 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 clothed 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 spite and resentment; hours of prayer, whilst you give up days and years to idle diversions, impertinent visits, and foolish pleasures, are as absurd, unacceptable services 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 sufficient degree of devotion, that they become an empty lip-labour; or, what is worse, a notorious hypocrisy.

10. Seeing therefore we are to make the *spirit and temper* of our prayers the *common spirit and temper* of our lives, this may convince us, that *all orders* of people are to labour 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.

\* 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, and laborious in all parts of his profession.

11. 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 clothed with humility. The *polite gentleman* must exchange the gay thoughts of wit and fancy, for a *broken and contrite heart*. The man of *quality* must so far renounce the dignity of his birth, as to think himself miserable till he is *born again*. *Servants* 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.

\* 12. *Young ladies* must either devote themselves to *piety, prayer, self-denial, and all good works*

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 married, 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 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 married or unmarried, they 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 mind, in the whole form of their behaviour, and in the daily course of their common life.

13. *Young 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, though 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



spend their estates in high living, in luxury and intemperance, in state and equipage, in pleasure 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 assured, 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 him, to live in the utmost heights of wisdom and holiness, and shew through 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.

\* 14. 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* to 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 rejoice in God.

The man of *strength and power* is to forgive and pray for his enemies, and the *innocent sufferer*,  
that

that is chained in prison, must, with *Paul* and *Silas*, at midnight sing praises unto 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 to be like him to the utmost of their power; 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.

• 15. Whatever therefore is *foolish, ridiculous, vain, or earthly, or sensual* in the life of a Christian, is something that ought not to be there; it is a *spot and a defilement*. But if any thing of this kind runs through the *course* of our whole life, we renounce our profession.

For as sure as Jesus Christ was wisdom and holiness; as sure as he came to make us like himself, and to be baptized 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

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.

16. 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 *ancient 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 degree 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

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 ancient Bishop*, you fancy some exalted degree of piety a living example of all those holy tempers which you find described in the gospel.

17. Now if you ask yourself what is the happiest thing for a *young Clergyman* to do? You must be forced 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 a *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 did. 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.

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 married or unmarried, is she that lives in the highest degrees of Christian holiness, and all the exercises of a divine and heavenly life.

## C H A P. IX.

*Shewing how great devotion fills our lives with the greatest peace and happiness that can be enjoyed in this world.*

• 1. **S**OME people will perhaps object, that this living unto God in all that we do, is 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 ourselves of so many innocent pleasures, we shall render our lives *dull, uneasy, and melancholy*.

To which it may be answered:

It will produce just the contrary effect. Instead of making our lives dull and melancholy, it will render them full of content and strong satisfactions; as 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*.

For as there is no true foundation for comfort in life, but in the assurance that a wise and good God governeth 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, and increase all that is *happy* and *comfortable* in human life.

And it is plain, 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 himself.

For these passions are the causes of all the disquiets and vexations of human life: they are

are the *dropfies* 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.

\* 2. Do but imagine that you some where or other saw a man that proposed *reason* as the rule of all his actions; that had no desires but after such things as *nature* wants, and *religion* approves: who 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 love, wishing and praying that all men may have what they want of worldly things, and be partakers of eternal glory.

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 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 we are.

3. Again, as it thus appears that real happiness is only to be had from religion; so the same truth will appear from a consideration of *human misery*.

If we look into the world, and view the troubles of human life, we shall find that they are all owing to our 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 our wants; because that which creates and increases our wants, does in the same degree create and increase our troubles and disquiets.

God Almighty has sent us into the world with very few wants: *meat* and *drink*, and *clothing*, are the only things necessary in life: and as these are only our present needs; so the present world is well furnished to supply these needs.

If a man had half the world in his power, he could make no more of it than this: as he wants it only to support an *animal* life, so is it unable to do any thing else for him, or to afford him any other happiness.

\* 4. 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 furnished with all that we want in it, is only a short passage to eternal glory, where we shall be clothed 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 be, if reason had its full power over us.

But alas, though God makes human life thus free from wants; yet our passions, in rebellion against God 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

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 requires him to be.

\* 5. 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 the most tormenting disquiets of life, you will find them all thus absurd. 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 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 at 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 human?

It may be answered, that wherever you see an *ambitious* man, there you see this *vain and senseless flyer*.

6. 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*, 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 itself 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 his own disquiets, but was foolish enough to be reckoned 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 other miseries, vexations, and complaints, are entirely of your 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 horses*.

7. *Cælia* is always telling you how *provoked* she is, what *intolerable shocking* things happen to her, what *monstrous* usage she suffers, and what *vexations* she meets with every where. She tells you that her patience is quite worn out, and there is no bearing the behaviour of people. Every *assembly* that she is at, sends her home provoked; something or other has been said or done, that no *reasonable, well-bred* person ought to bear. *Poor people* that want her charity, are sent away with halcy 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. *Cælia* 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

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 disordered her spirits, that she is forced 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 unquiet life of *Calia*, who has nothing to torment her but her own *spirit*.

If you could inspire her with a *Christian humility*, you need do no more to make her happy. 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 would keep off *tremblings* of the spirits, and *loss* of appetite, and her blood would need nothing else to sweeten it.

8. I have just touched upon these absurd characters, to convince you in the plainest manner, that religion is so far from rendering a life *dull*, *anxious*, and *uncomfortable*, that, on the contrary, all the miseries, vexations, and complaints that are in the world, are owing to the *want* of religion; being directly caused by those absurd passions, which religion teaches us to deny.

9. Most people indeed confess, that religion preserves us from a great many evils, and 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 restrains us from the excesses of our passions. They suppose that the *strict rules* of an *exalted piety* must needs make our lives *dull* and *uncomfortable*.

Although the weakness of this objection sufficiently appears from what has been already laid, yet I shall add one word more.

This objection supposes, that religion *moderately* practised, adds *much* to the happiness of life; but that heights of religion have a contrary 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 delivered 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 health consisted in being partly sick, and partly well.

But if humility be the peace and rest of the soul, then no one has so much happiness from humility, as he that is the most humble. If excessive envy is a torment of the soul, he is most happy who 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 this life.

And thus it is in every virtue: the more 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.

\* 10. Again, as to those satisfactions and enjoyments which 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 God. All ways of life, all satisfactions and enjoyments, that are within these bounds, are no way denied us by the strictest rules  
of

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 allowable 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.

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 thing to be rescued by religion from such self-murder, and to be rendered capable of eternal happiness.

\* 11. Let us suppose a *person* placed somewhere alone, 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, nor any directions from his *senses*, how to quench his *thirst*, or to satisfy his *hunger*, or make *any use* of the things about him. Let 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 *iron chains*; that feeling cold, he puts his feet in the water; that being frightened at the fire, he runs away from it; that being weary, he makes a *seat* of his *bread*. Let it be supposed, that through his ignorance of the right use of the things that are about him, he will vainly torment himself whilst he lives; and at last die, *blinded* with dust, *choaked* with gravel, and loaded with *irons*. Let it be supposed, that some good Being came to him, and shewed him the nature and use of all the things that were about

about him, and gave him such *strict rules* of using them, as would certainly, if observed, 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 rendered that poor man's life *dull* and *uncomfortable*?

12. 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 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 put *dust* in his eyes to relieve his *thirst*, or put 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 clothes; 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.

\* 13. 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 clothes*, *rich beds*, *stately equipage*, and *shew and splendour*, 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* misapplied, will only serve to render

der him more unhappy by such an ignorant mis-  
use of them.

It tells him, although this world can do no more for him, than satisfy these wants of the body ; yet 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 his short life is over ; where, in a new body, formed to an angelic 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.

14. 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 hindered 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 forbid the putting of dust into our eyes ? Who could 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, it is because all revenge is of the nature of *poison* ; and though we do not 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

and makes it difficult to be restored 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*, it is 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; it is because every other use of the world is abusing it to our own vexation, and turning all its conveniences into snares and traps to destroy us. It is 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 strait road that will carry us to eternal life.

\* 15. If religion requires us sometimes to *fast* and *deny* our natural appetites, it is to lessen that struggle and war that is in our nature; it is to render our bodies fitter instruments of purity; and more obedient to the good motions of divine grace; it is 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 although these abstinences give some pain to the body; yet they so lessen the power of bodily appetites and passions, and so increase our taste of spiritual joys, that even these severities of religion, when practised with discretion, add much to the comfortable enjoyments of our lives.

If religion calleth us to a life of *watching* and *prayer*, it is because we live among a crowd of enemies, and are always in need of the assistance of God. If we are to confess and bewail our sins, it is because such confessions relieve the mind, and restore it to ease; as *burdens* and *weights* taken off the shoulders, to relieve the body, and  
make

make it easier to itself. If we are to be frequent and fervent in holy petitions, it is 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, it is that we may be often happy in such secret joys as only prayer can give; in such communications of the divine presence, as will fill our minds with all the happiness that beings not in heaven are capable of.

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

\* 16 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 and 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 dependent 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 if they are great, they are only 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 thinking within them: and their *light* and *glory*, only so much of the light and glory of God shining upon them.

\* 17. As they are not *men* or *Angels*, because they had a mind to be to themselves, but because the will of God formed them to be what they are;

of



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 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.

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* to be a *dull* and *uncomfortable* state, when it is so plain and certain, that there is neither comfort or joy to be found in any thing else?

## C H A P. X.

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

WE may see yet more of the happiness of a life devoted to God, by considering the poor contrivances for happiness, and the contemptible ways of life, which they are thrown into who are seeking after happiness by other methods.

If one looks at their lives, who live by no rule but their own humours and fancies ; if one sees 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 rejoice, that God hath appointed a *strait* and *narrow* way that leadeth unto life, and that we are not left to the folly of our own minds, or forced to take up with such shadows of 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 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 this true *end*.

\* 2. 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 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 clothes*, this is as merely an *invention* of happiness, as contrary to *nature* and *reason*, as if she should propose to make herself 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 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.

3. 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 clothes* 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 spared no expence, but carried every nicety to its greatest height. But this happiness not answering his expectations, he left off his *brocades*, put on a plain coat,

coat, railed at *fops* and *beauxs*, and gave himself up to *gaming* with great eagerness.

