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A S E R I O U S

C A L L

T O A

D E V O U T and H O L Y

L I F E.

Adapted to the State and Condition of

All Orders of Christians.

By *WILLIAM LAW*, A. M.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

St. L U K E viii. 8.

*And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is
with me.*

R E V. xxii. 12.

L O N D O N:

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THE
CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the Nature and Extent of Christian Devotion. Page 1

CHAPTER II.

An Enquiry into the Reason, why the generality of Christians fall so far short of the Holiness and Devotion of Christianity, 16

CHAPTER III.

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

CHAPTER IV.

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

A 2

CHAPTER.

ij The CONTENTS.

CHAP. V.

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

CHAP. VI.

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

CHAP. VII.

How the imprudent use of an estate corrupts all the tempers of the mind, and fills the heart with poor and ridiculous passions through the whole course of life; represented in the character of Flavia. 92

CHAP. VIII.

How the wise and pious use of an Estate, naturally carrieth us to great perfection in all the virtues of the Christian Life; represented in the character of Miranda. 103

CHAP.

C H A P. IX.

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

C H A P. X.

Shewing how all orders and ranks of men and women of all ages, are obliged to devote themselves unto God. 139

C H A P. XI.

Shewing how great devotion fills our lives with the greatest peace and happiness that can be enjoy'd in this life, 163

C H A P. XII.

The happiness of a life wholly devoted unto God, farther prov'd, from the vanity, the sensuality, and the ridiculous, poor enjoyments, which they are forc'd to take up with, who live according to their own humours. This represented in various characters, 187

C H A P. XIII.

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

iv **The CONTENTS.**

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

C H A P. XIV.

Concerning that part of Devotion which relates to times and hours of Prayer. Of daily early prayer in the morning. How we are to improve our forms of Prayer, and how to increase the spirit of devotion. 228

C H A P. XV.

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

C H A P. XVI.

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

C H A P. XVII.

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

The CONTENTS.

v

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

C H A P. XVIII.

*Shewing how the education which men generally
receive in their youth, makes the doctrines of
humility difficult to be practis'd. The spirit
of a better education, represented in the cha-
racter of Paternus,* 325

C H A P. XIX.

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

C H A P. XX.

*Recommending Devotion at twelve o'Clock, call'd
in Scripture the sixth hour of the day. This
frequency of Devotion equally desirable by all
orders of people. Universal love is here re-
commended to be the subject of prayer at this
hour. Of intercession, as an act of universal
love,* 378

C H A P.

vj **The CONTENTS.**

C H A P. XXI.

Of the necessity and benefit of Intercession, consider'd as an exercise of universal love. How all orders of men are to pray and intercede with God for one another. How naturally such intercession amends and reforms the hearts of those that use it, Page 411

C H A P. XXII.

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

C H A P. XXIII.

Of Evening prayer. Of the nature and necessity of examination. How we are to be particular in the confession of all our sins. How we are to fill our minds with a just horror and dread of all sin, 459

C H A P. XXIV.

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

A S E R I -



A

SERIOUS CALL

TO A

Devout *and* Holy Life.

CHAP. I.

*Concerning the Nature and Extent of Christian
Devotion.*



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

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

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God

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ridicule in the lives of many People. You see them strict as to some *times* and *places* of Devotion, but when the Service of the *Church* is over, they are but like those that seldom or never come there. In their way of Life, their manner of spending their *time* and *money*, in their *cares* and *fears*, in their *pleasures* and *indulgences*, in their labour and diversions, they are like the rest of the world. This makes the loose part of the world generally make a jest of those that are *devout*, because they see their Devotion goes no farther than their *Prayers*, and that when they are over, they live no more unto God, till the time of 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*.

Julius is very fearful of missing Prayers; all the Parish supposes *Julius* to be sick, if he is not at *Church*. But if you was to ask him why he spends the rest of his time by *humour* and *chance*? why he is a companion of the silliest People in their most *silly pleasures*? why he is ready for every impertinent entertainment and diversion. If you was to ask him why there is no amusement too trifling to please him? why he is busy at all *balls* and *assemblies*? 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? why he allows himself in foolish hatreds and resentments against particular persons, without considering that he is to love every body as himself? if you ask him why he never puts his *conversation*, his *time*, and *fortune*, under the rules of Religion, *Julius* has no more to say for himself, than the most disorderly Person. For the whole tenor of Scripture lies as directly against such a life, as against *debauchery* and *intemperance*: He that lives in such a course of *idleness* and *folly*, lives no more according to the Religion of Jesus Christ, than he that lives in *gluttony* and *intemperance*.

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

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

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

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

Let

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If *self-denial* be a condition of salvation, all that would be saved, must make it a part of their *ordinary* life. If *humility* be a christian duty, then the common life of a Christian, is to be a constant course of humility in all its kinds. If *poverty of spirit* be necessary, it must be the spirit and temper of *every day* of our lives. If we are to *relieve* the naked, the sick, and the prisoner, it must be
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the common charity of our lives, as far as we can render our selves able to perform it. If we are to *love our enemies*, we must make our common life a visible exercise and demonstration of that love. If *content* and *thankfulness*, if the patient bearing of evil be duties to God, they are the Duties of every Day, and in every circumstance of our life. If we are to be wise and holy as the new-born sons of God, we can no otherwise be so, but by renouncing every thing that is foolish and vain in every part of our common life. If we are to be in Christ *new creatures*, we must shew that we are so, by having *new ways* of living in the world. If we are to *follow* Christ, it must be in our common way of spending every day.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

C H A P. II.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and *impertinent* in common life, whether of business or pleasure, as you now have to any thing that is *prophane*. You will be as fearful of living in any foolish way, either of spending your *time*, or your *fortune*, as you are now fearful of neglecting the publick Worship.

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

Let a *Clergyman* but be thus *pious*, and he will *converse* as if he had been brought up by an *Apostle*, he will no more think and talk of *noble preferment*, than of *noble eating*, or a *glorious chariot*. He will no more complain of the *frowns* of the world, or a *small cure*, or the want of a *patron*, than he will complain of the want of a *lac'd coat*, or a *running 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 a burning zeal for the salvation of souls; nor any thing poor in his profession, but *idleness* and a *worldly Spirit*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He will have no *hospitable table* for the rich and wealthy to come and feast with him in good eating and drinking; because our blessed Lord saith, *When thou makest a dinner, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed. For they cannot recompence thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*

Luke xiv.
12, 13, 14.

He will waste no money in gilded roofs, or costly furniture: He will not be carried from pleasure to pleasure in expensive state and equipage,

equipage, because an inspir'd Apostle hath said, that *all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ciple of Christianity, *viz.* *an intention to please God in all our actions.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

You perhaps will say, that all People fall short of the Perfection of the Gospel, and there-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Weak and imperfect men shall, notwithstanding their frailties and defects, be receiv'd, as having pleas'd God, if they have done their *utmost* to please him.

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

We

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

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

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

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

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

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unless

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, we shall in all probability fall into a state of negligence, and sit down in such a course of life, as will never carry us to the rewards of heaven.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now any man that dares be so serious as to put this question to himself, will be forc'd to answer, that at death every one will wish that

he had been as perfect as human nature can be.

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

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

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

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

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

Penitens was a busy, notable tradesman, and very prosperous in his dealings, but died in the *thirty-fifth* year of his age.

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

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

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

It is no trouble to me now to think that I am to die young, or before I have rais'd 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 my self either for ever happy in the favour of God, or eternally separated from all light and peace, can any words sufficiently express the littleness of every thing else?

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

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

This is the wisdom of our manly thoughts. And yet what folly of the fillicst children is so great as this?

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

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

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

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

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

If good Angels were ready to receive my soul, could it be any grief to me, that I was dying upon a *poor bed* in a *garret*?

And if God has deliver'd me up to evil spirits, to be dragg'd by them to places of torments, could it be any comfort to me that they found me upon a bed of state?

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

than whether you die in a *poor* or *stately* apartment.

The greatness of those things which follow death, makes all that goes before it sink into nothing.

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

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

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

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

nity

nity of all their labours, designs, and projects, astonish'd at the folly of their past lives, and not knowing which way to turn their thoughts, to find any comfort. Their consciences flying in their faces, bringing all their sins to their remembrance, tormenting them with 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 quench'd, the gates of hell, the powers of darkness, and the bitter pains of eternal death.

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

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

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

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

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

You

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I could have call'd in as many helps, have practis'd as many rules, and been taught as many certain methods of holy living, as of thriving in my shop, had I but so *intended* and *desir'd* it.

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

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

about twelve hours, and then gave up the ghost.

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

This therefore being so useful a meditation, I shall here leave the reader, as, I hope, seriously engag'd in it.



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 honour and Glory.

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

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

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

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

to *act* in their several states and employments for the Glory of God.

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

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

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

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

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

right and pious performance of their several callings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As the glory of God is *one* and the *same* thing, so whatever we do suitable to it, must be done with *one* and the *same* spirit. 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 employment. If it were allowable to indulge *covetous* or *vain* passions in our worldly *employments*, it would then be allowable to be vain-glorious in our *devotions*. But as our *alms* and *devotions* are not an acceptable service, but when they proceed from a heart *truly devoted* to God, so our common employment cannot be reckon'd a service to him;

but when it is perform'd with the *same* temper and piety of heart.

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

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

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

The *husbandman* that tilleth the ground, is employ'd in an honest business, that is necessary in life, and very capable of being made an *acceptable service* unto God. But if he labours and toils, not to serve any reasonable ends of life, but in order to have his *plow* made of *silver*, and to have his *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 *innocent* and *useful* in life, such as help both himself, and others, to a reasonable support, and enable them to assist those that want to be assisted. But if instead of this, he trades only with regard to *himself*, without any other rule than that of his own *temper*, if it be his chief end in it to grow *rich*, that he may live in *figure* and *indulgence*, and be able to retire from business to *idleness* and *luxury*, his trade, as to him, loses all its *innocency*, and is so far from being an acceptable service to God, that it is only a more plausible course of *covetousness*, *self-love* and *ambition*. For such a one turns the necessities of employment into pride and covetousness, just as the *sot* and *epicure* turn the necessities of eating and drinking into *gluttony* and *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 *admir'd*, charity is then but like the vanity of *fine cloaths*.

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

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

He is now so rich, that he would leave off his business, and amuse his *old age* with building and furnishing a fine house in the country,

but that he is afraid he should grow *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 us'd to get money, ever to leave it off. If thoughts of Religion happen at any time to *steal* into his head, *Calidus* contents himself with thinking, that he never was a friend to *hereticks* and *infidels*, that he has always been civil to the *Minister* of his parish, and very often given something to the *charity-schools*.

