

**THE WORKS OF THE REVEREND WILLIAM
LAW, 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**

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The Works of the Reverend William Law, 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 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 IV.

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

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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 'Ouranium'—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. WHITE'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
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DEVOUT and HOLY LIFE.

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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:
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Row. 1729.

The Contents.

CHAPTER I.

*C*ONCERNING 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