This new pleasure satisfied him for some time; he envied no other way of life. But being by the fate of *play*, drawn into a *duel*, where he narrowly escaped his death, he left off the *dice*, and sought for happiness no longer among the *gamesters*.

4. The next thing that seized his wandering 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*. He had now many a merry night, and met with stronger joys than any he had felt before. And here he had thoughts of setting up his staff, and looking out no farther; but unluckily falling into a *fever*, and grew angry at all strong liquors, he took his leave of the happiness of being drunk.

The next attempt after happiness carried him into the *field*. For two or three years nothing was so happy as *hunting*. He entered upon it with all his soul, and leaped over 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 entertained with the surprizing accidents of the last *noble chace*. 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-feat*, but he got sight of another happiness, hated the senseless noise and hurry of hunting, gave away his dogs, and was for some time after deep in the *pleasures of building*.

5. Now he invents new kinds of *dove-coats*, 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 any thing in his life; that he has more happiness amongst his *brick* and *mortar*, 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.

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 do not know what.

*Flatus* is very ill-natured, 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 entered upon his *riding regimen*, or began 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 in to his relief. He is now living upon *Herbs*, and running about the country, to get himself in as good wind as any *running footman* in the kingdom.

6. I have been thus circumstantial in so many foolish particulars; because I hope that every particular folly that you here see, will naturally turn itself 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.

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In like manner, the more I enumerate the follies, anxieties, delusions, and restless desires which go through every part of a life devoted to worldly enjoyments, the more you must be affected with that peace, and rest, and solid content, which religion gives to the souls of men.

7. But you will perhaps say, that the ridiculous, restless life of *Flatus*, is not the common state of those who neglect the strict rules of religion; and that therefore it is not so great an argument of the happiness of a religious life.

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 they had chiefly in view, when they were *twenty* years old, what at *twenty-five*, what at *thirty*, what at *forty*, what at *fifty*, and so on till they were brought to their last bed, numbers of people would find, that they had liked and disliked, and pursued 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.

8. 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 do not leave *gaming*, and then fall to *hunting*, but follow one or the other all their life. Some have so much *steadiness* in their temper, that they 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 *Flatus*? 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 looked upon as a burden, as a dull and melancholy state, for calling men from such *happiness* as this, to labour after the perfection of their nature, and prepare themselves for an endless state of joy and glory in the presence of God?

9. But turn your eyes now another way, and let the *trifling joys*, the *gewgaw* happiness of *Feliciiana*, teach you how wise they are, what delusion they escape, whose hearts and hopes are fixed upon a happiness in God.

If you was to live with *Feliciiana*, but one half year, you would see all the happiness that she is to have as long as she lives. She has no more to come, but the poor repetition of that which could never have pleased once, but through a littleness of mind, and want of thought.

She is to be again dressed fine, and keep her visiting day. She is then to change the colour of her *clothes*, again 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 mid-night, and again in bed at noon. She is to be again pleased with hypocritical compliments, and again disturbed with imaginary affronts.

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She is to be again delighted with her good luck at *gaming*, and again tormented with the loss of her money. She is again to prepare herself for a birth-night, and again to see the town full of good company. She is again to hear the cabels 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 surprising new dress, or new diversion just come to town.

10. 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 cheerful 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 let it be observed, 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 a very small part of it. As they have not *Feliciana's* fortune; so they must give away the comforts of a pious life, for a very small part of her happiness.

11. And if you look into the world, and observe the lives of those women, whom no arguments can persuade to live wholly unto God, you will find most of them such, as lose all the comforts of religion without gaining the tenth part of *Feliciana's* happiness. They are such as spend  
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their time and fortunes only in mimicking the pleasures of richer people; and rather look and long after, than enjoy those delusions, which are not to be purchased but 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 judged as rightly of the spirit of the gospel, as if she had rather wished to be *poor Lazarus* at the gate, than to be the rich Man *clothed in purple and fine linen, and fairing sumptuously every day.*

\* But to proceed; would you know what an happiness it is, to be governed 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 night's* 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 be only 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 amind at any time to indulge a grave thought, he 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 coolly and moderately upon all subjects, and is as fearful of falling into a passion, as  
of

of catching cold; being very positive 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 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 answered 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*.

\* 13. All the hours that are not devoted either to *repose* or *nourishment*, are looked 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 go to bed. In the morning you always see him in the same place in the *coffee-room*; and if he seems more attentively engaged than ordinary, it is because some *criminal* is broke out of *Newgate*, or some *lady* was robbed last night, but they cannot 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 lies 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 forced to refuse so welcome a guest.

But here he is soon relieved by a settled method of playing at cards, till it is time to think of some little, nice matter for supper. After

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 abandoned, as not to have a *regular meal*, or a *sound night's 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 twelve-month, 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:

14. That as I believe the most likely means in the world to inspire a person with true piety, was to have seen the example of some eminent professors of religion; so the next thing that is likely to fill us 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* *insensuality*, 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  
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for a thoughtful mind to rest upon, but a happiness in the hopes of religion.

15. Consider now with yourself, how unreasonable 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 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 yourself for the enjoyment of God? Must it be dull and tiresome to be delivered 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 offered unto God, all your watchings, and prayers, and labours of love: 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 contrivances 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 governed by religion, must be as *foolish*, and *low*, and *vain*, in his method of happiness, as the poor *Succus*.

\* 16. If

\* 16. 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 employed*, 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 *deep 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 do not think it hard to be deprived of the pleasures of *gluttony*, for the sake of religion, you have no reason to think it hard to be restrained from any 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 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?

17. If you would but use yourselves to such meditations as these, to reflect upon the vanity of *all order* 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

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.

18. 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 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 forced upon us by all our senses, and taught by almost every thing that we see and hear.

This is that *wisdom that crieth and putteth forth her voice in the streets*, Prov. viii. 1, 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 man to look after, no other end in nature for him to drive at, but a happiness in religion.



## C H A P. XIII.

*That not only a life of vanity, or sensuality, but even the most regular kind of life, that is not governed by great devotion, sufficiently shews its miseries, its wants and emptiness to the eyes of all the world. This represented in various characters.*

\* 1. **O**CTAVIUS is a learned, ingenious man, well versed in most parts of literature, and no stranger to any kingdom in *Europe*. The other day, being just recovered from a lingering *fever*, he took upon him to talk thus to his friends.

“ My *glafs*, 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 myself sinking away faster than any standers-by imagine. I fully believe, that one year more will conclude my reckoning.”

The attention of his friends was much raised 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 cannot pretend to do as I have done; and therefore I am resolved to furnish my own *cellar* with a little of the very best, though it cost me ever so much.”

2. A few days after *Octavius* had made this declaration to his friends, he relapsed into his former illness, was committed to a *nurse*, who closed his eyes before his fresh parcel of wine came in.

Young *Eugenius*, who was present at this discourse, went home a new man.

I never says *Eugenius*, was so deeply affected with the wisdom and importance of religion, as when I saw how *poorly* and *meanly* thel earned *Octavius* was to leave the world, through the want of it.

3. Was *all* to die with our *bodies*, there might be some pretence for these *different sorts* of happiness, that are now so much talked off: 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 intirely different from this; since they are all hastening thence at all uncertainties, as fast as death can cut them down; some in *sickness* some in *health*, some *sleeping*, some *walking*, some at *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 them 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 *honest 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 considerable fortune by good management.

*Cognatus* is very *orthodox*, and full of *esteem* for our *English* liturgy; it is 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 mortgagee, bad tenants, and the hardness of the times, are frequent subjects of his conversation, 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 saved out of the tythes of two livings.

The neighbours look upon *Cognatus* as a 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*.

5. But now if *Cognatus*, when he first entered 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 clothed, comforted, and relieved numbers of widows and orphans, 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 lessened any of that happiness, which is to be found in his sacred employments?

If instead of rejoicing in the happiness of a second

cond *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 labour of a *Curate*; better that she should want *fine clothes*, and a *rich husband*, than that cures of souls should be farmed out, 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 robbed *Cognatus* of any real happiness? Could it be said, that a life thus governed 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.

6. Look now at that condition of life, which draws the envy of all.

*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 been corresponding with all parts of *Europe*. The general good of trade seems to *Negotius* to be the general good of life; whatsoever he admires, whatever he commends or condemns, either in church or state, is admired, commended, or condemned, 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 public 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 jail, 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-house*, than as yet been seen in any place: for it is the generous spirit of *Negotius* to do nothing in a mean way.

7. If you ask what it is that has secured *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 are too much employed, to suffer him to fall either into any course 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 consists with that turn of mind, and multiplicity of business, which are his happiness.

If *Negotius* was asked, What it is which he drives at in life? He would be as much at a loss for an answer, as if he was asked, what any other person was thinking of. For though 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 confused notions in his head, which have been a long time there; such as these: 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

The thing that seems to give *Negotius* the greatest life and spirit, and to be most in his thoughts, is an expectation that he shall die richer than any of his business ever did.

\* 8. 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, labourious man, very 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 the 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 die possessed of more than an hundred thousand pairs of *boots* and *spurs*.

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 acquired an hundred thousand pairs of *boots* and *spurs* when he died.

\* 9. Now if this was really the case, I believe that it would be readily granted, that a life of such 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, that he might die, 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 pairs 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 die 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,

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 these things that a man left behind him; whether you call them *his*, or any *one's* else; whether you *call* them *trees* or *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 possessor of *ten towns* before he dies.

For if, when he had got all his *towns*, or all his *boots*, his soul is to go into his *own place* amongst separate spirits, and his body to be laid by in a *coffin*, till the last trumpet calls him to judgment; where the enquiry will be, how *humbly*, how *devoutly*, how *purely*, how *meekly*, how *pioufly*, 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?

10. But farther, let it now be supposed, that *Negotius*, when he first entered into business, happening to read the gospel with *attention*, and his eyes open, found he had a much greater business upon his hands, than that to which he had served an apprenticeship: that there were things which belongs 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 by reading this book, he had discovered that his soul was more to him  
than

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 die unprepared 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.

11. 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 subsistence, and to do all the good that he could, to the souls and bodies of his fellow-creatures.

Let it therefore be supposed, that instead of the continual hurry of business, he was frequent in his retirements; 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 had been busy in fortifying his soul against all approaches of sin; that instead of costly shew, and the expensive generosity of a splended life, he had loved and exercised all instances of humility and lowliness; that instead of great treats and full tables, his house had only furnished a sober refreshment to those that wanted it.