Now this way of life is at such a *distance* from all the doctrines and discipline of christianity, that no one can live in it through *ignorance* or *frailty*. *Calidus* can no more imagine, that *he is born again of the Spirit*; that he is *in Christ a new creature*; that he lives *here as a stranger and pilgrim, setting his affections upon things above, and laying up treasures in heaven*. He can no more imagine this, than he can think that he has been all his life an *Apostle*, working *Miracles*, and preaching the *Gospel*.

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

Now

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

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

Ephes. vi. 5.
Coll. iii. 22,
23.

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

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

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

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

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

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

So that men must not content themselves with the *lawfulness* of their employments, but must consider whether they *use* them, as they are to use *every thing*, as *strangers* and *pilgrims*, that are baptiz'd into the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that are to follow him 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.

Col. iii. 1.
1 Pet. xv. 16.
Ephes. v. 26,
27.

For

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Again,

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

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

Women are requir'd to have their *heads cover'd*, and to *adorn* themselves with *shamefacedness*; if therefore they are *vain* in those things which are expressly forbidden, if they patch and paint that part, which can only be adorn'd by *shamefacedness*, surely they have as much to repent of for such a pride, as they have, whose pride is the motive to their prayers and charity. This must be granted, unless we will say, that it is more *pardonable* to glory in our *shame*, than to glory in our *virtue*.

1 Cor. xi.

13.

1 Tim. ii. 9.

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

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

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

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

That

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

But as no one is to live in his *employment* according to his own humour, or for such ends as please his own fancy, but is to do all his business in such a manner, as to make it a service unto God; so those who have no particular employment, are so far from being left at greater liberty to live to themselves, to pursue their own humours, and spend their time and fortunes 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 greater *necessity* of always chusing and doing the *best* things.

They

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

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

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

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

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

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

Had you, *Serena*, been oblig'd by the necessities of life, to wash cloaths for your main-

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

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

St. Mat. xxv. and *faithful servant*, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

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

It is now your duty to turn your *five talents* into five more, and to consider how your *time*, and *leisure*, and *health*, and *fortune*, may be made so many happy means of purifying your

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own soul, improving your fellow-creatures in the ways of virtue, and of carrying you at last to the greatest heights of eternal glory.

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

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

Nourish it with *good works*, give it peace in *solitude*, get it strength in *prayer*, make it wise with *reading*, enlighten it by *meditation*, make it tender with *love*, sweeten it with *humility*, humble it with *penance*, enliven it with *Psalms* and *Hymns*, and comfort it with frequent *reflections* upon future glory. Keep it in the *presence* of God, and teach it to imitate those *guardian angels*, which though they attend on human affairs, and the lowest of mankind, yet *always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven*. St. Mat. xviii.
10.

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

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

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

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

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

That which is a reason for our being *wise* and *holy* in the discharge of all our *business*, is the same reason for our being wise and holy in the use of all our *money*.

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

Either

Either this piety, and wisdom, and devotion is to go thro' every way of life, and to extend to the use of every thing, or it is to go through no part of life.

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

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

For

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

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

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

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

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

Farther,

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

It is therefore an immutable law of God, that all rational beings should act *reasonably* in *all* their actions; not at this *time*, or in that *place*, 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, abuses its self, and sins against God the author of that nature.

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

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

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

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

the obedience of *men*, is to imitate the obedience of *Angels*, and that rational beings on earth, are to live unto God, as rational beings in Heaven live unto him.

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

Now all this is not over-straining the matter, or proposing to our selves, any needless perfection. It is but barely complying with the Apostle's advice, where he says, *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* For no one can come near the doctrine of this passage, but he that proposes to himself to do every

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

C H A P. VI.

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

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 oblig'd to observe this religious exactness, in the use of our *estates* and *fortunes*.

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

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

First,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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money well, we are guilty of his madness, that rather chuses to lock up *eyes* and *hands*, than to make himself for ever blessed, by giving them to those that want them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

herit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked, and ye 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.

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

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

of all such works of charity as we are able to perform.

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

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

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

The Apostle St. *Peter* puts this question to our blessed Saviour, *Lord*, *how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him, 'till seven times?* *Jesus* saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but

Mat. xviii. 22.

until seventy times seven. Not as

if after this number of offences, a man might then cease to forgive; but the expression of seventy times seven, is to shew us, that we are not to bound our forgiveness by *any number* of offences, but are to continue forgiving the most repeated offences against us. Thus our Saviour saith in another place, If he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee,

Luke xvii. 4.

saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him. If, therefore, a man ceases to forgive his brother, because he has forgiven him *often* already; if he excuses himself from forgiving this man, because he has forgiven *several others*; such a one breaks this law of Christ, concerning the forgiving ones brother.

Now

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

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

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

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

Either therefore you must so far renounce your Christianity, as to say, that you need
never

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

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

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

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

C H A P. VII.

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

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

pect, the *whole course* of our lives, will be render'd either very wise, or very full of folly.

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

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

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

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

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

For

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Flavia has been the *wonder* of all her friends, for her excellent management, in making so surprizing a figure in so moderate a fortune. Several *Ladies* that have twice her fortune, are not able to be always so *genteel*, and so *constant* at all places of *pleasure* and *expence*. She has every thing that is in the *fashion*, and is in every place where there is any *diversion*. *Flavia* is very *orthodox*, she talks warmly against *hereticks* and *schismaticks*, is generally at *Church*, and often at the sacrament. She once commended a *sermon* that was against the *pride* and *vanity* of dress, and thought it was very *just* against *Lucinda*, whom she takes to be a great deal finer than she need to be. If any one
asks

asks *Flavia* to do something in charity, if she likes the person who makes the proposal, or happens to be in a right *temper*, she will toss him *half a crown* or a *crown*, and tell him, if he knew what a *long Milliner's bill* she had just received, he would think it a great deal for her to give. A *quarter* of a year after this, she hears a *sermon* upon the *necessity* of charity; she thinks the man preaches well, that it is a very *proper* subject, that people *want* much to be put in mind of it; but she applies nothing to herself, because she remembers that she gave a *crown* some time ago, when she could so ill spare it.

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

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

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

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

Flavia

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

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

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

H

comes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For all these things are only *little*, when they are compared to *great sins*; and though they are little in that respect, yet they are great, as they are *impediments* and *hindrances* of a pious spirit.

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

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

C H A P. VIII.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

By *rule*, must here be constantly understood, a *religious rule*, observed upon a principle of duty to God.

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

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

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

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

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

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

But the two things which of all others, most want to be under a strict rule, and which are the greatest blessings both to our selves
and

and others, when they are rightly us'd, are our *time*, and our *money*. These talents are continual means and opportunities of doing good.

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

Miranda, (the sister of *Flavia*) is a sober reasonable Christian; as soon as she was mistress of her *time* and *fortune*, it was her first thought, how she might *best fulfil* every thing that God requir'd of her in the use of them, and how she might make the best and happiest use of this short life. She depends upon the truth of what our blessed Lord hath said, *that there is but one thing needful*, and therefore makes her whole life but one continual labour after it. She has but one reason for doing or not doing, for liking or not liking any thing, and that is the *will* of God. She is not so weak, as to pretend to add, what is call'd the *fine lady*, to the true Christian; *Miranda* thinks too well, to be taken with the *sound* of such silly words; she has renounc'd the world, to follow Christ in the exercise of humility, charity, devotion, abstinence, and heavenly 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 *patch'd*, and loaded with a *burden of finery*, to the holy Sacrament; to be in every polite *conversation*, to hear prophaneness at the *play-house*, and wanton songs and love intrigues at the *opera*, to dance at publick places, that *fops* and *rakes* might admire the fineness of her *shape*, and the *beauty* of her motions. The remembrance of this way of life, makes her exceeding careful to atone for it, by a contrary behaviour.

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

should be. For it is a folly and a crime in a *poor* man, says *Miranda*, to waste what is given him, in foolish trifles, whilst he wants *meat, drink and cloaths*.

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

her fortune, and she only differs from them in the *bleſſedneſs* of giving.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Besides, where has the Scripture made *merit* the rule or measure of charity? On the contrary, the Scripture saith, *if thy enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

C H A P. IX.

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

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

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

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

There is nothing that is *whimsical*, *trifling*, or *unreasonable* in her character; but every thing there describ'd, is a right and proper instance of a solid and real piety.

It is as easy to shew, that it is *whimsical* to go to church, or to say ones 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*.

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

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

If you spend your fortune in the needle's vain finery of dress, you cannot condemn prodigality, or extravagance, or luxury, without condemning your self.

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

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

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

there a right state of heart, true and exalted piety must needs be wanted? For as certainly as the holy *Virgin Mary* could not indulge 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 own'd, that all needless and expensive finery of dress, is the effect of a disorder'd heart, that is not governed by the true spirit of religion.

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

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

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

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

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

For as in the matter of temperance, there is *no rule*, but the sobriety, that is according to the doctrines and spirit of our religion; so in the matter of apparel, there is *no rule* to be observed, but such a right use of cloaths, as is strictly according to the doctrines and spirit
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of our religion. To pretend to make the *way of* the world our measure in these things, is as weak and absurd, as to make the way of the world the measure of our sobriety, abstinence, or humility. It is a pretence that is exceedingly absurd in the mouths of Christians, who are to be so far from conforming to the fashions of this life, that to have *overcome the world*, is made an essential mark of Christianity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is their *spirit* therefore, their piety, their love of God, that you are to imitate, and not the particular form of their life.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

First, Be very sure that this is *true*, before you make it an *excuse*.

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

First, To forbear from all this, as soon as your *husbands* will *permit* you.

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

their minds, and teach them to love you for such qualities, as will make you amiable in the sight of God and his holy angels.

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

These questions are generally put by those, who had rather perplex the plainest truths, than be obliged to follow them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now

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

Thus much to shew, how persons under the direction of others, may imitate the wise and pious life of *Miranda*.

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

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

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

Ever since the beginning of Christianity, there hath been two *orders*, or *ranks* of People amongst good Christians.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Christianity receives this as the perfect
 “manner of life.

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

“Now they who have chosen this manner
 “of life, have their set times for *retirement*
 “and *spiritual exercises*, and particular days
 “are set apart for their hearing *Euseb. Dem.*
 “and learning the word of God. *Evan. l. i. c.*
 “And this order of people are 8.
 “consider’d, as in the *second state* of piety.

Thus this learned historian.

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

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

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

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

If the Religion of Christians is founded upon the infinite *humiliation*, the cruel *mockings* and *scourgings*, the prodigious *sufferings*, the
poor,

poor, persecuted life, and painful death of a crucified Son of God; what wonder is it, if many *humble adorers* of this profound mystery, many *affectionate lovers* of a crucified Lord, should renounce their share of worldly pleasures, and give themselves up to a continual course of mortification and self-denial: That thus suffering with Christ here, they may reign with him hereafter?

