

**THE WORKS OF THE
REVEREND WILLIAM
LAW, M.A. IN NINE
VOLUMES. VOLUME VI**

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The works of the Reverend William Law, M.A. In nine volumes. Volume VI by William Law

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WILLIAM LAW

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

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

In Nine Volumes.

Volume VI.

CONTAINING

- I. An Earnest and Serious Answer
to Dr. TRAPP'S Discourse of the
Folly, Sin, and Danger of being
Righteous over-much.
- II. An Appeal to all that doubt, or
disbelieve the Truths of the
 Gospel.

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AN
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An Earnest and Serious
A N S W E R
TO
Dr. *Trapp's* Discourse, &c.

MIGHT I follow the *Bent* of my own Mind, my *Pen*, such as it is, should be wholly employed in setting forth the infinite Love of God to Mankind in Christ Jesus, and in endeavouring to draw all Men to the Belief and Acknowledgment of it.

This *one great Mercy* of God, which makes the *one only* Happiness of all Mankind, so justly deserves all our Thoughts and Meditations, so highly enlightens, and improves every Mind that is attentive to it, so removes all the Evils of this present World, so sweetens every State of Life, so inflames the Heart with the Love of every Divine and human Virtue, that he is no small Loser, whose Mind is, either by *Writing* or *Reading*, detained from the View and Contemplation of it.

When this Mystery of Divine Love was first manifested to the World, it produced its proper Effects, it put an End to all *Selfishness* and *Division*; for *all that believed were of one heart, and one spirit, and had all things common*.^{*} And indeed under the real Influence, and full Belief of this great Mystery of Divine Love, there seems to be no Room left for anything else amongst Christians, but Returns of Love to God, and Flowings out of Love towards one another.

But now it is so difficult to enter into Controversy without being, or at least *seeming* in some Degree unkind to the Person that one opposes, that it is with great Reluctance that I have entered upon my present Undertaking; having nothing more deeply riveted in my Heart, than an universal Love and Kindness for all Mankind, and more especially for those whom God has called to be my Fellow-Labourers in promoting the Salvation of Mankind. But however unwilling, yet I find myself obliged

^{*} Acts ii.

to consider, and lay open many grievous Faults in the Doctor's Discourse; and to show to all Christians, that the dearest Interests of their Souls are much endangered by it.

And this I must do with great Plainness and Sincerity, in the Love of Truth, and under the Direction of Charity, saying nothing in the Spirit of an *Adversary*, sparing nothing through *Respect of Persons*, sacrificing nothing to the *Taste or Temper* of the World, but setting forth every Thing in that naked Light, in which the Spirit of God represents it to my own Mind.

The Doctor undertakes to stir up, and alarm Mankind with the *Sin, Folly, and Danger, of being righteous over-much*. The Text from which he has the *Title* of his Discourse is very unhappily chosen, and must be looked upon rather as a *severe Reproach*, than any kind of Justification of it. The Text is indeed in the Writings of *Solomon*, and as it stands there, has no Hurt in it; because as the Royal Preacher sometimes introduces *Fools*, and sometimes *Infidels*, making their Speeches, so there is a Necessity of supposing that to be the Case in the Doctor's Text; not only from the Context, which plainly shows there are Two Persons introduced, the one *for*, the other *against* Righteousness; but because the Words, unless stripped of all their proper Meaning, cannot be taken in a Sense that is tolerable, or consistent with the common *Notions* of Piety.

Is it not therefore strange, that the Doctor should choose to have a *Discourse* and *Title* to it, conformable to a Text of *this kind*? For if his Discourse is of a Piece with his Text, must not all sensible People find it as hard to reconcile his Discourse, as to reconcile the Text with the *common Notions* of Piety? Is it not strange, that he should think it right and just, to limit, explain, and model, both the Letter and Spirit of the Gospel by such a Saying in the Writings of *Solomon*, as must be ascribed to the Spirit and Mouth of an Infidel? Is it not still stranger, that such a Text, so offensive to Piety, should have not only been so long dwelt upon in the Doctor's Three Churches, but sent abroad into the Christian World, as a proper *Key* to all the practical Sayings, Parables, and Doctrines, of Jesus Christ?

Supported by this Text, the Doctor endeavours to deter and frighten Christians from the *Sin, Folly, and Danger*, of being righteous over-much, and from what he calls the *baneful Plague* of Enthusiasm. But then it is Matter of just Complaint, that he does all this, without ever showing in any Part of his Discourse, wherein true Righteousness, or the right and sober Spirit of Piety consists. If he supposed his Readers to be already well acquainted with the Nature and Extent of Christian Holiness, and to have just and distinct Ideas of Religion, what it is

Answer to Dr. Trapp. 5

in itself, what Change, Purification, and Perfection, it aims at in human Nature, how, and by what Means, a Man may make himself a full Partaker of all that Benefit, Change, and Perfection, that is intended by it, there would then have been little Occasion for his present Undertaking.