Let it be supposed, that this 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.

12. 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 hope 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 compared 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 gained, 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 yourself, 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 any condition in the world.

\* 13. Imagine to yourself some person in a *consumption*, or any other *lingering 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 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 in 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* or *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 was to 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 pleased with *fine clothes*, when he could scarce stand to be dressed, 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.

14. 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 any 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 religion, which every man dying 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 ourselves more happy, to live piously, because we may have more years to come? If one year of piety before we die, is so desirable, are not more years of piety much more desirable?

15. If a man had *five fixed* 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 was 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



For who but a madman can account 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*.

16. 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 it is ! 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 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 his eternal state, which is our real state, *twenty-five years* is as poor a pittance as *twenty-five days*.

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 called a great deal in relation to us ; but if we are *eternal* beings, then the difference of a few years is as nothing.

\* 17. If we were to suppose *three* different sorts of rational beings, all of *different*, but *fixed* duration ; one sort that lived *certainly* only a *month*, the other a *year*, and the third an *hundred years*.

If these beings were to meet together, and talk about time, they must talk in a very different language. *Half an hour* to those who were to live but a *month*, must be a very different thing,

to what it is to those who are to live a *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 ourselves, 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 are now to 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 would 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*.

18. 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 *praised*, 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 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 seem as nothing.

What a *trifle* therefore must the years of a *man's age* appear, when they are forced to be set against *eternity*, when there shall be nothing but eternity to compare them with!

And this will be the case of every man, as soon as he is out of the body; he will be forced to forget the distinction of days and years, and to measure time, not by the course of the sun, but by setting it against eternity.

As the *fixed stars*, by reason of our being placed at such distance from them, appear but as so many *points*; so when we, placed in eternity, shall look back upon *all time*, it will 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 snatched 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.

## C H A P. XII.

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

1. **H**AVING in the foregoing chapters shewn the necessity of a devout spirit, 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 relates to *times* and *hours* of prayer.

\* I take it for granted, that every Christian,  
that

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 cannot tell how to think any thing good of him, who is such a slave to drowsiness, as to neglect his business 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 blamed 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 reproached, that had rather lie folded up in a bed, than be raising up his heart to God in acts of praise and adoration.

2. 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 height 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 swallowed 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 forced to receive it either in a state of *insensibility*, 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 indolence of sleep, rather than be early at his devotions to God; chuses the dullest refreshment of the body, before the highest, noblest enjoyment of the soul; he chuses that state, which is a reproach to *mere animals*, rather than that exercise, which is the glory of *angels*.

\* 3. Besides, 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, then 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 those duties; but he is no more disposed for the *true spirit* of prayer, than he is disposed for *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: on the other hand, every thing that requires *care, trouble, or self-denial*, is hateful to him for the same reason that he hates to rise.

4. 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 indulgence*, does as much to corrupt and disorder his soul, to make it a slave to bodily appetites, and keep it incapable of all heavenly tempers, as he that turns the necessity of eating into a course of indulgence.

A person that eats and drinks too much, does not

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 hinderance 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 entering into the true spirit of religion.

And this is the case of those who waste their time in sleep; it does not *disorder* the lives, or *wound* their consciences, as *notorious acts* of intemperance do; but, like any other moderate course of indulgence, it silently, and by smaller degrees, wears away the spirit of religion, and sinks the soul into a state of dullness and sensuality.

\* 5. If you consider devotion only as a *time* of so much prayer, you may perhaps perform it, though you live in 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. Self-denial, 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 prepared for? What sacrifice is he ready to offer to God, who cannot be so cruel to himself, as to rise to prayer at such a time, as the *drudging* part of the world are content to rise to their labour?

\* 6. 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 *hardened 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 softness and idleness, as makes you incapable of the most fundamental duties of a truly Christian and spiritual life.

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?

\* 7. If I was to desire you not to study the gratification of your *palate*, in the niceties of meats and drinks, I would not insist upon the crime of wasting your money in such a way, though it be a great one; but I 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 do not insist much upon  
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the crime of wasting 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, and the spirit of all the saints and martyrs which have ever been amongst men, but must be the spirit of 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 itself 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 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 to renounce other pleasures and tempers that war against the soul.

But above all, 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 fervour in devotion.

8. Hoping therefore that you are now enough  
convinced



convinced of the necessity of rising early to your prayers, I shall proceed to lay before you a method of daily prayer.

I do not take upon me to prescribe to you the use of any *particular forms* of prayer, but you will here find some helps, how to furnish yourself with such as may be useful. And if your heart is always ready to pray in its own language, in this case I press no necessity of borrowed forms.

It seems right for such an one to begin with a *form* of prayer; and if, in the midst of it he finds his heart ready to break forth into other words, he may leave his *form*, and follow those fervours of his heart, till it again want the assistance of his usual petitions.

This seems to be the *true liberty* of *private devotion*: it may be under the direction of some *form*; yet not so tied down to it, but that it may be free to take such new expressions as its present fervours furnish it with, which sometimes carry the soul more powerfully to God, than any expressions that were ever used before.

9. Most people are changeable in regard to devotion. Sometimes our hearts have such *strong* apprehensions of the divine presence, and are so full of compunction, that we cannot speak 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 goodness of God, that our hearts worship in a language 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

of words, but our hearts have little or no share in them.

We may provide against this *inconstancy* of our hearts, by having at hand such *forms* of prayers, 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*.

\* 10. 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 itself 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 *hurry*; 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*.

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 much assist your devotion.

\* 11. It may be of use to you to observe this farther rule: 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, 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 may be of benefit to you, to have something *fixed*, and something at *liberty*, in your devotions.

You may have some fixed subject 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 *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.

Therefore *praise* and *thanksgiving*, and *oblation* of yourself unto God, may be the fixed 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 direct.

\* 12. One of the greatest benefits of *private* devotion, consists in adapting our prayers to 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, and all sorts of *kindnesses*, *injuries*, or *reproaches* from other people.

Now, as these are great parts of our state of  
life,

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 resignations, 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.

\* 13. We are likewise always to adapt some part of our prayers to the *difference* of our hearts; by which is meant the different 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.*

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.

If, on the other hand, we feel ourselves laden with *heavy* 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 to lessen our infirmities, and to deliver us from these passions.

By this wise application of our prayers, we shall get all the relief from them that is possible; and the very *changeableness* of our hearts, will prove a means of exercising a greater variety of holy tempers.

You will perceive by this, that persons ought to have a great share in composing their own devotions.

As to that part of their prayers, which is always fixed, they may use forms composed by  
other

other persons; but in that part which they are to suit to the present *state* of their *life*, and the *present* state of their *heart*, 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.

14. But it is amazing to see how eagerly men employ their *parts*, their *sagacity*, *time*, *study*, *application*, and *exercise*: how all helps are called to their assistance, when any thing is intended and desired in worldly matters; and how *dull*, *negligent*, and unimproved 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 advanced in age, and has made a great figure in business. Every part of *trade* 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, make 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 rendered him a great master in most concerns in human life.

Thus has *Mundanus* gone on, increasing his *knowledge* and *judgment*, as fast as his years came upon him.

\* The only thing which has not fallen under his improvement, nor received any benefit from his judicious mind, is his *devotion*: this is just in  
the

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 used 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 *used* 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.

If *Mundanus* sees a book of *devotion*, he passes it by, as he does a *spelling-book*; because he remembers that he learned 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?

15. *Classicus* is a man of learning, and well versed in all the best authors of antiquity. He has read them so much, that he has entered into their spirit, and can 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 on 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*.

16. *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 do not content yourself 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 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 lie 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 ancients is of entering into the spirit of antiquity?

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 formed in his mind ? And is there not the same 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 formed 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 entered 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 formed 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 think, and pray* to God, in the *spirit* of *St. Austin*.

And yet 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.

18. There is one thing more I would advise; and that is, to begin your prayers with a *psalm*.

I do not mean, that you should *read* over a psalm, but that you should *chant* or *sing* one. For *singing* is as much the *proper* use of a *psalm*, as *devout supplication*, is the *proper* use of a *form* of prayer.

The difference between singing and reading a psalm, will easily be understood, if you consider the difference between reading and singing a *common song* that you like. Whilst you only read it, you only *like* it; but as soon as you *sing* it, then you feel the delight of it, it has got hold of you, and you feel the *same spirit* within you, that there seems to be in the words.

You will perhaps say, you cannot sing.

This objection might be of weight, if you was desired to sing to entertain other people; but it is not to be admitted in the present case, where you are only advised to sing the praises of God in private.

You may not have the talent of singing, so as to entertain other people, and therefore it is reasonable to excuse yourself 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 required for the music that is made by it, than prayer is required for the fine words it contains, but as it is the natural and proper expression of a heart rejoicing in God.

Our blessed Saviour and his Apostles sung an hymn; but it may be reasonably supposed, that they rather rejoiced in God, than made *fine music*.

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

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 makes 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.

19. Let us now consider another reason of this kind of devotion.

The union of soul and body is not a mixture of their substances, as we see bodies united and mixed 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 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 mixed 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 concerned 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 powers of so doing; as it is fixed 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 *skin*, and *coats*, and *humours* 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 powers over sounds, but merely because it is the will of God, that *seeing* and *hearing* should be thus received: 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.

20. 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 religion.

This union of our souls and bodies, is the reason both why we have so little and so much power over ourselves. 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 ourselves.

On the other hand, it is owing to this union, that we have so *much* power over ourselves. For as our souls in a great measure depend upon our bodies; and as we have great power over these; as we can mortify our bodies, and remove ourselves from objects that inflame our passions; so we have a great power over the *inward* state of our souls. Again, as the outward acts of reading,

ing, praying, singing, and the like, have an effect upon the soul: 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 ourselves.

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, because they are proper to 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.

\* 21. This doctrine may easily be carried 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 placed 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 benefit 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,

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 ourselves 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 of *singing of psalms*; it is because outward actions are necessary to support inward tempers.

\* 22. I have been the longer upon this head, because of its importance to true religion. For there is no state of mind so holy, so excellent, 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 does not believe this from his heart, he cannot be said to believe in God. And yet he that has this  
faith,

faith, has faith enough to be always 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, 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 repining 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.