If *truth* it self hath assur'd us, that *there is but one thing needful*, what wonder is it, that there should be some amongst Christians so full of faith, as to believe this in the highest sense of the words, and to desire such a separation from the world, that their care and attention to the one thing needful may not be interrupted?

If our blessed Lord hath said, *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: And come and follow me*: What wonder is it, that there should be amongst Christians, some such zealous followers of Christ, so intent upon heavenly treasure, so desirous of perfection, that they should renounce the enjoyment of their estates, chuse a voluntary poverty, and relieve all the poor that they are able?

If the *chosen vessel*, St. Paul, hath said, *He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: And that there is this difference also between a wife and a virgin; the unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be ho-*
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ly both in body and Spirit : What wonder is it, if the purity and perfection of the virgin state, hath been the praise and glory of the Church in its first and purest ages?

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

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

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

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

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

C H A P. X.

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

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 honour and glory of God.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As therefore, no particular state, or private life, is an excuse for the abuse of our *bodies*, or *self-murder*, so no particular state, or private life, is an excuse for the abuse of our reason, or the neglect of the holiness of the christian religion. For surely it is as much
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the will of God that we should make the best use of our rational faculties, that we should conform to the purity and holiness of christianity, as it is the will of God, that we should use our eyes, and eat and drink for the preservation of our lives.

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

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

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

Theft and dishonesty seem indeed, to vulgar eyes, to be greater sins, because they are so hurtful to civil society, and are so severely punish'd by human laws.

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

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

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

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

If therefore, you rather chuse to be an *idle Epicure*, than to be *unfaithful*; if you rather chuse to live in *lust* and *sensuality*, than to injure your neighbour in his goods, you have made no better a provision for the favour
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of God, than he that rather chuses to rob a *house*, than to rob a *church*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And on the other hand, as it is more difficult to worship God with our substance, to honour him with the right use of our time, to offer to him the continual sacrifice of 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 more difficult to sacrifice all our corrupt tempers, correct all our passions, and make piety to God the rule and measure of all the actions of our common life: so the devotion of this kind is a much more acceptable service unto God, than those words of devotion which we offer to him either in the *Church*, or in our *closet*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 tho' this text should not oblige *all* people to sell *all*, yet it certainly obliges all kinds of people to *employ all* their estates in such wise and reasonable and charitable ways, as may sufficiently shew that all that they have is devoted to God, and that no part of it is kept from the poor, to be spent in needless, vain, and foolish expences.

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

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

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

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

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

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

is to be practised, and the spirit of Religion is to be the common spirit of every Christian in every state and condition of life.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now

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

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

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

rable a mistake it is in a Bishop, to live a careless, worldly life.

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

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

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

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

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

To which it may be answer'd:

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

Secondly, That as there is no foundation for comfort in the enjoyments of this life, but in the assurance that a wise and good God go-

verneth the world, so the more we find out God in every thing, the more we apply to him in every place, the more we look up to him in all our actions, the more we conform to his will, the more we act according to his wisdom, and imitate his goodness, by so much the more do we enjoy God, partake of the divine nature, and heighten and increase all that is *happy* and *comfortable* in human life.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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 increaseth our wants, does in the same degree create and increase our trouble and disquiets.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If you ask, what it signifies to suppose such silly creatures as these, as are no where to be found in human life?

It may be answer'd, that where-ever you see an *ambitious* man, there you see this *vain and senseless flyer.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

to enjoy more for the time to come. This virtue would keep off *tremblings* of the spirits, and *loss* of appetite, and her blood would need nothing else to sweeten it.

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

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

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

Most people indeed confess, that religion preserves us from a great many evils, and helps

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

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

This objection supposes, that religion *moderately* practis'd, adds *much* to the happiness of life; but that such heights of piety as the perfection of religion requireth, have a 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 deliver'd from a *boundless* ambition, but unhappy to be without a more *moderate* ambition. It supposes also, that the happiness of life consists in a *mixture* of virtue and vice, a mixture of ambition and humility, charity and envy, heavenly affection and covetousness. All which is as absurd, as to suppose that it is happy to be free from excessive pains, but unhappy to be without more moderate pains; or that the happiness of *health* consisted in being partly sick, and partly well.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

he has no knowledge of the *right use* of these things, nor any direction from his *senses* how to quench his *thirst*, or satisfy his *hunger*, or make *any use* of the things about him. 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 the *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 thro' his ignorance of the right use of the things that are about him, he will vainly torment himself whilst he lives; and at last dye, *blinded* with *dust*, *choaked* with *gravel*, and loaded with *irons*. Let it be supposed, that some good Being came to him, and shew'd him the nature and use of all the things that were about him, and gave him such *strict rules* of using them, as would certainly, if observ'd, make him the happier for all that he had, and deliver him from the pains of hunger, and thirst, and cold.

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

Now this is in some measure a representation of the *strict rules* of religion; they only relieve our ignorance, save us from torment-
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ing ourselves, and teach us to use *every thing* about us to our proper advantage.

Man is placed in a world full of variety of things; his ignorance makes him use many of them as absurdly, as the man that 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 cloaths; and that he has nothing else to expect from the things of this world, but to satisfy such wants of his own; and then to extend his assistance to all his brethren, that as far as he is able, he may help all his fellow-creatures to the same benefit from the world that he hath.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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think

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Was there any thing in the world more worth our care, was there any exercise of the mind, or any conversation with men, that turned more to our advantage than this intercourse with God, we should not be called to such a continuance in prayer. But if a man considers what it is that he leaves when he retires to devotion, he will find it no small happiness to be so often relieved from doing *nothing*, or nothing to the purpose; from dull
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idleness, unprofitable labour, or vain conversation. If he considers, that all that is in the world, and all that is doing in it, is only for the body, and bodily enjoyments, he will have reason to rejoyce at those *hours* of prayer, which carry him to higher consolations, which raise him above these poor concerns, which open to his mind a scene of greater things, and accustom his soul to the hope and expectation of them.

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

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

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

This is the state of all creatures, whether men or angels; as they make not themselves,

so they enjoy nothing from themselves; if they are great, it must be only as great receivers of the gifts of God; their *power* can only be so much of the divine Power acting in them; their *wisdom* can be only so much of the divine Wisdom shining within them, and their *light* and *glory*, only so much of the light and glory of God shining upon them.

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

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

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

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

His Lord having convicted him out of his own mouth, dispatches him with this sentence, *Cast the the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.* Mat. xxv. 24.

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

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

Now this is the happiness of all those, who look upon a *strict* and exalted piety, that is, a right use of their talent, to be a dull and melancholy state of life.

They may live a while free from the restraints and directions of Religion, but instead thereof, they must be under the absurd government of their passions: They must like the man in the *parable*, live in *murmurings*, and *discontents*, in *fears* and *apprehensions*. They may avoid the labour of doing good, of spending their time devoutly, of laying up treasures in heaven, of cloathing the naked, of visiting the sick; but then they must, like this man, have *labours*, and *pains* in vain, that tend to no use or advantage, that do no good either to themselves, or others; they must *travail*, and *labour*, and *work*, and *dig* to hide their talent in the earth. They must like him, at their Lord's coming, be convicted out of their own mouths, be accus'd by their own hearts, and have every thing that they have said and thought of Religion, be made to shew the justice of their condemnation to eternal darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This is the purchase that they make, who avoid the strictness and perfection of Religion, in order to live happily.

On the other hand, would you see a short description of the happiness of a life rightly employ'd, wholly devoted to God, you must look at the man in the *parable*, to whom his Lord had given five talents. *Lord, says he, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold I have gain'd besides them five talents more. His Lord said unto him, well done thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

Here you see a life that is wholly intent upon the improvement of the talents, that is devoted wholly unto God, is a state of happiness, prosperous labours, and glorious success. Here are not, as in the former case, any *uneasy passions, murmurings, vain fears, and fruitless labours.* The man is not toiling, and digging in the earth for no end or advantage; but his pious labours prosper in his hands, his happiness increases upon him, the blessing of five becomes the blessing of ten talents; and he is receiv'd with a *well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

Now as the case of these men in the *parable*, left nothing else to their choice, but either to be happy in using their gifts to the glory of the Lord, or miserable by using them according to their *own humours and fancies*; so
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the state of Christianity leaves us no other choice.

All that we have, all that we are, all that we enjoy, are only so many talents from God: if we use them to the ends of a pious and holy life, our five talents will become ten, and our labours will carry us into the joy of our Lord; but if we abuse them to the gratifications of our own passions, sacrificing the gifts of God to our own pride and vanity, we shall live here in vain labours and foolish anxieties, shunning Religion as a melancholy thing, accusing our Lord as a hard master, and then fall into everlasting misery.

We may for a while amuse our selves with *names*, and *sounds*, and *shadows* of happiness; we may talk of this or that greatness and dignity; but if we desire real happiness, we have no other possible way to it, but by improving our talents, by so holily and piously using the *powers* and *faculties* of *men* in this present state, that we may be happy and glorious in the *powers* and *faculties* of *angels* in the world to come.

How ignorant therefore are they, of the nature of Religion, of the nature of man, and the nature of God, who think a life of *strict piety* and devotion to God, to be a *dull uncomfortable* state; when it's so plain and certain, that there is neither comfort or joy to be found in any thing else?

C H A P. XII.

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

WE may still see more of the happiness of a life devoted unto God, by considering the poor contrivances for happiness, and the contemptible ways of life, which they are thrown into, who are not under the directions of a strict piety, but seeking after happiness by other methods.

If one looks at their lives, who live by no rule but their own humours and fancies; if one sees but what it is, which they call *joy*, and *greatness*, and *happiness*; if one sees how they rejoice, and repent, change and fly from one delusion to another; one shall find great reason to rejoyce, that God hath appointed a *straight and narrow* way, that leadeth unto life, and that we are not left to the folly of our own minds, or forc'd to take up with such shadows of joy and happiness, as the weakness and folly of the world has invented. I say *invented*, because those things which make up the *joy and happiness* of the world, are mere *inventions*, which have no foundation in
nature

nature and reason, are no way the proper good or happiness of man, no way perfect either his body, or his mind, or carry him to his true *end*.

As for instance, when a man proposes to be happy in ways of *ambition*, by raising himself to some *imaginary heights* above other people; this is truly an *invention* of happiness which has no foundation in nature, but is as mere a cheat, of our own making, as if a man should intend to make himself happy by *climbing up a ladder*.

If a *woman* seeks for happiness from *fine colours* or *spots* upon her face, from *jewels* and *rich cloaths*, this is as merely an *invention* of happiness, as contrary to *nature* and *reason*, as if she should propose to make 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 *created* or *invented* by the blindness and vanity of our own minds.

And it is on these inventions of happiness, that I desire you to cast your eye, that you may thence learn, how *great a good* Religion is, which delivers you from such a multitude of follies, and vain pursuits, as are the torment and vexation of minds, that wander from their true happiness in God.