For if they may be supposed thus to know what is right in Religion, they would by such Knowledge be in the best State of Security against that which is wrong.

But the Doctor overlooks this important Matter. He neither supposes them to have this Knowledge, nor endeavours to help them to it; but in a Flow of Zeal, in a loose, declamatory Style, reflects at large upon all Attempts towards a Piety, that is not *modern, common*, and according to the present Power and Fashion of Religion in the World. Thus, you everywhere find hard and severe Reflections cast upon *Pretenders* to Piety, *pretended Spiritualists*, and *Righteous over-much*; great Accusation of *Excesses, Extraordinaries, and By-paths*; but nowhere a *Word*, or a *Hint*, in Favour of those, who would only be so *excessive, so extraordinary*, and so much out of the *common Paths*, as the blessed Saints, and Martyrs of the Primitive Church were; nowhere are *such People* told, that he wishes them *God speed*, that *their Zeal* is much wanted both amongst *Clergy and Laity*, and that the Gospel suffers, because we know not where to find *living Examples* of its Purity and Perfection. Nowhere are such People told, that he writes not *against* them, that He *loves* their Spirit, and should be glad to *add* new Fervours to it; nowhere are they told, what *Christian Perfection* is, what a Holiness of Body, Soul and Spirit it requires, and what Blessedness of Life it gives; how powerfully all are called to it; how earnestly all ought to aspire after it; and how sadly they are mistaken, what Enemies to themselves, who for the Sake of any, or all the Things in the World, die less purified and perfect, than they might have been.

If we had to do only with *one single* Person, sincerely good, yet seeming to carry Matters too high in some Parts of his Duty, if we intended *privately* to dissuade him from such Heights; yet even *this*, thus *privately* done, and to a Person of *Piety*, would be exceeding *dangerous*, and very *unjustifiable*; unless we took the utmost Care at the same Time, to *keep up* the pious Zeal of his Mind, to show him wherein the *true Point* of Perfection consisted, and to encourage his utmost Endeavours after it.

But if this Caution, Instruction, and Encouragement, cannot be omitted without great Hurt to Religion, when we speak only to a Person of *Piety*, and in *private*, about any religious *Extremes*,

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what must be said of the Doctor's Conduct? who to the World *dead in Trespasses and Sin*, preaches up the *Sin, Folly, and Danger*, of being Righteous over-much. To the World *Eating and Drinking*, and *rising up to Play*, he harangues upon the Madness, Danger, and Folly, of too much Temperance, Abstinence, Mortification, and Severity of Life. To the World *asleep, insensible, and careless*, not only of the Purity and Perfection, but of the First Principles of the Gospel, he *boldly, rashly* reproaches all Appearances of Holiness, that are *uncommon and extraordinary*. To *no Part* of the World does he represent or propose the *Perfection* of the Gospel, or recommend it as that, which deserves all that they can do, *or* suffer for Sake of it.

This, therefore, I am obliged to point out, as a *fundamental Defect* in the Doctor's Discourse, and such as renders it an evil *Temptation*, a dangerous *Snare*, and fatal *Delusion*, to all those, who do not read it with a full and thorough Dislike.

Coldness, Indifference, and a lifeless outward Compliance with all the Duties of Religion; a Slavery to Ease, Softness, and sensible Pleasures; a criminal Conformity to the Spirit, Fashions, and Corruptions, of the World; unmortified Passions; a conniving at favourite Sins; deep roots of Pride, Partiality, and Self-Love; an unawakened Conscience; an Insensibility of their corrupt, unreformed, unregenerate State; a Proneness to be content and satisfied with poor Beginnings, Names and Appearances of Virtue; is perhaps the State of more than *Two-thirds* of those that are looked upon to be the Religious amongst us.

Now the Doctor's Discourse has a direct and natural Fitness to lull all these People asleep, to suppress all Stirrings and Intentions of Amendment, to keep up and nourish every Disorder of their Hearts, to increase their Blindness, and awaken nothing in them, but a *hurtful Zeal* to censure and condemn all those, that are endeavouring to practise the *uncommon* Piety of the Gospel.

There is scarce a Reader amongst *this Number* of People, whether he be *Layman* or *Clergyman*, but will find this Effect from the Doctor's Instructions; he will begin to take *fresh Comfort* in his State, to think himself *happy* for having had no *aspirings* after high Improvements in Piety; he will not only be *content* with his Corruptions, but be *fixed*, and hardened against all *inward* and *outward* Calls to a solid Piety; he will approve of the *Deadness* and *Insensibility* of his own Heart, and acquiesce in it, as his true and just *Security*, from the *Sin* and *Folly* and *Danger* of being Righteous over-much.

Again, others there are, I make no doubt, in all Parts of this Kingdom, both amongst Clergy and Laity, Men and Women,