\* 23. If any one would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness, he must tell you 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 yourself, 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, and might judge of your improvement in piety. For so far as you renounce all 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 have advanced in piety.

And although this be the highest temper that you can aim at; yet it is not tied 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 governed 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 employed in singing the praises of God.

24. It may perhaps after all be objected, that although the great benefit of this practice is very apparent; yet it seems not so fit for *private* devotions, since it can hardly be performed without making our devotions public, and seems liable to the charge of *sounding a trumpet* at our prayers.

It is answered, *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.

*Secondly*, Numbers of people are by the *necessity* of their state, as *servants*, *apprentices*, *prisoners* and *families* in small houses, forced 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 obliged to be more exact in them, that others may not be witnesses of their neglect, and so corrupted by their example?

And what is here said of devotion, may surely be said of *singing a psalm*.

The rule is this: do not 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 *sung praises to God in prison*, though we are expressly told that the *prisoners heard them*. They therefore did not refrain 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?

\* *Fourthly*, The *privacy* of our prayers is not destroyed by our *having*, but by our *seeking* witnesses of them.

If therefore no body hears you but those you cannot separate yourself 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.



## C H A P. XIII.

*Recommending devotions at nine o'clock in the morning, called in scripture, the third hour of the day. The subject of these prayers may be humility.*

1. **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.

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.

I have in the last chapter laid before you the excellency of *praise* and *thanksgiving*, and recommend that as the subject of your first devotions in the morning.

And because humility is the *life* and *soul* of piety, the *support* of every virtue and good work, the best *guard* and *security* of all holy affections, this may be the subject of your devotions at this *hour*.

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 although 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

No people have more occasion to be afraid of the approaches of pride, than those who have made *some advances* in a pious life. For pride can grow as well upon our *virtues* as our *vices*, and steals upon us on all occasions.

Every good thought we have, every good action we do, lays us open to pride.

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 this exercise of humility, that he may not fall a sacrifice to his own progress in those virtues, which are to save mankind from destruction.

But as all virtue is founded in *truth*; so humility is 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 of ourselves. In 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 when we feel ourselves 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 your 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.

3. The misery of our condition appears in this, that we use these *borrowed* powers of our nature, to the *torment* and *vexation* of ourselves, 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, 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 much 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 been able to *please* himself, and how often he has *displeased* others; how  
often

often he has changed his counsels, hated what he loved, and loved what he hated; how often he has been enraged and transported at *trifles*, pleased 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* fully and corrupt his best actions, he would have no more pretence to be honoured and admired for his *goodness* and *wisdom*, than a *rotten* and *distemper'd* body to be loved and admired for its *health* and *comeliness*.

4. 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?

5. If to this we add the *shame* and *guilt* of sin, we shall find still a greater reason for *humility*.

No creature that had lived in innocence, would have thereby got any pretence for pride : 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 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 required 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 ever separated from God, and incapable of ever appearing before him.

And is there any room for *pride*, whilst we are partakers of *such a nature* as this ?

Have our sins rendered us so abominable 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 ourselves ? 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 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

there is nothing else but this, that is his own property.

6. Turn your eyes towards heaven, and fancy that you saw what is doing there; that you saw *cherubim* and *seraphim*, 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 own *praises*, not valuing *themselves*, and despising *others*, but all employed 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, Rev. iv. 10, 11.*

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 *fancied 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 *falsehood*, *lusts* and *impurity* reign.

Let a man, when he is most delighted with his own figure, contemplate our blessed Lord *stretched out*, and *nailed 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 a crucified Saviour?

These are the reflections that you are often to meditate upon, that you may thereby be disposed to walk before God and man in such a spirit of humility, as becomes the *weak*, *miserable*, and *sinful* state of all that are descended from fallen *Adam*.

7. But you must not content yourself with this, as if you was therefore humble, because you acknowledge the reasonableness of humility, and declare against pride.

You would not indulge yourself to be devout, because in your judgment you approved of prayers, and often declared your mind in favour of devotion. Yet how many people imagine themselves good enough, for no other reason, but because they often commend humility, and make vehement declarations against pride?

*Cæcus* is a rich man, of good birth, and very fine parts; is very full of every thing that he says or does, and never 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. *Cæcus* would have been very religious, but that he always thought he was so.

There is nothing so odious to *Cæcus* 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 wherever 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.

*Cæcus* 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 enraged at pride.

It is very true, *Cæcus*, 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, *Cæcus*, that you only love humility, and hate pride in *other people*. You never once in your life thought of any other humility, or of any other pride, than that which you have seen in *other people*.

8. The case of *Cæcus* is a common case; many people live in all the instances of pride, and indulge

dulge every vanity that can enter into their minds, and yet never suspect themselves to be governed by pride and vanity, because they know how much they dislike proud people, and how mightily they are pleased with humility and modesty, wherever they find them.

All their speeches in favour of humility, and all their railings against pride, are looked upon as so many 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 it in other people.

\* You must therefore act by a quite contrary measure, and reckon yourself only so far humble, as you impose *every instance* of humility upon yourself, and *never* call for it in other people. So far an enemy to pride, as you never *spare* it in yourself, 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 to you, but so far as you love to see all your own thoughts, words, and actions governed by it. And the hating of pride does you no good, but so far as you hate to harbour any degree of it in your own heart.

Now in order to set out in the practice of humility, you must take it for granted, that you are *proud*, that you have been so all your life.

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 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 ourselves to God, we can hardly be surer of any thing, than that we have a great deal of pride to repent of.

If therefore you find it disagreeable to your mind to entertain this opinion of yourself, and that you cannot put yourself amongst those that want to be cured 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 confirmed pride, than 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.

9. Every person, therefore, when he first applies himself to the exercise of humility, must consider himself as a *learner*; that is, to learn something that is contrary to all his former tempers and habits of mind.

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 itself; he must forget and depart from abundance of passions and opinions, which the *fashion*, and *vogue*, and spirit of the world, have made natural to him.

He must lay aside the opinions and passions which he has received from the world; because the *vogue* and *fashion* of the world, by which we have been carried away, as in a *torrent*, before we could pass right judgments of the value of things, is utterly contrary to *humility*.

The

The devil is called, 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 lies, to separate us from God, and prevent our return to happiness.

Now, according to the *spirit* of this world, whose corrupt air we have all breathed, there are many things that pass for *great*, and *honourable*, and *desirable*, which yet are so far from being so, that the *true greatness* and honour of our nature consists in the not desiring them.

To abound in wealth, to have fine houses and rich clothes, to be attended with splendour and equipage, to be beautiful in our persons, to have titles and dignity, to be above our fellow creatures, to command the bows and obeisance of other people, to be looked on with admiration, to overcome our enemies with power, to subdue all that oppose us, to set out ourselves in as much as we can, to live highly and magnificently, to eat and drink, and delight ourselves 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*.

10. 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 lived *contrary* to the spirit of the world.

*If any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Again, Whosoever is born of 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

But notwithstanding the clearness and plainness of these doctrines, great part of Christians live and die slaves to the *customs* and *tempers* of the world.

How many people swell with *pride* and *vanity*, for such things as they would not value at all, but that they are admired 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 the world admires a *coach* and *six*? How fearful are many people of having their houses poorly furnished, or themselves meanly clothed, for this only reason, lest the world should place them among *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 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, 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; but they are frightened, by considering what the world would say of them?

11. Thus do the impressions which we have received 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.

You can make no *stand* against the assaults of pride, 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.

For indeed, as great as the power of the world is, it is all built upon a *blind obedience*.

Ask whom 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 extravagance*.

Who will not own, that the wisdom of *philosophy*, and the piety of *religion*, was always confined to a small number? And is not this expressly owing, 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 condemned even by itself, to make it very easy for a thinking man to be of the same judgment.

\* Therefore you should 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?

12. Again, to lessen your 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 died 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 filled 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 belonged 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

Think again, how many poor souls see heaven lost, and lie now expecting a miserable eternity, for their homage to a world, that thinks itself 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 *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?

13. *If ye were of the world, saith our blessed Lord, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you, John xv. 19.*

We are apt to lose the true meaning of these words, by considering them only as an *historical 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 appears 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

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.

\* 14. 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 is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, &c.* 1 John ii. 16. This is an exact and full description of the world. 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.

15. And indeed the world, by professing Christianity, is so far from being a less dangerous enemy

enemy than it was before, that it has by its 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 considered as an enemy; and therefore the generality of people are easily persuaded to resign themselves up to be governed 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 lie 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 required of them only by heathens, would have been refused, as contrary to the holiness of Christianity.

Who would 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 by the necessity of *great self-denial, humility, and poverty of spirit*, but that the authority of the world has banished this doctrine of the cross?

16. There is nothing therefore, that a Christian ought to be more suspicious of, or more constantly

stantly guard against, than the authority 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 to be taken in the *strict sense*, in relation to the present world.

For the change that the world has undergone, has only altered its methods, but not lessened 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 *heathen world*, Christians were thereby made more intent upon the contrary virtues. But when *pride, sensuality, covetousness* and *ambition*, have the authority of the *Christian world*, then private Christians are in the utmost danger, not only of being ashamed out of the practice, but of losing the very notion of the piety of the gospel.

There is therefore hardly any possibility of saving yourself 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 yourself, that it is as dangerous to conform to its *tempers* and *passions*, now it is Christian, as when it was Heathen.

For only ask yourself, 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 called *Christian*?

Need a man do more to make his soul 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 spirit of religion, without renouncing the most *general temper* and *behaviour* of those, who are of the same order and business as yourself.

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 obliged 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 raised against the practice of *Christian humility*.

#### C H A P. XIV.

*Shewing how the Education which men generally receive, makes the doctrines of humility difficult to be practised. The spirit of a better Education represented in the character of Paternus.*

1. **A**NOTHER difficulty in the practice of humility, arises from our education. We are corruptly educated, and then committed to take our course in a corrupt world ; so that it is no 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.

But

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 introduced 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 considered as *reason* borrowed at *second hand*, which is, as far as it can, to supply the loss of *original* perfection. And as physic may justly be called 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.