Look

Look at *Flatus*, and learn how miserable they are, who are left to the folly of their own passions.

Flatus is rich and in health, yet always uneasy, and always searching after happiness. Every time you visit him, you find some new project in his head, he is eager upon it as something that is more worth his while, and will do more for him, than any thing that is already past. Every new thing so seizes him, that if you was to take him from it, he would think himself quite undone. His sanguine temper, and strong passions, promise him so much happiness in every thing, that he is always cheated, and is satisfied with nothing.

At his first setting out in life, *fine cloaths* was his delight, his enquiry was only after the best *Tailors* and *Peruke-makers*, and he had no thoughts of excelling in any thing but *dress*. He spar'd no expence, but carry'd every nicety to its greatest height. But this happiness not answering his expectations, he left off his *Brocades*, put on a plain coat, rail'd at *fops* and *beaux*, and gave himself up to *gaming* with great eagerness.

This new pleasure satisfy'd him for some time, he envy'd no other way of life. But being by the fate of *play* drawn into a *duel*, where he narrowly escap'd his death, he left off the *dice*, and sought for happiness no longer amongst the *gamesters*.

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

The next attempt after happiness, carry'd him into the *field*, for two or three years nothing was so happy as *hunting*; he enter'd upon it with all his soul, and leap'd more *hedges* and *ditches* than had ever been known in so short a time. You never saw him but in a *green coat*; he was the envy of all that blow the *horn*, and always spoke to his dogs in great propriety of language. If you met him at home in a bad day, you would hear him blow his horn, and be entertain'd with the surprizing accidents of the last *noble chase*. No sooner had *Flatus* outdone all the world in the breed and education of his *dogs*, built new *kennels*, new *stables*, and bought a new *hunting seat*, but he immediately got sight of another happiness, hated the senseless noise and hurry of hunting, gave away his dogs,
and

and was for some time after deep in the pleasures of building.

Now he invents new kinds of *dove-cotes*, and has such contrivances in his *barns* and *stables*, as were never seen before: He wonders at the dulness of the old builders, is wholly bent upon the improvement of *Architecture*, and will hardly hang a door in the ordinary way. He tells his friends, that he never was so delighted in 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.

The next year he leaves his house unfinished, complains to every body of *Masons* and *Carpenters*, and devotes himself wholly to the happiness of *riding about*. After this, you can never see him but on *horse-back*, and so highly delighted with this new way of life, that he would tell you, give him but his *horse* and a *clean country* to ride in, and you might take all the rest to your self. A variety of new *saddles* and *bridles*, and a great change of horses, added much to the pleasure of this new way of life. But however, having after some time tir'd both himself and his horses, the happiest thing he could think of next, was to go *abroad* and visit *foreign countries*; and there indeed happiness exceeded his imagination, and he was only uneasy that he had begun so fine a life no sooner. The next month

month he return'd home, unable to bear any longer the impertinence of *foreigners*.

After this, he was a great *student* for one whole year; he was up early and late at his *Italian grammar*, that he might have the happiness of understanding the *opera*, whenever he should hear one, and not be like those *unreasonable* people, that are pleased with they don't know what.

Flatus is very ill-natur'd, or otherwise, just as his affairs happen to be when you visit him; if you find him when some project is almost wore out, you will find a peevish ill-bred man; but if you had seen him just as he enter'd upon his *riding regimen*, or begun to excel in sounding of the horn, you had been saluted with great civility.

Flatus is now at a full stand, and is doing what he never did in his life before, he is *reasoning* and *reflecting* with himself. He loses several days, in considering which of his *cast-off* ways of life he should try again.

But here a new project comes into his relief. He is now living upon *herbs*, and running about the country, to get himself into as *good wind* as any *running-footman* in the kingdom.

I have been thus circumstantial in so many foolish particulars of this kind of life, because I hope, that every particular folly that you here see, will naturally turn it self into an argument for the wisdom and happiness of a religious life.

If

If I could lay before you a particular account of all the circumstances of terror and distress, that daily attend a life at *sea*, the more particular I was in the account, the more I should make you feel and rejoice in the happiness of living upon the *land*.

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

If you but just cast your eye upon a *madman*, or a *fool*, it perhaps signifies little or nothing to you; but if you was to attend them for some days, and observe the lamentable madness and stupidity of all their actions, this would be an affecting sight, and would make you often bless your self for the enjoyment of your reason and senses.

Just so, if you are only told in the gross, of the folly and madness of a life devoted to the world, it makes little or no impression upon you; but if you are shown how such people live every day; if you see the continual folly and madness of all their particular actions and designs, this would be an affecting sight, and make you bless God, for having given you a greater happiness to aspire after.

So that *characters* of this kind, the more folly and ridicule they have in them, provided

vided that they be but natural, are most useful to correct our minds; and therefore are nowhere more proper than in books of devotion, and practical piety. And as in several cases, we best learn the nature of things, by looking at that which is contrary to them; so perhaps we best apprehend the *excellency* of wisdom, by contemplating the *wild extravagancies* of folly.

I shall therefore continue this method a little farther, and endeavour to recommend the happiness of piety to you; by shewing you in some other instances, how miserably and poorly they live, who live without it.

But you will perhaps say, that the ridiculous, restless life of *Flatus*, is not the common state of those who resign themselves up to live by their own humours, and neglect the strict rules of religion; and that therefore it is not so great an argument of the happiness of a religious life, as I would make it.

I answer, that I am afraid it is one of the most *general characters* in life; and that few people can read it, without seeing something in it that belongs to themselves. For where shall we find that wise and happy man, who has not been eagerly pursuing different appearances of happiness, sometimes thinking it was here, and sometimes there?

And if people were to divide their lives into particular stages, and ask themselves what they were pursuing, or what it was
which

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 lik'd, and dislik'd, and pursu'd as many different appearances of happiness, as are to be seen in the life of *Flatus*.

And thus it must necessarily be, more or less, with all those who propose any other happiness, than that which arises from a strict and regular piety.

But *Secondly*, let it be granted, that the *generality* of people are not of such restless, fickle tempers as *Flatus*; the difference then is only this, *Flatus* is continually changing and trying something new, but others are content with some one state; they don't leave *gaming*, and then fall to *hunting*. But they have so much *steadiness* in their tempers, that some seek after no other happiness, but that of *heaping* up riches; others grow old in the sports of the *field*; others are content to *drink* themselves to death, without the least enquiry after any other happiness.

Now is there any thing more *happy*, or *reasonable*, in such a life as this, than in the life of *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 look'd upon as a burden, as a dull and melancholy state, for calling men from such *happinefs* as this, to live according to the laws of God, to labour after the perfection of their nature, and prepare themselves for an endless state of joy and glory in the presence of God?

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

If you was to live with *Felician*a 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 pleas'd once, but through a littleness of mind, and want of thought.

She is to be again dress'd fine, and keep her visiting-day. She is again to change the colour of her *cloaths*, again to have a new *head*, and again put *patches* on her face. She is again to see who acts best at the *play-house*, and who sings finest at the *opera*. She is again to make ten visits in a day, and be ten times in a day trying to talk artfully, easily and politely about *nothing*.

She is to be again delighted with some new fashion; and again angry at the change of some old one. She is to be again at cards, and gaming at midnight, and again in bed at noon. She is to be again pleas'd with hypo-
critical

critical compliments, and again disturb'd at imaginary affronts. She is to be again pleas'd with her good luck at gaming, and again torment-ed with the loss of her money. She is again to prepare her self for a birth-night; and again see the town full of good company. She is again to hear the cabals and intrigues of the town; again to have secret intelligence of private amours, and early notice of marriages, quarrels, and partings.

If you see her come out of her chariot more briskly than usual, converse with more spirit, and seem fuller of joy than she was last week, it is because there is some surprizing new dress, or new diversion just come to town.

These are all the *substantial* and *regular* parts of *Felicianas*'s happiness; and she never knew a pleasant day in her life, but it was owing to some one, or more, of these things.

It is for this happiness, that she has always been deaf to the reasonings of religion, that her heart has been too gay and chearful to consider what is *right* or *wrong*, in regard to eternity; or to listen to the sound of such dull words, as *wisdom*, *piety*, and *devotion*.

It is for fear of losing some of this happiness, that she dares not meditate on the immortality of her soul, consider her relation to God, or turn her thoughts towards those joys, which make Saints and Angels infinitely happy in the presence and glory of God.

But now let it here be observ'd, that as poor a round of happiness as this appears, yet most women that avoid the restraints of religion for a gay life, must be content with very small parts of it. As they have not *Felician's* fortune and figure in the world, so they must give away the comforts of a pious life, for a very small part of her happiness.

And if you look into the world, and observe the lives of those women, whom no arguments can persuade to live wholly unto God, in a wise and pious employment of themselves, you will find most of them to be such, as lose all the comforts of religion, without gaining the tenth part of *Felician's* happiness. They are such as spend their time and fortunes only in mimicking the pleasures of richer people; and rather look and long after, than enjoy those delusions, which are only to be purchas'd by considerable fortunes.

But if a woman of *high* birth, and *great* fortune, having read the Gospel, should rather wish to be an *under servant* in some pious family, where wisdom, piety, and great devotion, directed all the actions of every day; if she should rather wish this, than to live at the top of *Felician's* happiness; I should think her neither *mad*, nor *melancholy*; but that she judg'd as rightly of the spirit of the Gospel, as if she had rather wish'd to be poor *Lazarus at the gate*, than to be the rich man
cloath'd

cloath'd in purple and fine linnen, and faring sumptuously every day.

But to proceed; would you know what an happiness it is, to be govern'd by the wisdom of religion, and be devoted to the joys and hopes of a pious life, look at the poor condition of *Succus*, whose greatest happiness, is a *good nights* rest in bed, and a *good meal* when he is up. When he talks of happiness, it is always in such expressions, as shews you, that he has only his *bed* and his *dinner* in his thoughts.

This regard to his *meals* and *repose*, makes *Succus* order all the rest of his time with relation to them. He will undertake no business that may hurry his spirits, or break in upon his hours of *eating* and *rest*. If he reads, it shall only be for half an hour, because that is sufficient to amuse the spirits; and he will read something that may make him laugh, as rendering the body fitter for its *food* and *rest*. Or if he has at any time a mind to indulge a grave thought, he always has recourse to a useful treatise upon the *antient cookery*. *Succus* is an enemy to all *party-matters*, having made it an observation, that there is as good eating amongst the *Whigs*, as the *Tories*.

He talks coolly and moderately upon all subjects, and is as fearful of falling into a passion, as of catching cold; being very positive, that they are both equally injurious to the *stomach*. If ever you see him more hot

than ordinary, it is upon some provoking occasion, when the dispute about cookery runs very high, or in the defence of some beloved dish, which has often made him happy. But he has been so long upon these subjects, is so well acquainted with all that can be said on both sides, and has so often answer'd all objections, that he generally decides the matter with great gravity.

