

**THE WORKS OF THE REVEREND
WILLIAM LAW, M.A,
VOL. IV. A SERIOUS CALL
TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649220090

The works of the Reverend William Law, M.A, Vol. IV. A serious call to a devout and holy life
by William Law

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

WILLIAM LAW

**THE WORKS OF THE REVEREND
WILLIAM LAW, M.A.,
VOL. IV. A SERIOUS CALL
TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE**

THE
WORKS
Of the REVEREND
WILLIAM LAW, M.A.,

Sometime Fellow of *Emmanuel*
College, *Cambridge*.

In Nine Volumes.

Volume IV.
A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy
Life, adapted to the State and
Condition of all Orders
of Christians.

LONDON: Printed for J. RICHARDSON, 1762.
Privately Reprinted for G. MORETON, *Setley*,
Brockenhurst, New Forest, Hampshire. 1893.



Prefatory Advertisement.

A SERIOUS CALL

TO A

Devout and Holy Life.

THE SERIOUS CALL to a Devout and Holy Life, is WILLIAM LAW'S fifth work in the order of publication, printed in the year 1729, when he was about forty-three years of age. It was written by him during the early portion of his ten years' residence with the *Gibbon* family at *Putney*, with whom he resided in the capacity of Spiritual Director, and by whom, as most readers know, he was greatly esteemed.

The 'Serious Call' is the most widely and generally known of all WILLIAM LAW'S works; and is undoubtedly his masterpiece: if not, as some think in a certain sense, his masterpiece. It has passed through some hundreds of editions by various Publishers, from the year of its publication to the present time; and has, more than any other religious work, attracted—as it will ever continue to do—the notice and admiration, and its precepts the emulation, of successive generations of the wisest and best among men. Of such, various authoritative opinions have been quoted, in acknowledgment and support of the great excellence of this work: which excellence, the most ordinary reader may at once by its perusal, discern for himself.

It is supposed that the Character of 'Paternus' described in this work, was that of WILLIAM LAW'S father; and that 'Eusebia' represented his widowed-mother; but this is mere conjecture: both portraits, as that of 'Ouranius'—which is likewise supposed to be William Law himself—being, more probably, ideals of his own. These and other 'Characters,' are cleverly and humorously described—in particular that of 'Mundanus,' who 'has made a great figure in business,' which he has carried to its greatest improvement and perfection. 'The only one thing which has not fallen under his improvement nor received any benefit from his judicious mind, is his devotion.

iv Prefatory Advertisement.

' This is just in the same poor state it was when he was only six
' years of age, and the old man prays now in that little form of
' words which his mother used to hear him repeat night and
' morning. This *Mundanus*, who hardly ever saw the poorest
' utensil, or ever took the meanest trifle into his hand, without
' considering how it might be made or used to better advantage,
' has gone all his life long praying in the same manner as when
' he was a child without ever considering how much better or
' oftener he might pray. . . . If *Mundanus* sees a book of devo-
' tion he passes it by as he does a spelling-book, because he
' remembers that he learned to pray so many years ago under
' his mother when he learned to spell. . . . '

It will probably not escape the attention of the thoughtful reader that in Chapter XX., upon 'Intercessory Prayer,' WILLIAM LAW sets our duty towards our Neighbour—particularly towards such of whose reputation and manner of life *we* do not quite approve—in a new, and deeply instructive light—in a most impressive and logical passage, which it is remarkable should have been omitted from DR. WHYTE'S recently published Selections from Law's works.

In it WILLIAM LAW reminds us that when is 'let loose any
' ill-natured passion, either of hatred, or contempt, towards—as
' you suppose—an ill man, consider what you would think of
' another, who was doing the same towards a good man, and be
' assured that you are committing the same sin. You will per-
' haps say—How is it possible to love a good and a bad man, in
' the same degree? Just as it is possible to be as *just* and *faith-*
' *ful* to a good man as to an evil man. Now are you in any
' difficulty about performing *justice* and *faithfulness* to a bad
' man? Are you in any doubts whether you need be so *just* and
' *faithful* to him, as you need be to a good man? Now why is
' it that you are in no doubt about it? It is because you know
' that justice and faithfulness are founded upon reasons that never
' *vary* or *change*, that have no dependence upon the *merits* of
' men, but are founded in the Nature of Things, in the Laws of
' God, and therefore are to be observed with an equal exactness
' towards good and bad men. Now do but think thus justly of
' Charity, or love to your Neighbour, that it is founded upon
' reasons, that *vary* not, that have no dependence upon the *merits*
' of men, and then you will find it as possible to perform the
' same *exact charity*, as the same *exact justice*, to all men, whether
' good or bad.'

G. B. M.

A
SERIOUS CALL
TO A
DEVOUT and HOLY LIFE.
ADAPTED TO
The State and Condition of all Orders
of CHRISTIANS.

By *WILLIAM LAW*, M. A.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.
St. Luke viii. 8.

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

L O N D O N :
Printed for J. RICHARDSON, in *Pater-noster-*
Row. 1729.

The Contents.

CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING the Nature and Extent of Christian Devotion Page 7

CHAPTER II.

An Inquiry into the reason, why the generality of Christians fall so far short of the Holiness and Devotion of Christianity 15

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 21

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 30

CHAPTER V.

Persons that are free from the necessity of labour and employments, are to consider themselves as devoted to God in a higher degree 42

CHAPTER VI.

Containing the great obligations, and the great advantages of making a wise and religious use of our estates and fortunes 48

CHAPTER 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 . . . Page 55

CHAPTER 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 61

CHAPTER IX.

Containing some reflections upon the life of Miranda; and showing how it may, and ought to be imitated by all her sex 70

CHAPTER X.

Showing how all orders and ranks of men and women of all ages, are obliged to devote themselves unto God 80

CHAPTER XI.

Showing how great devotion, fills our lives with the greatest peace and happiness that can be enjoyed in this life 93

CHAPTER XII.

The happiness of a life wholly devoted unto God, further proved, from the vanity, the sensuality and the ridiculous poor enjoyments, which they are forced to take up with, who live according to their own humours. This represented in various characters . . . 106

The Contents.

v

CHAPTER XIII.

That not only a life of vanity, or sensuality, but even the most regular kind of life, that is not governed by great devotion, sufficiently shows its miseries, its wants, and emptiness, to the eyes of all the world. This represented in various characters Page 117

CHAPTER 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 128

CHAPTER 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 146

CHAPTER XVI.

Recommending devotion at nine o'clock in the morning, called in Scripture the third hour of the day. The subject of these prayers is humility 160

CHAPTER XVII.

Showing how difficult the practice of humility is made, by the general spirit and temper of the world. How Christianity requireth us to live contrary to the world 170

CHAPTER XVIII.

Showing how the education which men generally receive in their youth, makes the doctrines of humility difficult to be practised. The spirit of a better education, represented in the character of Paternus 180