2. Now as the instruction of every *art* or *science* is founded upon the *discoveries*, the *wisdom*, *experience*, and *maxims* of the several great men that have laboured in it; so that *human wisdom*, or *right use* of our reason, which young people should be called 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, have said of the necessity of *piety*, of the excellency of *virtue*, of the emptiness of riches, of the vanity of the *world*; all the *sentences*, *judgments*, *reasonings*, and *maxims* of the wisest 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.

\* 3. 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 agreeableness to the divine nature; upon the dignity of reason, and 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 bettered, and amended by Christianity, as the *faith* and *doctrines* of religion are amended by it.

As it has introduced such a *new state* of things, and so fully informed us of the *nature* of man, the *ends* of his creation, and the state of his condition; as it has fixed 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*, not only for the searching a few questions and answers of a *Catechism*, but for the forming, training, and practising youths in such a course of life, as the highest precepts, the *strictest* rules, and the *sublimest* doctrines of Christianity require.

\* 4. An education under *Pythagoras*, or *Socrates* had no other end, but to teach youth to *think*, *judge*, and *act* as *Pythagoras*, and *Socrates* used.

And is it not as reasonable to suppose, that a Christian education should have no other end, but

to teach youth how to think, judge, and act according to the *strict 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 a *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 reasonable to expect and require all this benefit of a Christian education, as to require that physic should strengthen all that is right in our nature, and remove that which is *sickly and diseased*.

But alas, our modern education is not of this kind.

5. 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

to take comfort in them, and promise the world some mighty thing 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 carried him through all the *dignities* 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 the rich men in the *same trade*, and consider how many now are carried 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 died.

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 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*.

6. 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 governed by *ambition*, *envy*, *scorn*, and a *desire* of glory; not considering that they were all the time of their youth called 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

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 spurred 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* is acknowledged by all people to be the most *ungenerous, base* and *wicked* passion that can enter into the heart of man.

And is this the temper to be instilled, nourished and established in the minds of young people?

7. I know it is said, that it is not *envy*, but *emulation*, that is intended to be awakened 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 covered with a name of a less odious sound.

Secondly, If *envy* is thus confessedly bad, and it be only *emulation* that is endeavoured to be awakened 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 defined in its best manner, is nothing else but a *refinement* upon *envy*,  
or

r 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*.

8. It is said also, 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 *dullness* and *idleness*.

But these people who say this, do not 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.

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 required of grown men.

Again, let those people, who think that children would be spoiled, 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 trained up in the profoundest principles of humility? Can they say that our blessed Lord, who was the humblest man that ever was on earth, was hindered 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 lived in the humble spirit of their Master, did therefore cease to be labourious 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 education in pride and ambition.

\* 9. *Paternus* lived 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 speak 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 I should live with you.

But, my child, though you now think yourself 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 saved *Noah* in the ark; who was the God of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*; whom *Job* blessed and praised in the greatest afflictions; who delivered 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 had created so many millions of men; who lived 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



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 received your being ten years ago, at the time that I planted that little tender *elm* which you there see.

10. I myself 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 called it ours in our turn, though 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*. Where you to go up or down, *east* or *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 preserved you from a thousand dangers, which neither you nor I know any thing of.

11. 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

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, that he is nearer to you than any thing that you can see.

Take him for your *Lord*, and *Father*, and *Friend*; look up to him as the fountain and cause of all the good that you have received 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 younger 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.

12. You do well to reverence 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 yourself, 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*, and *fields* and *farms*, to contemplate upon God and heaven, to consider Angels, and the spirits of good men living in light and glory.

As you have been used 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.

13. God keepeth a *book* of life, wherein 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 received to the happiness of those holy men who have died before you, or be turned 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 opened, you must see it, and you must be tried by it. Strive therefore to fill it with your good deeds, that the hand-writing 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 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 join yourself to him; and when you love what he dislikes, then you oppose him, and separate yourself from him. This is the true and the right way; think what God loves, and do you love it with all your heart.

14. First of all, my child, worship and adore God, think of him magnificently, speak of him reverently, magnify his Providence, adore his  
power,

power, frequent his service, and pray unto him constantly.

Next to this, love your neighbour, which is all mankind, with such tenderness and affection as you love yourself. 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 excel 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 if it is once a pleasure to you to excel other people, it will by degrees be a pleasure to you, to see other people not so good as yourself.

Banish therefore every thought of *pride* and *distinction*, and accustom yourself 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 pleased with their well-doings, as with yours; so you ought to desire, that every thing that is wise, and holy, and good, may be performed in as high a manner by other people, as by yourself.

15. Let this therefore be your only motive to all good actions, to do every thing in as perfect a manner as you can; for this only reason, because it is pleasing to God, who 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 employed, as God would have all employed, for the common 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.

16. I am teaching you *Latin* and *Greek*, not that you should desire to be a great *critic*, a fine 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.

But I teach you these languages, that at proper times you may look into the history of past ages, and learn the method of God's Providence over the world: that reading the writings of the ancient sages, you may see how wisdom and virtue have been the praise 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 governed by right reason; so it loves and requires great plainness and simplicity of life. Therefore avoid

avoid all superfluous shews, finery, and equipage, and let your house be plainly furnished with moderate conveniences. Do not consider what your estate can afford, but what right reason requires.

17. 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 plainness 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 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.

Hate and despise all *human glory*, for it is nothing else but human folly. It is the greatest *snare*, and the greatest *betrayal*, that you can possibly admit into your heart.

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.

18. 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 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 to-

wards them be governed 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 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 to yourself.

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 yourself.

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 received 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.

## C H A P. XV.

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

\* 1. **T**HAT turn of mind which is taught and encouraged 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. For though *women* do not carry on the *trade* and *business* of the world; yet

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* 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 received from the *love*, *tenderness*, *authority*, and constant *conversation* of our mothers.

As we call our first language our *mother-tongue*, 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*.

2. 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 *minds*, are not only educated in *pride*, but in the *silliest* and most *contemptible* part of it.

They are not indeed suffered to dispute with us the proud *prizes* of *arts* and *sciences*; 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 owned, that, generally speaking, good parents are never more fond of their daughters, than when they see them *too fond* of themselves,



themselves, and *dressed* in such a manner, as is a great reproach to the gravity and sobriety of the Christian life.

\* 3. 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* confined to *former* ages.

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, gewgaw* 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 *abused*, and *injured*, and *betrayed* 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.

4. It is generally said, that *women* are naturally of *little* and *vain minds*; but this I look upon to be as *false*, as to say, that *butchers* are naturally *cruel*; for as their cruelty is not owing to their *nature*, but to their *way of life*; so whatever *littleness* and *vanity* is to be observed in the minds of women, is like the cruelty of *butchers*, a temper that is wrought into them by that life which they are *taught* and *accustomed* to lead.

And if it were true, that they were thus naturally vain and light, then how much more blame-  
able

able is that education, which seems contrived 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 of herself, we could hardly take better means to raise this passion in her, than those that are now used in their education.

\* 5. *Matilda* is a fine woman, of good breeding, and great sense. 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 flays 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* lived in the first ages of Christianity, she had in all probability been one of the greatest saints. 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.

6. *Matilda* never was meanly dressed 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 missed the Church; but then they are more afraid to see her, if they are not laced as strait 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.

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.

The children see so plainly the *temper* of their mother, that they even affect to be *more pleased* with dress, 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.

7. 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 spoiled in her time for want of such care.

Whenever they begin to look *sanguine and healthful*, she calls in the assistance of the *Doctor* ; and if *physic*, or *issues*, will keep the complexion from inclining to *coarse* or *ruddy*, she thinks them well employed.

By this means they are *poor, pale, sickly, infirm* creatures, *vapoured* through want of spirits, *crying* at the smallest accidents, *fwooning* away at any thing that frights them, and hardly able to bear the *weight* of their best clothes.

The eldest daughter lived as long as she could under this discipline, and died in the twentieth year of her age.

When her body was opened, it appeared that her *ribs* had grown into her *liver*, and that her other *entrails* were much hurt, by being *crushed* together with her *stays* ; which her mother had ordered to be twitched 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

contributed nothing to it herself. 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.

8. Now, though I do not 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.

Their minds are turned as much to the care of their beauty and dress, without having such rules of devotion to stand against it. So that if *solid piety, humility, and a sober sense* of themselves, is much wanted in that sex, it is the plain consequence of a vain and corrupt education.

And if they are often ready to receive the first *fops, beaux, and fine dancers*, for their husbands, it is 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, it is no more to be wondered at, than to see a *little flower* choaked and killed 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 killed 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 honour, and only condemn that *education* which is so *injurious* thereto.

Their education, I profess I cannot spare; but the only reason is, because it is their *greatest enemy,*

*enemy*, because it deprives the world of so many  *blessings*; and the Church of so many  *saints*.

If it should here be said, that Leven charge  *too high* upon their  *education*, and that they are not so much hurt by it, as I imagine :

It may be answered, that though I do not 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.

9. 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 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  *sewing*,  *knitting*,  *spinning*, and all other parts of  *housewifry*; not for their  *amusement*, but that they may be serviceable to themselves and others, and be saved 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.

\* 10. If

\* 10. If *Eusebia* has lived 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, it is because they are all founded in a deep *humility*.

My children, says she, when your father died, I was much pitied by my friends, as having all the care of a family, and the management of an estate fallen upon me.

But my own grief was founded upon another principle: I was grieved to see myself deprived 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 of our own making, and fall away as soon as we *know ourselves*.

If a person in a *dream* is disturbed with strange appearances, his trouble is over as soon as he is *awake*, and sees that it was a dream.

Now, when a right knowledge of ourselves enters into our minds, it makes as great a change in all our thoughts and apprehensions, as when we *awake* from the *wanderings* 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 ourselves, and might as justly pass for *thoroughmadness*, as when a man fancies himself to be *glass* or *ice*.

A woman that dares not appear in the world without *fine clothes*, that thinks it is a happiness to have a face *finely coloured*, to have a skin *delicately fair*, that had rather die than be reduced to *poverty*, and be forced to work for a poor main-

tenance, is as ignorant of herself to the full, as he that fancies himself to be *glafs*.

\* 11. For this reason, all my discourse with you, has been to acquaint you with yourselves, and to accustom you to such books and devotions, as might 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 yourselves, 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 were all of you *pure spirits*. I do not mean that you have not bodies that want *meat*, and *drink*, and *sleep*, and *clothing*: 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 *clothing*; something that is only to be used for awhile, and then to *end* and *die*, and *wear away*, and to signify no more to you than the *clothing* and *bodies* of other people.