Succus is very loyal, and as soon as ever he likes any wine, he drinks the king's health with all his heart. Nothing could put rebellious thoughts into his head, unless he should live to see a *Proclamation* against eating of *Pheasant's eggs*.

All the hours that are not devoted either to *repose*, or *nourishment*, are look'd upon by *Succus* as *waste* or *spare time*. For this reason he lodges near a *coffee-house* and a *tavern*, that when he rises in the morning he may be near the *news*, and when he parts at night, he may not have far to bed. In the morning you always see him in the same place in the *coffee-room*, and if he seems more attentively engag'd than ordinary, it is because some *criminal* is broke out of *Newgate*, or some *Lady* was robb'd last night, but they can't tell where. When he has learnt all that he can, he goes home to settle the matter with the Barber's boy, that comes to shave him.

The next *waste-time* that lyes upon his hands, is from dinner to supper. And if melancholy thoughts ever come into his head, it

is at this time, when he is often left to himself for an hour or more, and that after the greatest pleasure he knows is just over. He is afraid to sleep, because he has heard, it is not healthful at that time, so that he is forc'd to refuse so welcome a guest.

But here he is soon reliev'd by a settl'd method of playing at cards, till it is time to think of some little nice matter for supper.

After this, *Succus* takes his glass, talks of the excellency of the *English constitution*, and praises that *Minister* the most, who keeps the best table.

On a *Sunday* night you may sometimes hear him condemning the iniquity of the *town rakes*; and the bitterest thing that he says against them, is this, that he verily believes, some of them are so abandon'd, as not to have a *regular meal*, or a *sound nights* sleep in a week.

At eleven *Succus* bids all good night, and parts in great friendship. He is presently in bed, and sleeps till it is time to go to the coffee house next morning.

If you was to live with *Succus* for a 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:

That as I believe the most likely means in the world to inspire a person with true piety,

ty, was to have seen the example of some eminent professor of Religion; so the next thing that is likely to fill one with the same zeal, is to see the *folly*, the *baseness*, and *poor* satisfactions of a life destitute of Religion. As the one excites us to love and admire the wisdom and greatness of Religion, so the other may make us fearful of living without it.

For who can help blessing God for the *means of grace*, and for the *hope of glory*, when he sees what variety of folly they sink into, who live without it? Who would not heartily engage in all the labours and exercises of a pious life, be *stedfast, immoveable*, and *always abounding in the work of the Lord*; when he sees, what *dull* sensuality, what *poor* views, what *gross* enjoyments they are left to, who seek for happiness in other ways.

So that whether we consider the greatness of Religion, or the littleness of all other things, and the meanness of all other enjoyments, there is nothing to be found in the whole nature of things, for a thoughtful mind to rest upon, but a happiness in the hopes of Religion,

Consider now with your self how unreasonably it is pretended, that a life of *strict* piety, must be a *dull* and *anxious* state? For can it with any reason be said, that the duties and restraints of Religion must render our lives heavy and melancholy, when they only
deprive

deprive us of such happiness, as has been here laid before you?

Must it be tedious and tiresome to live in the continual exercise of charity, devotion and temperance, to act wisely and virtuously, to do good to the utmost of your power, to imitate the divine perfections, and prepare your self for the enjoyment of God? Must it be dull and tiresome, to be deliver'd from blindness and vanity, from false hopes, and vain fears, to improve in holiness, to feel the comforts of conscience in all your actions, to know that God is your friend, that all must work for your good, that neither life nor death, neither men nor devils can do you any harm; but that all your sufferings and doings, that are offer'd unto God, all your watchings and prayers, and labours of love and charity, all your improvements, are in a short time to be rewarded with everlasting glory in the presence of God; must such a state as this be *dull and tiresome*, for want of such happiness, as *Flatus* or *Felician*a enjoys?

Now if this cannot be said, then there is no happiness, or pleasure lost, by being strictly pious, nor has the devout man any thing to envy in any other state of life. For all the art and contrivance in the world, without Religion, cannot make more of human life, or carry its happiness to any greater height, than *Flatus* or *Felician*a have done.

The finest *wit*, the greatest *genius* upon earth, if not govern'd by Religion, must be as
foolish

foolish, and *low* and *vain* in his methods of happiness, as the *poor Succus*.

If you was to see a man dully endeavouring all his life to satisfy his thirst, by holding up one and the same *empty cup* to his mouth, you would certainly despise his ignorance.

But if you should see others of *brighter parts*, and *finer understandings*, ridiculing the dull satisfaction of *one cup*, and thinking to satisfy their own thirst by a variety of gilt and golden empty cups; would you think that these were ever the *wiser*, or *happier*, or *better* employ'd, for their *finer parts*?

Now this is all the difference that you can see in the happiness of this life.

The *dull* and *heavy* soul, may be content with *one empty appearance* of happiness, and be continually trying to hold *one* and the *same empty cup* to his mouth all his life. But then, let the *wit*, the *great scholar*, the *fine genius*, the *great statesman*, the *polite gentleman*, lay all their heads together, and they can only shew you, *more*, and *various*, *empty appearances* of happiness; give them all the world into their hands, let them cut and carve as they please, they can only make a greater variety of *empty cups*.

So that if you don't think it hard to be depriv'd of the pleasures of *gluttony* for the sake of Religion, you have no reason to think it hard to be restrain'd from any other worldly pleasure. For search as deep, and look as far as you will, there is nothing here to be found,

that

that is *nobler*, or *greater*, than high eating and drinking, unless you look for it in the wisdom and laws of Religion.

And if all that is in the world, are only so many *empty cups*, what does it signify, which you take, or how many you take, or how many you have?

If you would but use your self to such meditations as these, to reflect upon the vanity of *all orders* of life without piety, to consider how all the ways of the world, are only so many different ways of error, blindness, and mistake; you would soon find your heart made wiser and better by it. These meditations would awaken your soul into a zealous desire of that solid happiness, which is only to be found in recourse to God.

Examples of great piety are not now common in the world, it may not be your happiness to live within sight of any, or to have your virtue inflam'd by their light and fervour. But the misery and folly of worldly men, is what meets your eyes in every place, and you need not look far to see, how poorly, how vainly men dream away their lives for want of religious wisdom.

This is the reason that I have laid before you so many characters of the vanity of a worldly life, to teach you to make a benefit of the corruption of the age, and that you may be made wise, tho' not by the sight of what piety is, yet by seeing what misery and folly reigns, where piety is not.

If

If you would turn your mind to such reflections as these, your own observation would carry this instruction much farther, and all your conversation and acquaintance with the world, would be a daily conviction to you, of the necessity of seeking some greater happiness, than all the poor enjoyments of this world can give.

To meditate upon the perfection of the divine attributes, to contemplate the glories of Heaven, to consider the joys of Saints and Angels living for ever in the brightness and glory of the divine presence; these are the meditations of souls advanced in piety, and not so suited to every capacity.

But to see and consider the *emptiness* and error of all worldly happiness; to see the *grossness* of sensuality, the *poorness* of pride, the *stupidity* of covetousness, the *vanity* of dress, the *delusion* of honour, the *blindness* of our passions, the *uncertainty* of our lives, and the *shortness* of all worldly projects; these are meditations that are suited to all capacities, fitted to strike all minds; they require no depth of thought, or sublime speculation, but are forc'd upon us by all our senses, and taught us by almost every thing that we see and hear.

Prov. viii. 1. This is that *wisdom that crieth,*
and putteth forth her voice in the streets, that standeth at all our doors, that appealeth to all our senses, teaching us in every thing and every where, by all that we see and all that

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 which is only to be found in the hopes and expectations of 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 govern'd by great devotion, sufficiently shews its miseries, its wants, and emptiness to the eyes of all the world. This represented in various characters.

IT is a very remarkable saying of our Lord and Saviour to his disciples in these words: *Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.* They teach us two things: *First,* That the *dulness* and *heaviness* of mens minds with regard to spiritual matters, is so great, that it may justly be compar'd to the want of *eyes* and *ears*.

Secondly, That God has so fill'd every *thing* and every *place* with motives and arguments for a godly life, that they who are but so
blefs'd

blefs'd, fo happy as to ufe their eyes and their ears, muft needs be affected with them.

Now though this was in a more efpecial manner, the cafe of thofe whofe fenfes were witneffes of the life and miracles and doctrines of our bleffed Lord, yet is it as truly the cafe of all Christians at this time. For the reafons of Religion, the calls to piety, are fo written and engrav'd upon every thing, and prefent themfelves fo ftrongly, and fo constantly to all our fenfes in every thing that we meet; that they can only be difregarded by *eyes* that fee not, and *ears* that hear not.

What greater motive to a religious life, than the *vanity*, the *poornefs* of all worldly enjoyments? And yet who can help feeing and feeling this every day of his life?

What greater *call* to look towards God, than the pains, the ficknefs, the *crosses*, and vexations of this life; and yet whofe eyes and ears are not daily witneffes of them?

What *miracles* could more ftrongly appeal to our fenfes, or what message from heaven fpeak louder to us, than the *daily dying* and departure of our fellow creatures does?

So that the one thing needful, or the great end of life, is not left to be difcover'd by fine reasoning, and deep reflections; but is prefs'd upon us in the plaineft manner, by the experience of all our fenfes, by every thing that we meet with in life.

Let us but *intend* to *fee* and *hear*, and then the whole world becomes a book of wifdoms

dom and instruction to us; all that is *regular* in the order of nature, all that is *accidental* in the course of things, all the mistakes and disappointments that happen to our selves, all the miseries and errors that we see in other people; become so many plain lessons of advice to us; teaching us with as much assurance as an Angel from Heaven, that we can no ways raise our selves to any true happiness, but by turning all our thoughts, our wishes, and endeavours, after the happiness of another life.

It is this right use of the world, that I would lead you into, by directing you to turn your eyes upon every shape of human folly, that you may thence draw fresh arguments and motives of living to the best and greatest purposes of your creation.

And if you would but carry this *intention* about you, of profiting by the follies of the world, and of learning the *greatness* of Religion, from the *littleness* and *vanity* of every other way of life; if I say, you would but carry this intention in your mind, you would find, every day, every place, and every person, a fresh proof of their wisdom, who chuse to live wholly unto God. You would then often return home, the wiser, the better, and the more strengthen'd in Religion, by every thing that has fallen in your way.

Octavius is a learned, ingenious man, well vers'd in most parts of literature, and no stranger to any kingdom in *Europe*. The o-

ther day, being just recover'd from a 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 my self 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 rais'd by such a declaration, expecting to hear something truly excellent from so learned a man, who had but a *year* longer to live. When *Octavius* proceeded in this manner: For these reasons, says he, my friends, I have left off all *taverns*, the wine of those places is not good enough for me in this decay of nature. I must now be *nice* in what I drink; I can't pretend to do, as I have done; and therefore am resolv'd to furnish my own *cellar* with a little of the very best, tho' it cost me ever so much.

I must also tell you, my friends, that age forces a man to be *wise* in many other respects, and makes us change many of our opinions and practices.

You know how much I have lik'd a large acquaintance; I now condemn it as an error. Three or four *cheerful, diverting companions*, is all that I now desire: because I find, that in my present infirmities, if I am left *alone*, or to *grave* company, I am not so easy to myself.

A few

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

Young *Eugenius*, who was present at this discourse, went home a new man, with full resolutions of devoting himself wholly unto God.

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

How often had I envy'd his *great learning*, his skill in *languages*, his knowledge of *antiquity*, his *address*, and fine manner of *expressing* himself upon all subjects! But when I saw how *poorly* it all ended, what was to be the *last year* of such a life, and how foolishly the master of all these accomplishments was then forc'd to talk, for want of being acquainted with the *joys* and *expectations* of piety; I was thoroughly convinced, that there was nothing to be envy'd or desir'd, but a *life* of true piety; nor any thing so *poor* and *comfortless*, as a *death* without it.

Now as the young *Eugenius* was thus edify'd and instructed in the present case; so if you are so happy as to have any thing of his *thoughtful* temper, you will meet with variety of instruction of this kind; you will find that arguments for the wisdom and happiness of a

strict piety, offer themselves in all places, and appeal to all your senses in the plainest manner.

You will find, that all the world *preaches* to an *attentive* mind; and that if you have but ears to hear, almost every thing you meet, teaches you some lesson of wisdom.

But now, if to these admonitions and instructions, which we receive from our senses, from an experience of the state of human life; if to these we add the lights of religion, those great truths which the Son of God has taught us; it will be then as much past all doubt, that there is but *one happiness* for man, as that there is but one God.

For since religion teaches us, that our souls are immortal, that piety and devotion will carry them to an eternal enjoyment of God; and that carnal, worldly tempers will sink them into an everlasting misery with damned spirits; what gross nonsense and stupidity is it, to give the name of *joy* or *happiness* to any thing but that, which carries us to this joy and happiness in God?

Was *all* to dye with our *bodies*, there might be some pretence for those *different sorts* of happiness, that are now so much talked of: but since *our all* begins at the death of our bodies; since all men are to be immortal either in misery or happiness, in a world entirely different from this; since they are all hastening hence at all uncertainties, as fast as death can cut them down; some in *sickness*, some in *health*, some *sleeping*, some *waking*, some at *midnight*,

midnight, others at *cock-crowing*, and all at hours that they know not of; is it not certain, that no man can exceed another in joy and happiness, but so far as he exceeds him in those virtues, which fit him for a happy death?

Cognatus is a sober, regular *Clergyman*, of good repute in the world, and well esteemed in his parish. All his parishioners say he is an *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*; and if he has not prayers on *Wednesdays* and *Fridays*, 'tis because his *Predecessor* had not used the parish to any such custom.

As he cannot serve both his *livings* himself, so he makes it matter of *conscience* to keep a *sober curate* upon one of them, whom he *hires* to take care of all the souls in the parish, at as cheap a rate as a sober man can be procured.

Cognatus has been very prosperous all his time; but still he has had the uneasiness and vexations that they have, who are deep in worldly business. *Taxes, losses, crosses, bad mortgages, bad tenants*, and the hardness of the times, are frequent subjects of his conver-

fation; and a good or a bad *season* has a great effect upon his spirits.

Cognatus has no other end in growing rich, but that he may leave a considerable fortune to a *Niece*, whom he has *politely* educated in expensive finery, by what he has sav'd out of the tithes of *two livings*.

The neighbours look upon *Cognatus* as an happy clergyman, because they see him (as they call it) in *good circumstances*; and some of them intend to dedicate their own sons to the Church, because they see how well it has succeeded with *Cognatus*, whose father was but an *ordinary man*.

But now, if *Cognatus*, when he first enter'd into holy orders, had perceived how absurd a thing it is to grow *rich* by the Gospel; if he had propos'd to himself the example of some *primitive father*; if he had had the piety of the great St. *Austin* in his eye, who durst not enrich any of his relations out of the revenue of the Church: if instead of twenty years care to lay up treasures upon earth, he had distributed the income of every year in the most Christian acts of charity and compassion.

If instead of tempting his *Niece* to be proud, and providing her with such ornaments, as the *Apostle* forbids, he had cloathed, comforted, and assisted numbers of *widows, orphans*, and distress'd, who were all to appear for him at the last day.

If instead of the cares and anxieties of *bad bonds, troublesome mortgages, and ill bargains*,
he

he had had the constant comfort of knowing, that his treasure was securely laid up, where neither moth corrupteth, nor thieves break through and steal: Could it with any reason be said, that he had mistaken the spirit and dignity of his order, or lessen'd any of that happiness, which is to be found in his sacred employment?

If instead of rejoicing in the happiness of a second *living*, he had thought it as unbecoming the office of a clergyman to *traffick* for gain in *holy things*, as to open a *shop*.

If he had thought it better to recommend some *honest labour* to his *Niece*, than to support her in *idleness* by the labours of a *curate*; better that she should want *fine cloaths*, and a rich husband, than that *cures of souls* should be farm'd about, and brother clergymen not suffered to *live* by those altars, at which they serve. If this had been the spirit of *Cognatus*, could it with any reason be said, that these rules of religion, this strictness of piety, had robb'd *Cognatus* of any real happiness? Could it be said, that a life thus govern'd by the spirit of the Gospel, must be *dull* and *melancholy*, if compared to that of raising a fortune for a *Niece*?

Now as this cannot be said in the present case, so in every other kind of life, if you enter into the particulars of it, you will find, that however easy and prosperous it may seem, yet you cannot add piety to any part of it,

without adding so much of a better joy and happiness to it.

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

Negotius is a temperate, honest man. He served his time under a master of great trade, but has by his own management made it a more considerable business than ever it was before. For thirty years last past, he has wrote fifty or sixty letters in a week, and is busy in corresponding with all parts of *Europe*. The general good of trade seems to *Negotius* to be the general good of life; whomsoever he admires, whatever he commends or condemns either in Church or State, is admired, commended; or condemn'd, with some regard to trade.

As money is continually pouring in upon him, so he often lets it go in various kinds of expence and generosity, and sometimes in ways of charity.

Negotius is always ready to join in any publick contribution: If a *purse* is making at any place where he happens to be, whether it be to buy a *plate* for a horse-race, or to redeem a *prisoner* out of jayl, you are always sure of having something from him.

He has given a fine *ring* of *bells* to a Church in the country; and there is much expectation, that he will some time or other make a more beautiful *front* to the *market-house*, than has yet been seen in any place.

For

For it is the generous spirit of *Negotius* to do nothing in a mean way.

If you ask what it is, that has secur'd *Negotius* from all *scandalous vices*, it is the same thing that has kept him from all *strictness of devotion*, it is his great business. He has always had too many important things in his head, his thoughts have been too much employ'd, to suffer him to fall either into any courses of *rakery*, or to feel the necessity of an *inward, solid piety*.

For this reason he hears of the pleasures of debauchery, and the pleasures of piety, with the same indifferency; and has no more desire of living in the one than in the other, because neither of them consist with that turn of mind, and multiplicity of business, which are his happiness.

If *Negotius* was ask'd, What it is which he drives at in life? he would be as much at a loss for an answer, as if he was ask'd, what any other person is thinking of. For tho' he always seems to himself to know what he is doing, and has many things in his head, which are the motives of his actions; yet he cannot tell you of any *one general end* of life, that he has chosen with deliberation, as being truly worthy of all his labour and pains.

He has several confus'd notions in his head, which have been a long time there; such as these, *viz.* That it is *something great* to have more business than other people, to have more dealings upon his hands than an hundred of
the

the same profession; to grow continually richer and richer, and to raise an immense fortune before he dies. The thing that seems to give *Negotius* the greatest life and spirit, and to be most in his thoughts, is an expectation that he has, that he shall dye richer than any of his business ever did.

The generality of people, when they think of happiness, think upon *Negotius*, in whose life every instance of happiness is supposed to meet; sober, prudent, rich, prosperous, generous, and charitable.

Let us now therefore look at this condition in another, but truer light.

Let it be supposed, that this same *Negotius* was a painful, laborious man, every day deep in variety of affairs; that he neither drank, nor debauched; but was sober and regular in his business. Let it be supposed, that he grew old in this course of trading; and that the *end* and *design* of all this labour, and care, and application to business, was only this, that he might dye possessed of more than an hundred thousand pair of *boots* and *spurs*, and as many great coats.

Let it be supposed, that the sober part of the world say of him when he is dead, that he was a great and happy man, a thorough master of business, and had acquir'd an hundred thousand pair of *boots* and *spurs* when he dy'd.

Now if this was really the case, I believe it would be readily granted, that a life of such
busi-

business was as poor and ridiculous, as any that can be invented. But it would puzzle any one to shew, that a man that has spent all his time and thoughts in business and hurry, that he might dye, as it is said, worth an hundred thousand pounds, is any whit wiser than he, who has taken the same pains to have as many pair of *boots* and *spurs* when he leaves the world.

For if the *temper* and *state* of our souls be our *whole state*; if the only end of life be to dye as *free* from sin, and as *exalted* in virtue as we can; if naked as we came, so naked are we to return, and to stand a trial before Christ, and his holy angels, for everlasting happiness or misery; what can it possibly signify, what a man had, or had not, in this world? What can it signify what you *call* those things which a man has left behind him; whether you call them *his*, or *any one's* else; whether you *call* them *trees* and *fields*, or *birds* and *feathers*; whether you *call* them an hundred *thousand pounds*, or an hundred thousand pair of *boots* and *spurs*? I say, *call* them; for the *things* signify no more to him than the *names*.

Now it is easy to see the folly of a life thus spent, to furnish a man with such a number of *boots* and *spurs*. But yet there needs no better faculty of seeing, no finer understanding, to see the folly of a life spent in making a man a possessor of *ten towns* before he dies.

For

For if when he has got all his *towns*, or all his *boots*, his soul is to go to its *own place* amongst separate spirits, and his body be laid by in a *coffin*, till the last trumpet calls him to judgment; where the enquiry will be, how *humbly*, how *devoutly*, how *purely*, how *meekly*, how *piously*, how *charitably*, how *heavenly* we have *spoke*, *thought*, and *acted*, whilst we were in the body; how can we say, that he who has wore out his life in raising an *hundred thousand pounds*, has acted wiser for himself, than he who has had the same *care* to procure an hundred thousand of *any thing* else?