12. 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 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 clothes, but they are like *infected clothes*, that  
 all

fill you with ill diseases, 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, 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 and destroy all *vanity, pride, and sensuality*.

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?

But do not 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 only then begin to see, when our bodily eyes are closing.

\* 13. You see then your state, my children; you are to 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, 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 relish that eternal state, which is to begin when this life ends.

As to our bodies, you are to consider them as *poor, perishing* things, that are corrupt at present, and will soon drop into common dust; you are to



watch over them as *enemies*, that are always trying to betray you, and so never follow their counsel; you are to consider them as the *place* and *habitation* of your souls, and so keep them *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 yourselves; 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 perfecting of your souls, you are much more beside yourselves, than he that had rather have a *laced coat*, than an healthful body.

14. 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 entertainments of *plays* and *operas*, I have taught you to delight in visiting the *sick* and *poor*. What *music*, and *dancing*, and *diversions* are to many in the world, that *prayers* and *devotions*, and *psalms* are to you. Your hands have not been employed in plaiting the hair, and adorning your persons; but in making clothes for the naked. You have not wasted your fortunes upon yourselves; but have added your labour to them, to do more good to other people.

Instead of forced *shapes*, *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*, and *sincerity*, and *humility* of all your behaviour.

15. You know, my children, the *high perfection*, and the *great rewards* of virginity; you know  
how

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 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 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, admired, and courted* by men; but as *poor sinners*, that are to save yourselves from the vanities and follies of a miserable world. 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 you can turn into a service to God, and a means of your future happiness.

\* 16. Whether married therefore, or unmarried, 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; and besides the good you will thereby do to other people, your own heart will be improved by it.

For next to *reading, meditation, and prayer*, there is nothing that so secures our hearts from foolish passions, as some *useful, humble employment of ourselves*.

Never therefore consider your labours 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 tried by fire.

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 nobody 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 employed, as those that are amusing themselves with such tedious works as they neither need, nor hardly know how to use when they are finished; when, with less labour and expence, they might be doing as much good, as he that is *clothing* the naked, or *visiting* the sick.

Be glad therefore to know the wants of the poorest people, and let your hands be employed 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.

This will make you true disciples of your meek Lord and Master, who *came into the world not to be ministered unto, but to minister*; and though he was Lord of all, and amongst the creatures of his own making, yet was amongst them *as one that serveth*.

17. Christianity has then had its effect upon your hearts, when it has 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; not in ceremonious visits and vain acquaintances. 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 yours.

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, be as much grieved 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.

18. Love *poverty*, and reverence *poor people*; as for many reasons, so particularly for this, because our blessed Saviour was one of the number.

Visit and converse with them frequently; you will often find *simplicity*, *innocence*, *patience*, *fortitude*, and great piety amongst 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,

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 appearance 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 your labours of love, till Christ cometh with all his holy Angels.

19. And above all, my children, have a care of vain thoughts of your own virtues. For as soon as ever people live different from the common way of the world, the devil represents to their minds the height of their perfections; and is content they should excel in good works, provided that he can 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 imaginations; and think what a loss it would be to you, to have the fruit of all your good works devoured by the vanity of your minds.

Never therefore allow yourselves to despise those who do not follow your rules of life; but love them, and pray to God for them; and let humility be always *whispering* it into your ears, that you yourselves will fall from these rules tomorrow, if God should leave you to your own strength and wisdom.

When therefore you have spent days and weeks well, do not suffer your hearts to contemplate any thing as your own, but give all to the glory of God, who has carried 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

great matters, but as *poor beginners*, that want the daily assistance of God to save you from the *grossest sins*.

20. 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 conjured 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 the *plainnest, simplest* instances of an humble, holy, and industrious life.

He taught me an admirable rule of humility, which he practised 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 ourselves.

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 me, 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.

And a very ordinary knowledge of the *spirit of Christianity*, seems 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?

\* 21. These

21. These considerations will, I hope, teach you the necessity of letting no days 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 you may always appear poor, and little, and mean in your own eyes, and fully content that others should have the same opinion of you.

That the whole course of your life, your *expense*, your *house*, your *dress*, your manner of *eating*, *drinking*, *conversing*, and doing *every thing*, may be so many continual proofs of the 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 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.

## C H A P. XVI.

*Recommending devotion at twelve o'clock, called 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.*

1. **T**HERE is no excuse from devotion 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, to make them *less*.

*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 requires.

\* *Merchants* and *tradesmen*, for instance, are generally ten times farther engaged 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 censured as a blameable instance of covetousness and ambition.

Unless *Gentlemen* can shew, that they have another God, than the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, another nature, than that which is derived from *Adam*; another religion, than the Christian, it is 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.

2. If a *Merchant*, having forbore too great business, that he might quietly attend on the service of God, should therefore die 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 parties 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  
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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 practise 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 excused from it, because they are men of *figure*, and *estates*, and *business*, are no wiser than those that should desire to be excused from *health* and *happiness*, because they were men of *figure* and *estates*.

3. I cannot see why every *gentleman*, *merchant*, or *soldier*, should not put these questions seriously to himself.

*What is the best thing for me to intend and aim 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, seems 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, to condescend to such questions as these ? Or a *Tradesman* think his business too great, to take any care about himself ?

Now, here is desired no more devotion in any one's life, than the answering these *few questions* 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.

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 do not know what, or why ; without ever considering the worth, or value, or tendency of their actions ; without considering what God, *reason*, *eternity*, and their own happiness requires of them : It is for the honour of devotion that none  
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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.

\* 4. It is true, *Claudius*, you are a man of figure and *estate*, and are to act the part of such a station in life; you are not called, 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?

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, because you are not an Apostle or a Bishop.

Consider, *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, 2 Cor. v. 10.* 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 that great day?

5. Consider the words of *St. Peter*, *As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, 1 Pet. i. 15.*

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 through 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. Forasmuch 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.

And if he had said, Forasmuch as ye know ye were made capable of this state of holiness, entered 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 happiness, at so great a price. How base and shameful must it be, if you do not henceforth devote yourselves wholly to the glory of God and become holy, as he who hath called you is holy?

6. 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 piety and 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 neglect it, because you had a fancy to *pick straws*.

7. There is no principle more acceptable to God, than an *universal* fervent love to all mankind, *wishing* and *praying* for their happiness; because there is no principle that makes us more like God, who is love and goodness itself, and created all beings for the enjoyment of happiness.

The greatest *idea* that we can frame of God is, a Being of infinite love and goodness; using an infinite wisdom and power for the common good and happiness of all his creatures.

The highest notion therefore that we can form of man is, when we conceive him as like God in this respect as he can be; using all his infinite 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 assistances from him, as his 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*, *envy*, *spite*, and *ill-will*; if we consider, that every instance of them, is so far acting in *opposition* to God, and intending *mischiefs* and *harm* to those creatures, which God *favours*, and *protects*, and *preserves*, in order to their happiness? An *ill-natured* 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.

8. *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 ourselves, 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 ourselves.

As we have no degrees of spite, or envy, or ill-will to ourselves, so we cannot be disposed towards others as we are towards ourselves, till we *universally* renounce all instances of spite, 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 spiteful, or ill-natured towards *any one* man, the same temper will make us envious, and spiteful, and ill-natured towards a great many more.

If therefore we desire this love, we must exercise 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 allowed instance of injustice destroys the justice of all our other actions; so one allowed instance of envy, spite, or ill-will, renders all our other acts of 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 disposed to *universal justice*.

A love which is not universal, may indeed have *tendernefs* and *affection*, but it hath nothing of *piety* in it; it is but humour and temper, or interest, or such a love as *Publicans* and *Heathens* practise.

9. Now, the noblest motive to universal tenderness, is this, *God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God.*

Who therefore, whose heart has any tendency towards God, would not aspire after this divine temper, which so exalts our nature?

How

How should we rejoice in the exercise of this love, which, so often as we feel it, is so often an assurance to us, that we act according to his spirit, who is love itself? But we must observe, that love has then only this mighty power, 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 wherever we see them, and be as glad to have other people perfect as ourselves.

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.

\* 10. 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 we cannot stand in one another's 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 spite, 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?

\* 11. How many *Saints* has adversity sent to heaven? And how many poor *Sinners* has prosperity plunged into everlasting misery? A man seems then to be in the most glorious state, when he has conquered, disgraced, and humbled his enemy; though it may be, that same conquest has saved his adversary, and undone himself.

*This* man had perhaps never been debauched, but for his *fortune* and *advancement*; *that* had never been pious, but through his *poverty* and *disgrace*.

She that is envied 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* 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 fixed to his first *poor vicarage*.

How envied 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 despised 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 envied was *St. Paul*! How much to be pitied 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.

\* 12. 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 restrained. There are, it may be, but few people to whom we can contribute any worldly relief.

But

But though our outward means of doing good are often thus limited, yet, if our hearts are but full of love, we get, as it were, an infinite power; because God will attribute to us those good works, those acts of love which we would have performed, 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 in your heart, that *excites* you to do *all* that you can; if your love has *no bounds*, but continually *wishes* and *prays* for the relief of all that are in distress, you will be received by God as a benefactor to those, who had nothing from you but your *good-will*, and tender affections.

You cannot build *hospitals* for the *incurable*; but if you join in your heart with those that do; if you are a friend to these great friends of mankind, and rejoice in their eminent virtues, you will be received by God as a sharer of such 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 the height of a loving, charitable, and benevolent mind.

13. And, on the other hand, we may hence learn the great evil of *envy*, *spite*, *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, will bring us under the guilt of actions that we have never committed.

As he that lusteth after a woman shall be reckoned an adulterer, though he has only committed the crime in his heart; so the malicious, spiteful, ill-natured man, that only *secretly* rejoices

at



at evil, shall be reckoned a *murderer*, 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 *greatest* business to govern the motions of our hearts, to correct and improve the inward state of our souls.

These reasons sufficiently shew, 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 household; if these are the great reasons why I should live in love and friendship with any one man in the world, they are the same great reasons why I should live in love and friendship with every man in the world; and consequently, I offend against *all these reasons*, 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.