But farther: Let it now be supposed, that *Negotius*, when he first entred into businets, happening to read the Gospel with *attention*, and eyes open, found that he had a much greater businets upon his hands, than that to which he had served an apprenticeship: that there were things which belong to man, of much more importance than all that our eyes can see; so glorious, as to deserve all our thoughts; so dangerous, as to need all our care; and so certain, as never to deceive the faithful labourer.

Let it be supposed, that from reading this book, he had discovered that his soul was more to him than his body; that it was better to grow in the virtues of the soul, than to have a large body, or a full purse; that it was better to be fit for heaven, than to have variety of fine houses upon the earth; that it

was better to secure an everlasting happiness, than to have plenty of things which he cannot keep; better to live in habits of humility, piety, devotion, charity, and self-denial, than to dye unprepar'd for judgment; better to be most like our Saviour, or some eminent saint, than to excel all the tradesmen in the world, in business and bulk of fortune.

Let it be supposed, that *Negotius* believing these things to be true, entirely devoted himself to God at his first setting out in the world, resolving to pursue his *business* no farther than was consistent with great devotion, humility, and self-denial; and for no other ends, but to provide himself with a sober 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, and a strict observer of all the *hours* of prayer; that instead of restless desires after more riches, his soul had been full of the love of God and heavenly affection, constantly watching against worldly tempers, and always aspiring after divine grace; that instead of worldly cares and contrivances, he was busy in fortifying his soul against all approaches of sin; that instead of costly shew, and expensive generosity of a splendid life, he lov'd and exercis'd all instances of humility and lowliness; that instead of great treats and full tables,

tables, his house only furnish'd a sober refreshment to those that wanted it.

Let it be suppos'd, that his contentment kept him free from all kinds of envy. That his piety made him thankful to God in all crosses and disappointments. That his charity kept him from being rich, by a continual distribution to all objects of compassion.

Now had this been the christian spirit of *Negotius*, can any one say, that he had lost the true joy and happiness of life, by thus conforming to the spirit, and living up to the hopes of the Gospel?

Can it be said, that a life made exemplary by such virtues as these, which keep heaven always in our sight, which both delight and exalt the soul here, and prepare it for the presence of God hereafter, must be *poor* and *dull*, if compar'd to that of heaping up riches, which can neither stay with us, nor we with them?

It would be endless to multiply examples of this kind, to shew you how little is lost, and how much is gain'd, by introducing a strict and exact piety into every condition of human life.

I shall now therefore leave it to your own meditation, to carry this way of thinking farther, hoping that you are enough directed by what is here said, to convince your self, that a true and exalted piety is so far from rendering any life dull and tiresome, that it is
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the only joy and happiness of every condition in the world.

Imagine to your self some person in a *consumption*, or any other *lingring distemper*, that was *incurable*.

If you was to see such a man wholly intent upon doing every thing in the spirit of Religion, making the wisest use of all his time, fortune, and abilities. If he was for carrying every duty of piety to its greatest height, and striving to have all the advantage that could be had from the remainder of his life. If he avoided all business, but such as was necessary; if he was averſe to all the follies and vanities of the world, had no taste for *ſuery*, and *ſhew*, but sought for all his comfort in the hopes and expectations of Religion; you would certainly commend his prudence, you would ſay that he had taken the right method to make himself as joyful and happy, as any one can be in a state of ſuch infirmity.

On the other hand, if you ſhould ſee the ſame perſon, with *trembling* hands, *ſhort* breath, *thin* jaws, and *hollow* eyes, wholly intent upon business and bargains, as long as he could ſpeak. If you ſhould ſee him pleas'd with *ſine cloaths*, when he could ſcarce ſtand to be dress'd, and laying out his money in *horses* and *dogs*, rather than purchaſe the prayers of the poor for his ſoul, which was ſo ſoon to be ſeparated from his body, you would certainly condemn him, as a weak ſilly man.

Now

Now as it is easy to see the reasonableness, the wisdom and happiness of a religious spirit in a *consumptive man*, so if you pursue the same way of thinking, you will as easily perceive the same wisdom and happiness of a pious temper in every other state of life.

For how soon will every man that is in *health*, be in the state of him that is in a *consumption*? How soon will he want all the same comforts and satisfactions of Religion, which every dying man wants?

And if it be wise and happy to live piously, because we have not above a year to live, is it not being more wise, and making our selves more happy, because we may have more years to come? If one year of piety before we die, is so desirable, is not more years of piety much more desirable?

If a man had *five fix'd* years to live, he could not possibly think at all, without intending to make the best use of them *all*. When he saw his stay so short in this world, he must needs think that this was not a world for him; and when he saw how near he was to another world, that was eternal, he must surely think it very necessary to be very diligent in preparing himself for it.

Now as reasonable as piety appears in such a circumstance of life, it is yet more reasonable in every circumstance of life, to every thinking man.

For who but a madman, can reckon that he has *five years certain* to come?

And if it be reasonable and necessary to deny our worldly tempers, and live wholly unto God, because we are *certain* that we are to die at the end of *five years*; surely it must be much more reasonable and necessary, for us to live in the same spirit, because we have no *certainty*, that we shall live *five weeks*.

Again, if we were to add *twenty* years to the *five*, which is in all probability more than will be added to the lives of many people who are at man's estate; what a poor thing is this! how small a difference is there between five, and twenty five years?

It is said, that a *day* is with God as a *thousand years*, and a thousand years as one day; because in regard to his eternity, this difference is as nothing.

Now as we are all created to be *eternal*, to live in an endless succession of ages upon ages, where *thousands*, and *millions of thousands* of years, will have no proportion to our everlasting life in God; so with regard to this eternal state, which is our real state, *twenty five years* is as poor a pittance as *twenty-five days*.

Now we can never make any true judgment of time as it relates to us, without considering the true state of our *duration*. If we are *temporary* beings, than a little time, may be justly be call'd a great deal in relation to us,

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but if we are *eternal* beings, than the difference of a few years is as nothing.

If we were to suppose *three* different sorts of rational beings, all of *different*, but *fix'd* duration, one sort that liv'd *certainly* only a *month*, the other a *year*, and the third an *hundred* years.

Now if these beings were to meet together, and talk about time, they must talk in a very different language; *half* an *hour* to those that were to live but a *month*, must be a very different thing, to what it is to those, who are to live an *hundred* years.

As therefore *time* is thus *different* a thing with regard to the *state* of those who enjoy it, so if we would know what time is with regard to our selves, we must consider our state.

Now since our eternal state, is as certainly ours, as our present state; since we are as certainly to live for ever, as we now live at all; it is plain, that we cannot judge of the value of any particular time, as to us, but by comparing it to that eternal duration for which we are created.

If you would know, what *five* years signify to a being that was to live an *hundred*, you must compare *five* to an *hundred*, and see what proportion it bears to it, and then you will judge right.

So if you would know, what *twenty* years signify to a son of *Adam*, you must compare it,

it, not to a *million* of ages, but to an *eternal* duration, to which no number of millions bears any proportion; and then you will judge right, by finding it *nothing*.

Consider therefore this; how would you condemn the folly of a man, that should lose his share of future glory, for the sake of being *rich*, or *great*, or *prais'd*, or delighted in *any enjoyment*, only *one poor* day before he was to die!

But if the time will come, when a number of years will seem less to every one, than a day does now; what a condemnation must it then be, if eternal happiness should appear to be lost, for something less than the enjoyment of a day!

Why does a day seem a trifle to us now? It is because we have years to set against it. It is the duration of years, that makes it appear as nothing.

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

Now this will be the case of every man, as soon as he is out of the body; he will be forc'd to forget the distinctions of days and years, and to measure time, not by the course of the Sun, but by setting it against eternity.

As the *fix'd stars*, by reason of our being plac'd at such distance from them, appear but as so many *points*; so when we, plac'd in eternity, shall look back upon *all time*, it will all appear but as a *moment*.

Then, a *luxury*, an *indulgence*, a *prosperity*, a *greatness* of *fifty years*, will seem to every one that looks back upon it, as the same *poor short* enjoyment, as if he had been snatch'd away in his *first sin*.

These few reflections upon *time*, are only to shew how poorly they think, how miserably they judge, who are less careful of an eternal state, because they *may* be at some *years* distance from it, than they would be, if they knew they were within a few *weeks* of it.

C H A P. XIV.

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

HAVING in the foregoing Chapters shewn the necessity of a devout spirit, or habit of mind in every part of our common life,

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 is in health, is up *early* in the morning; for it is much more reasonable to suppose a person up *early*, because he is a *Christian*, than because he is a *labourer*, or a *tradesman*, or a *servant*, or has business that wants him.

We naturally conceive some abhorrence of a man that is in *bed*, when he should be at his *labour*, or in his *shop*. We can't tell how to think any thing good of him, who is such a slave to drowsiness, as to neglect his 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 blam'd as a *slothful drone*, that rather chuses the lazy indulgence of sleep, than to perform his proper share of worldly business; how much more is he to be reproach'd, that had rather lie folded up in a bed, than be raising up his heart to God in acts of praise and adoration?

Prayer is the nearest approach to God, and the highest enjoyment of him, that we are capable of in this life.

It is the noblest exercise of the soul, the most exalted use of our best faculties, and the highest imitation of the blessed inhabitants of heaven.

When our hearts are full of God, sending up holy desires to the throne of grace, we are then in our highest state, we are upon the utmost heights of human greatness; we are not before *kings* and *princes*, but in the presence and audience of the *Lord* of all the world, and can be no higher, till death is swallow'd up in glory.

On the other hand, *Sleep* is the *poorest*, *dullest* refreshment of the body, that is so far from being intended as an *enjoyment*, that we are forc'd to receive it either in a state of *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 indulgence of sleep, rather than be *early* at his devotions to God; chuses the dullest refreshment of the body, before the highest, noblest employment of the soul; he chuses that state, which is a reproach to *mere animals*, rather than that exercise, which is the glory of *Angels*.

You will perhaps say, tho' you rise *late*, yet you are always careful of your devotions when you are up.

It may be so. But what then? Is it well done of you to rise late, because you pray
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when you are up? Is it pardonable to waste great part of the day in bed, because some time after you say your prayers?

It is as much your duty to rise to pray, as to pray when you are risen. And if you are late at your prayers, you offer to God the prayers of an idle, slothful worshipper, that rises to prayers, as idle servants rise to their labour.