\* 14. 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. And you have never less reason to be pleased with yourself, than when you find yourself most offended at the behaviour of others. All sin is certainly to be hated; but then, we must set ourselves against sin, as we do 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 guard against than this. For it is a temper that lurks under the cover of many virtues, and by being unsuspected does the more mischief.

A man naturally fancies, that it is his own love of virtue that makes him not able to bear with those that want it; and when he *abhors* one man; *despises* another, and cannot 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 this 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, 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, and the higher our sense of virtue is, the more we shall 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*,

\* 15. 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-behaved, 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,

Again, if their goodness were the reason of our being obliged to love people, we should have no *rule* to proceed by ; because though some people's virtues or vices are very notorious, yet generally speaking, we are but very ill judges of the virtue of other people.

*Thirdly*, We are sure that the virtue of persons, is not the reason of our being obliged 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 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.

16. You will perhaps ask, if you are not to have a *particular esteem* and *reverence* for good men ? It is answered, yes ; but then, this *esteem* is very different from that love of *benevolence* which we owe to our neighbour.

The esteem which you have for a man of eminent piety, is no act of charity to him.

We do not love virtue, as any thing that wants our *good wishes*, but as something that is our proper good.

This distinction betwixt love of benevolence, and esteem of 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 observed.

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 yourself.

It is very possible, I hope, for you not only to dislike, but to *detest* and *abhor* a great many of your own past actions. But do you then lose any of those tender sentiments towards yourself, which you used to have? Do you then cease to wish well to yourself? Is not the love of yourself as strong then as at any other time?

Now what is thus possible with relation to ourselves, 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 ourselves, and yet at the same time dislike their way of life.

17. To conclude, all that love which we may justly have for ourselves, we are in *strict justice* obliged to exercise towards all other men; and we offend against the great law of our nature, when our temper towards others are different from those which we have towards ourselves.

Now that *self-love* which is *just* and *reasonable*, keeps us constantly *tender*, *compassionate*, and *well-affected* towards ourselves. If therefore you do not feel these kind dispositions towards all other people, you may be assured, 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 *robbed* of your reputation, and *deprived* 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

their *frailties* and *infirmities*; or if you are only *loth* to conceal their faults, you are so far from loving such people as yourself, that you may be justly supposed to have as much hatred for them, as you have love for yourself. 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 yourself, 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 pleased with any thing that hurts him.

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## C H A P. XVII.

*Of the necessity and benefit of intercession, considered as an exercise of universal love. How all orders of men are to intercede with God for one another. How such intercession amends and reforms the heart.*

1. **T**HAT 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, by prayers for one another.

St. Paul, whether he writes to Churches, or particular persons, shews that they are the constant subject of his prayers.

Thus to the *Philippians*, *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you: always in ever prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy,* Phil. i. 4, 5.

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,* 2 Tim. i. 3. How holy an acquaintance and friendship was this, how worthy of persons that were

were raised above the world, and related to one another, as new members of a kingdom of heaven!

2. Apostles and great Saints did not only thus 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*, *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,* 2 Cor. i. 11.

This was the *ancient friendship* of Christians, uniting and cementing their hearts, not by worldly considerations, or human passions, but by the mutual communication of spiritual blessings, by prayers and thanksgivings to God for one another.

It was this holy intercession that raised Christians to such a state of mutual love, as far exceeded all that had been admired in human friendship. And when the same spirit of *intercession* is again in the world, this holy friendship will be again in fashion, and Christianity 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.

3. Be daily therefore on your knees in a solemn, deliberate performance of this devotion, praying for others with such *length, importunity* and *earnestness*, as you use for yourself; and you will find all *little, ill-natured* passions die away; and your heart will delight in the common happiness of others, as you used only to delight in your own.

For it is hardly possible for you to beseech God to make any one happy in his glory to all eternity,  
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and yet be troubled to see him enjoy the much smaller gifts of God in this life.

For how strange 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 pleasures of *agreeable medicines* ?

\* But the greatest benefits of intercession are then received, 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* as *brethren*, as occasion offers ; yet as we can only live in the actual society of a few, and are more particularly *related* to some than others ; so 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.

If therefore you should always alter your intercessions, according as the *needs* of your *neighbours* or *acquaintance* 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.

4. 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 compassionate 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*.

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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 implored 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 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 fellow heirs of the same glory.

And by being thus desirous that every one should have their full share of the favours of God, they would be glad to see one another happy in the little enjoyments of this life.

\* 5. *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 satisfied with degrees of care and watchfulness, it is because he has learned 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 *hope*, 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 *inter-*



cede with God for them, according to their *particular necessities*.

\* 6. When *Ouranius* first entered into holy orders, he had a *haughtiness* in his temper, a great *contempt* and *disregard* for all foolish and unreasonable people: but he has *prayed 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 being upon his knees in prayer to God for them.

Thus has his *prayers* for others *altered* and *amended* the state of his own heart.

It would strangely delight you to see with what *spirit* he converses, with what *tenderness* he reproveth, with what *affection* he exhorts, and with what *vigour* he preaches; and it is all owing to this, because he reproveth, 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.

7. At his first coming to this little *village*, it was as disagreeable to him as a *prison*, and every day seemed too tedious to be endured in so retired 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 Battles*.

This was his *polite*, or I may rather say, *poor ignorant* turn of mind, before devotion had got the government of his heart.

But

But now his days are so far from being tedious, or his parish too great a retirement, that he only wants more time to do that 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 placed 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 wherever 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 possibly 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.

8. *Ouranius* is mightily affected with this passage of holy scriptures, *The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*, Jam. v. 16.

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 ancient, 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.

9. *Ouranius* reads how God himself said unto *Abimelech* concerning *Abraham*: *He is a Prophet; he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live, Gen. xx. 7.*

And again, how he said of *Job*: *And my Servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept, Job xlii. 8.*

From these passages *Ouranius* justly concludes, that the prayers of men eminent for holiness, have an extraordinary power with God; that he grants to other people such blessings, through their prayers, as would not be granted to men of less piety. This makes *Ouranius* exceeding studious of Christian Perfection, searching after every grace and holy temper, fearful of every error and defect in his life, lest his prayers for his flock should be less availing with God.

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 produced in the life of *Ouranius*.

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.

\* 10. If *Masters*, for instance, were thus to remember their *Servants* in their prayers, beseeching God to bless them, and suing their petitions to the particular wants and necessities of their *Servants*; letting no days 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,  
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and become exemplary in all the parts of a wise and good Master.

The presenting their Servants so often before God, as equally related to God, and entitled to the same heaven as themselves, would incline them to treat them not only with such *humanity* as became *fellow-creatures*, but with such *tenderness, care, and generosity*, as became *fellow heirs* of the same glory. This devotion would make Masters inclined to every thing that was good towards their Servants; 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 public 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 opportunities and encouragements, both to know and perform all the duties of the Christian Life.

\* 11. How natural would it be for such a Master, to perform every part of family devotion; to have constant prayers; to excuse no one's absence from them; to have the scriptures, and books of piety, often read amongst his Servants; to take all opportunities of instructing them, of raising their minds to God, and teaching them to do all their business, as a service to God, and upon the hope and expectations 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

How impossible would it be for a Master, that thus interceded with God for his Servants, to use any unkind threatenings towards them, to damn and curle 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.

12. Now if *Gentlemen* think it too low an employment 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.

13. 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 dispose their own minds to the performance of every thing that was excellent and praise-worthy.

\* I do not suppose, but that the generality of parents remember their children in their prayers. But the thing here intended is not a general remembrance of them, but a *regular method*, of recommending all their *particular needs* 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

them to bless their children with their prayers and sacrifices to God. Thus it was that holy *Job* watched over, and blessed his children, he *sanctified them, he rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings, according to the number of them all,* Job i. 5.

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 required, 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 desired in their prayers.

14. 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 ashamed 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.

If a father thus considered himself as an intercessor with God for his children, to bless them with his prayers, how would such thoughts make him avoid every thing that was displeasing to God, lest when he prayed for his children, God should reject his prayers?

\* How tenderly, how religiously would such a father converse with his children, whom he considered 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 unjust ways of raising their fortune, of bringing them up in pride and indulgence, or of making them too fond

fond of the world, lest he should thereby render them incapable of those graces which he was so often beseeching God to grant them?

15. *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 intercession with God, for such persons as had raised 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 at that time to the greatest degree of *contrariety* to that temper which you was then in, it would be an excellent means of mending your heart.

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 pray to God to bless and prosper him in that *very thing* which raised your envy; if you should repeat your petitions in the strongest terms, beseeching God to grant him all the happiness from the enjoyment of it that can possibly be received, you would soon find it to be the best antidote in the world, to expel the venom of that passion.

16. *Again*: If in any little difference or misunderstandings that you have happened 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 you can think of, you would take the speediest method 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.

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This 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 often arise from poor *punctilios*, 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.

17. Hence we may also learn the odious nature and exceeding guilt of all *spite, 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* 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-natured* 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 *blefs* and *pray* for them, as you are obliged to *blefs* 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* recommend to the love and favour of God.

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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. 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*?

\* 18. 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 tried by this devotion, would soon shew us how we have deceived ourselves.

*Sufurrus* is a pious, temperate man, remarkable for abundance of excellent qualities. No one more constant at the service of the Church. His charity is so great, that he almost starves himself, to be able to give greater alms to the poor.

19. Yet *Sufurrus* 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 disliked 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 itself, *Sufurrus* was ready to receive it.

When he visits, you generally hear him relating, how sorry he is for the 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 forced to say; and how gladly he would conceal it, if it could be concealed.

*Sufurrus*

-*Sufurrus* had such a tender, compassionate manner of relating things the most prejudicial to his neighbour, that he even seemed, both to himself and others, to be exercising a Christian Charity, at the same time that he was indulging a whispering, evil-speaking temper.

*Sufurrus* once whispered to a particular friend in great secrecy, something too bad to be spoke of publicly. 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, *Sufurrus*, 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 earnestness as you would pray for yourself 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.

20. *Sufurrus* was exceedingly affected with his rebuke, and felt the force of it upon his conscience in as lively a manner, as if he had seen the *books opened* at the day of judgment.

All other arguments might have been resisted ; but it was impossible for *Sufurrus* either to reject, or to follow this advice, without being equally self-condemned.