Farther, if you fancy that you are careful of your devotions, when you are up, though it be your *custom* to rise late, you deceive your self; for you cannot perform your devotions as you ought. For he that cannot deny himself this drowsy indulgence, but must pass away good part of the morning in it, is no more prepared for prayer when he is up, than he is prepared for *fasting*, *abstinence*, or any other *self-denial*. He may indeed more easily read over a *form* of prayer, than he can perform these duties; but he is no more disposed to enter into the *true spirit* of prayer, than he is disposed to *fasting*. For sleep thus indulged, gives a *softness* and *idleness* to all our tempers, and makes us unable to relish any thing, but what suits with an *idle state* of mind, and gratifies our natural tempers, as sleep does. So that a person that is a slave to this idleness, is in the *same temper* when he is up; and though he is not asleep, yet he is under the effects of it; and every thing that is *idle*, *indulgent*, or *sensual*, pleases him for the same reason that sleep pleases him; and

on the other hand, every thing that requires *care*, or *trouble*, or *self-denial*, is hateful to him, for the same reason that he hates to rise. He that places any happiness in this morning indulgence, would be glad to have all the day made happy in the same manner; though not with sleep, yet with *such enjoyments* as gratify and indulge the body in the same manner as sleep does; or at least, with such as come as near to it as they can. The remembrance of a warm bed is in his mind all the day, and he is glad when he is not one of those that sit starving in a *Church*.

Now you don't imagine, that such a one can truly mortify that body which he thus indulges; yet you might as well think this, as that he can truly perform his devotions; or live in such a drowsy state of indulgence, and yet relish the joys of a *spiritual life*.

For surely, no one will pretend to say, that he knows and feels the true happiness of prayer, who does not think it worth his while to be *early* at it.

It is not possible in nature, for an *Epicure* to be truly devout; he must renounce this habit of sensuality, before he can relish the happiness of devotion.

Now he that turns sleep into an *idle indulgence*, does as much to corrupt and disorder his soul, to make it a slave to bodily appetites, and keep it incapable of all devout and heavenly tempers, as he that turns the necessities

cessities of eating, into a course of indulgence.

A person that eats and drinks too much, does not feel such effects from it, as those do, who live in *notorious* instances of gluttony and intemperance ; but yet his course of indulgence, though it be not *scandalous* in the eyes of the world, nor such as *torments* his own conscience, is a great and constant hindrance to his improvement in virtue ; it gives him *eyes that see not*, and *ears that hear not* ; it creates a sensuality in the soul, increases the power of bodily passions, and makes him incapable of entering into the true spirit of Religion.

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

If you consider devotion only as a *time* of so much prayer, you may perhaps perform it, though you live in this daily indulgence : But if you consider it as a *state* of the heart, as a *lively fervour* of the soul, that is deeply affected with a sense of its own misery and infirmities, and desiring the spirit of God more than all things in the world, you will find that the spirit of indulgence, and the spirit of prayer, cannot subsist together. Mortification,

cation, of *all kinds*, is the very life and soul of piety; but he that has not so small a degree of it, as to be able to be early at his prayers, can have no reason to think that he has taken up his cross, and is following Christ.

What conquest has he got over himself? What right hand has he cut off? What trials is he prepar'd for? What sacrifice is he ready to offer unto God; who cannot be so cruel to himself, as to rise to prayer at such time, as the drudging part of the world are content to rise to their labour.

Some people will not scruple to tell you, that they indulge themselves in sleep, because they have *nothing* to do; and that if they had either *business* or *pleasure* to rise to, they would not lose so much of their time in sleep. But such people must be told, that they mistake the matter; that they have a great deal of business to do; they have a *harden'd heart* to change; they have the *whole spirit* of Religion to get. For surely, he that thinks devotion to be of less moment than business or pleasure; or that he has nothing to do, because nothing but his prayers want him, may be justly said to have the whole spirit of Religion to seek.

You must not therefore consider, how small a crime it is to *rise late*, but you must consider how great a misery it is to want the *spirit* of Religion; to have a heart not rightly affected with prayer; and to live in such soft-
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ness and idleness, as makes you incapable of the most fundamental duties of a truly christian and spiritual life.

This is the right way of judging of the crime of wasting great part of your time in bed.

You must not consider the thing barely in it self, but what it proceeds from; what virtues it shews to be wanting; what vices it naturally strengthens. For every habit of this kind discovers the *state* of the soul, and plainly shews the *whole turn* of your mind.

If our blessed Lord used to pray early before day; if he spent whole nights in prayer; if the devout *Anna* was day and night in the temple; if *St. Paul* and *Silas* at midnight sang praises unto God; if the *primitive Christians*, for several hundred years, besides their hours of prayer in the day-time, met publicly in the Churches at *midnight*, to join in Psalms and Prayers, is it not certain that these practices shew'd the *state* of their heart? Are they not so many plain proofs of the *whole turn* of their minds?

And if you live in a contrary state, wasting great part of every day in sleep, thinking any time soon enough to be at your prayers; is it not equally certain, that this practice as much shews the state of your heart, and the whole turn of your mind?

So that if this indulgence is your way of life, you have as much reason to believe your self destitute of the true spirit of devotion,
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as you have, to believe the Apostles and Saints of the Primitive Church were truly devout. For as their way of life was a demonstration of their devotion, so a contrary way of life is as strong a proof of a want of devotion.

When you read the Scriptures, you see a Religion that is all *life*, and *spirit*, and *joy* in God; that supposes our souls risen from earthly desires, and bodily indulgences, to prepare for another body, another world, and other enjoyments. You see christians represented as temples of the holy Ghost, as children of the day, as candidates for an eternal crown, as watchful virgins, that have their lamps always burning, in expectation of the bridegroom. But can he be thought to have this joy in God, this care of eternity, this watchful spirit, who has not zeal enough to rise to his prayers?

When you look into the writings and lives of the first christians, you see the same spirit that you see in the Scriptures. All is reality, life, and action. Watching and prayers, self-denial and mortification, was the common business of their lives.

From that time to this, there has been no person like them, eminent for piety, who has not, like them, been eminent for self-denial and mortification. This is the only royal way that leads to a kingdom.

But how far are you from this way of life, or rather how contrary to it, if instead of imitating their austerity and mortification,

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you can't so much as renounce so poor an indulgence, as to be able to rise to your prayers? If self-denials and bodily sufferings, if watchings and fastings, will be marks of glory at the day of Judgment, where must we hide our heads, that have slumber'd away our time in sloth and softness?

You perhaps now find some pretences, to excuse your self from that severity of fasting and self-denial, which the first christians practis'd. You fancy that human nature is grown weaker, and that the difference of *Climates*, may make it not possible for you to observe their methods of self-denial and austerities, in these colder countries.

But all this is but pretence; for the change is not in the *outward* state of things, but in the *inward* state of our minds. When there is the same spirit in us, that there was in the Apostles and primitive Christians, when we feel the weight of Religion, as they did, when we have their faith and hope, we shall take up our cross, and deny our selves, and live in such methods of mortification as they did.

Had *St. Paul* liv'd in a cold countrey, had he had a constitution made weak with a *sickly stomach*, and often *infirmities*, he would have done as he advis'd *Timothy*, he would have mix'd a little wine with his water.

But still he would have liv'd in a state of self-denial and mortification. He would have given this same account of himself. *I therefore*

fore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it unto subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I my self should be a cast-away.

After all, let it now be suppos'd, that you imagine there is no necessity for you to be so sober and vigilant, so fearful of your self, so watchful over your passions, so apprehensive of danger, so careful of your salvation, as the *Apostles* were. Let it be suppos'd, that you imagine that you want less self-denial and mortification, to subdue your bodies, and purify your souls, than they wanted; that you need not have your loins girt, and your lamps burning as they had, will you therefore live in a quite contrary state? Will you make your life as constant a course of softness and indulgence, as theirs was of strictness and self-denial.

If therefore, you should think that you have time sufficient, both for prayer and other duties, though you rise late; yet let me persuade you to rise early, as an instance of *self-denial*. It is so small a one, that if you cannot comply with it, you have no reason to think your self capable of any other.

If I was to desire you, not to study the gratifications of your *palate*, in the niceties of meats and drinks, I would not insist much upon the crime of wasting your money in such a way, though it be a great one; but I
would

would desire you to renounce such a way of life, because it supports you in such a state of sensuality and indulgence, as renders you incapable of relishing the most essential doctrines of Religion.

For the same reason, I don't insist much on the crime of wasting so much of your time in sleep, though it be a great one; but I desire you to renounce this indulgence, because it gives a softness and idleness to your soul; and is so contrary to that *lively, zealous, watchful, self-denying* spirit, which was not only the spirit of Christ and his Apostles, the spirit of all the saints and martyrs which have ever been amongst men, but must be the spirit of all those who would not sink in the common corruption of the world.

Here therefore, we must fix our charge against this practice; we must blame it, not as having this or that particular evil, but as a *general habit*, that extends it self through our whole spirit, and supports a state of mind that is wholly wrong.

It is contrary to piety; not as accidental slips and mistakes in life are contrary to it, but in such a manner, as an ill habit of body is contrary to health.

On the other hand, if you was to rise early every morning, as an instance of self-denial, as a method of renouncing indulgence, as a means of redeeming your time, and fitting your spirit for prayer, you would find mighty advantages from it. This method, though

it seems such a small circumstance of life, would in all probability be a means of great piety. It would keep it constantly in your head, that softness and idleness were to be avoided, that self-denial was a part of Christianity. It would teach you to exercise power over yourself, and make you able by degrees to renounce other pleasures and tempers that war against the soul.

This one rule would teach you to think of others; it would dispose your mind to exactness, and be very likely to bring the remaining part of the day, under rules of prudence and devotion.

But above all, one certain benefit from this method you will be sure of having, it will best fit and prepare you for the reception of the holy Spirit. When you thus begin the day in the spirit of religion, renouncing sleep, because you are to renounce softness, and redeem your time; this disposition, as it puts your heart into a good state, so it will procure the assistance of the holy Spirit; what is so planted and watered, will certainly have an increase from God. You will then speak from your heart, your soul will be awake, your prayers will refresh you like meat and drink, you will feel what you say, and begin to know what saints and holy men have meant, by fervours of devotion.

He that is thus prepared for prayer, who rises with these dispositions, is in a very different state from him, who has no rules of this
kind;

kind; who rises by chance, as he happens to be weary of his bed, or is able to sleep no longer. If such a one prays only with his mouth; if his heart feels nothing of that which he says; if his prayers are only things of course; if they are a lifeless form of words, which he only repeats because they are soon said, there is nothing to be wondred at in all this: for such dispositions are the natural effect of such a state of life.

Hoping therefore, that you are now enough convinced of the necessity of rising early to your prayers, I shall proceed to lay before you a method of daily prayer.

I don't take upon me to prescribe to you the use of any *particular forms* of prayer, but only to shew you the necessity of praying at such times, and in such a manner.

You will here find some helps, how to furnish yourself with such *forms* of prayer, as shall be useful to you. And if you are such a proficient in the spirit of devotion, that your heart is always ready to pray in its own language, in this case I press no necessity of borrow'd forms.

For tho' I think a form of prayer very *necessary* and *expedient* for *publick* worship, yet if any one can find a better way of raising his heart unto God in private, than by *prepared forms* of prayer, I have nothing to object against it; my design being only to assist and direct such as stand in need of assistance.