From that time to this, he has constantly used himself to this method of intercession ; and his heart is so entirely changed 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.

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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 be well wondered, how a man of so much piety as *Sufurrus*, could be so deceived 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 deceived both himself and others.

This was a falseness of heart, which was only to be fully discovered, by the true Charity of *Intercession*.

And if people of virtue, who think as little harm of themselves, as *Sufurrus* 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.

### C H A P. XVIII.

*Recommending Devotion at Three o'Clock, called in Scripture the Ninth hour of the Day. The Subject of Prayer at this Hour may be Resignation to the divine Pleasure. The Nature and Duty of Conformity to the Will of God in all our Actions and Designs.*

\* 1. **T**HERE is nothing *wise*, or *holy*, or *just*, but the *great Will* of God. This is as strictly true as that nothing 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

nary 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 yourself 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 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.

2. It is as necessary to live in this state of heart, to think thus of God and yourself, as to think that you have any dependance upon him. And it is as great a rebellion against God, to think that your Will may ever differ from his, as to think that you have not received the power of *willing* from him.

You are therefore to consider yourself 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, no designs of your own, 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 yourself. It is as plain that 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 that in him you *live, and move, and have your being.*

\* 3. *Resignation* to the divine will, signifies a cheerful approbation, and thankful acceptance of every thing that comes from God. It is not enough patiently to submit; but we must thank-

fully 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 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 tended to our benefit; it would not be enough to be patient, and abstain from murmuring against such a *Physician*; it would be as much a breach of gratitude, not to be thankful for what he did, as it would be to murmur at him.

Now this is our true state with relation to God; we cannot 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 thankfulness. And there needs no more to dispose us to that 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 cheerfully approve of every thing that God has already approved for you.

For as you cannot possibly be pleased with the behaviour of any person towards you, but because it is for your good, is wise in itself, and the effect of his love and goodness towards you; so when you are satisfied 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 to be pleased with every thing which God chuses for you, as to wish your own happiness.

4. Whenever therefore you find yourself disposed to *uneasiness*, or *murmurings* at any thing that is the effect of God's Providence over you, you must look upon yourself as *denying* either the wisdom or goodness of God. For every complaint supposes

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 impatient reflection under the Providence of God, is the same accusation of God. A complaint always supposes *ill usage*.

Here you may see the great necessity 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 *refined notions*, but a plain principle, founded in this plain belief, that God is a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness.

5. This resignation to the divine will, may be considered 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 laws of his creation, by the first article of his creed, obliged to 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 itself was formed at such a particular time, and in such a manner. That the general order of nature, the whole frame of things, is contrived and formed 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 presence.

This is a noble magnificence of thought, a true 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 pleased spectator; and adoring that invisible hand, which gives laws to all motions, and overrules all events to ends suitable to the highest wisdom and goodness.

6. 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 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.

It sounds indeed much better to murmur at the course of the world, 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, it is a poor excuse 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 considered as God's, and referred 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; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black, Matt. v. 37.* 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,

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 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?

For who so murmurs at the course of the world, murmurs at God that governs the course of the world. Who so 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*.

8. 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, we are to receive them with the same tempers.

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 is without his permission; yet we must adore God in the greatest public calamities, the most grievous persecutions, as things that are suffered by God, like *plagues* and *famine*, 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 at 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 every man pleased



pleased 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 *will* and *wisdom* are 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 loves 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.

9. 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 stopped at no difficulties, was not altered or lessened by any human appearances. It first of all carried him, against all shew of happiness, from his own kindred and country, into a strange land, *not knowing whether he went*. It afterwards made him, against all appearances of nature, when his *body was dead*, when he was about an hundred years old, depend upon the promise of God, *being fully persuaded, that what God had promised he was able to perform*. It was this same faith, that against so many pleas of nature, so many appearances of reason, prevailed upon him to *offer up Isaac*,—*accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead*, Heb. xi. 17. 19.

Now this is the true pattern of Christian resignation: 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,  
where

where 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.

You cannot therefore look upon this as an unnecessary 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 revealed religion.

10. Thus much concerning resignation to the divine will, as it signifies a thankful approbation of God's *general providence*: it is now to be considered, 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, as 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.

11. The scripture assures us, that it was by divine appointment, that our blessed Saviour was born at *Bethlehem*, and at such a time. Now although 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,

world, is according to some *eternal purposes* and *direction* of 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 numbered*, Is it not to teach us, that nothing, not the *smallest* thing imaginable, happens to us by *chance*? But if the smallest things we can conceive, are declared 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 *parents*, the *time*, and other *circumstances* of our birth, and condition, are all according to the *eternal purposes, direction, and appointment* of divine Providence.

12. When the disciples put this question to our blessed Lord concerning the blind man, *Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* He made this answer, *Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him*, John xi. 2, 3, plainly declaring, that the particular circumstances of every 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 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,  
called

called upon to 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*; being fully assured, that it was for some reasons of infinite wisdom and goodness, that we were so born into such particular states of life.

\* 13. If the man above-mentioned 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 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 manifested 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, to the common and particular advantage of all beings? So that all persons, in such a wonderful variety of causes and events, should fall into such particular states, as were foreseen and foreordained to their best advantage, and so as to be most serviceable to the wise and glorious end of God's government of all the world!

14. Had you been any thing else than what you are, you had, all things considered, been less wisely provided for than you are now; you had wanted some circumstances that are best fitted to make you happy yourself, and serviceable to the glory of God.

Could

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 *trust* in God is to exercise itself, and render you as 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 willed for him? and by a trust in the divine goodness, thankfully adore that wise Providence, which he is sure has made the best choice for him of those things which he could not chuse for himself.

15. 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 prescribed to people in *health*. For all the different states of *life* are like the different states of *diseases*; and what is a remedy to one man, 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 his will, he would be killed by that which will prove the cure of another.

It is just thus in the various conditions of life; if you give yourself 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

that very thing which would 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, as to have no will but that of God's, and desire nothing for ourselves, in our *persons*, our *state*, and *condition*, but that which the good Providence of God appoint us.

16. 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 itself was not made by chance ; we are as certain that all things happen, and work together for our good, as that God is goodness itself. 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.

17. This is not cheating or soothing ourselves 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 deceived, by thinking that to be best for us which God has brought upon us.

For the Providence of God is not more concerned 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 changes, all the various turns in your life, to be the effects of divine Providence, as the rising 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.

18. There is nothing that so powerfully governs the heart, as a true sense of God's *presence*; and nothing so constantly keeps 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.

9. Now you must not reserve the exercise of this pious temper to any particular times or occasions, or fancy how *resigned* you will be to God if such or such trials should happen: for this is amusing yourself with the *notion* or *idea* of resignation instead of the virtue itself.

Do not therefore please yourself 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 assured, that the best way of shewing a *true zeal*, is to make *little things* the occasions of *great piety*.

Begin

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 numbered amongst those that are resigned, and thankful to God in the greatest trials and afflictions.

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## C H A P. XIX.

### *Of the Excellency and Greatness of a devout spirit.*

1. **I** Have now finished what I intended in this Treatise. I have explained the nature of devotion, both as it signifies a life devoted to God, and as it signifies a regular method of prayer. I have now only to add a word or two in recommendation of a life governed by this spirit.

And because in this *polite* age, we have so lived 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 proficient in it.

It shall here be 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 tried by reason and scripture, it may soon be made appear, that a *want* of devotion, wherever it is, either among 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.

2. 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?

It is 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 *dread*, and *reverence*, be much more just, and reasonable, and honourable, when they are in the *highest degree* towards God?

So that so long as *duty* to parents, *love* to friends, and *gratitude* to benefactors, are great and honourable tempers, devotion, which is nothing else but duty, love, and gratitude to God, must have the highest place among 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

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.

3. Even that part of devotion which expresses itself in *sorrowful* confessions, and *penitential* tears of a broken and contrite heart, is very far from being any sign of a *litle* and *ignorant* mind.

For who does not acknowledge it an instance of an *ingenious, generous, and brave* mind, to acknowledge a fault, and ask pardon for any offence? And are not the *finest* and *most improved* minds, the most remarkable for this excellent temper?

Is it not also allowed, 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 disposed to prostrate himself before God in all the *humblest acts* and expressions of repentance.

And the greater the *ingenuity*, the *generosity*, *judgment*, and *penetration* of his mind is, the more will he exercise and indulge a *passionate, 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*, the more *senseless* it is of the goodness of God, the most averse to *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 ourselves, are the greatest *helps* that our devotion hath.

4. On the other hand, *indevotion* is founded in the most excessive ignorance.

And *First*, Our blessed Lord and his Apostles were eminent instances of great 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 God, and the nature of man, then it is plain, that all those that are insensible 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? Is it 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 *better knowledge* of God and ourselves, then the neglect of devotion at other times is always owing to the great ignorance of God and ourselves.

5. 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 shamefulnes of any ignorance.

Now *knowledge* itself would be no *excellence*, nor ignorance any *reproach* to us, but that we are *rational creatures*.

It follows plainly, that knowledge which is most *suitable* to our rational nature, and which  
most

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 concerned to know, is, of all others, the most *gross* and *shameful* ignorance.

If therefore there be any thing that concerns 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 sees these truths in the *clearest, strongest* light, has, of all others, as a *rational creature*, the best and clearest understanding.

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 *value* of holiness, that judges every thing *little*, when compared with it, proves himself to be master of the *best* and *most excellent* knowledge.

6. 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 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 compared to any thing else.

This is the most clear and improved understanding, which *judges* best of the *value* of things; all the rest is but the capacity of an *animal*; it is but mere *seeing* and *hearing*.

And there is no excellence of any knowledge in us, till we exercise our *judgment*, and judge well of the *value* of things.

If

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 but a *very bad sight*.

If another had *ears* that received 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* in arts and sciences, or an imagination that can wander agreeably in *fiction*s, 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 reckoned to have a *bad understanding*. He is but like the man that can only *see* and *hear* such things as are of no benefit to him.

7. If a 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 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 want of *devotion* is a certain proof of the want of *understanding*.

8. Let *Libertines* but grant that there is a God, and Providence, and then they have granted enough to justify the wisdom, and support the honour of devotion.

For

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.

F I N I S.



