Joseph Seccomb: on Business & Diversion

1743.
SEMPER PUGNARE PARATUS

Edward Sands Litchfield.
Business and Diversion
inoffensive to God, and necessary for the
Comfort and Support of human Society.

Tho. Seccombe A 1742/3. March

DISCOURSE
utter'd in Part 1690

Jonas. Parker AT 1773

Ammauskeeeg Falls,
IN THE
Fishing-Season.

1739.

Deep in the Vale old Moniack rolls his Tides,
Romantick Prospects crown his reverend Sides;
Now thro' wild Grotts, and pendent Woods he strays,
And ravish'd at the Slight, his Course delays.
Silent and calm—now with impetuous Shock
Pours his swift Torrent down the steepy Rock;
The tumbling Waves thro' airy Channels flow,
And loudly roaring, smoke and foam below.

I. W.

Boston, Printed for S. Kneeland and T. Green in
Queen-Street. MDCCXLIII.
Presented by Mrs. M. H. Brown, Esq.,
of Providence R. I.
Nov. 6th 1864.
S. E. A.
To the Honourable
Theodore Atkinson, Esq;
And Other
The Worthy Patrons of the Fishing
At
AMMAUSKEEG.

Gentlemen,

'Tis not to signify to others that I pretend to an Intimacy with you, or that I ever had a Share in those pleasant Diversions, which you have innocently indulged your selves in, at the Place where I have taken an annual Tour for some Years past. Yet I doubt not but you'ld Patronize my Intention, which is to fence against Bigotry and Superstition. All Excess I disclaim, but pretend to be a Favourer of Religion, and of Labour as an Ingredient, and of Recreation as a necessary Attendant.
I believe the Gentleman who moved me to preach there in some odd Circumstances, and those at whose Desire and Charge this Discourse is Printed, (asking their Pardon if my Suggestion appear to them ungrounded) were moved more from the uncommonness of the Thing, than any Thing singular in it. I have put off the Importunity for near these three Years; but least it should be, that I fear, it’s being seen by the World, I submit it to Sight and Censure.

So little as I know you, Gentlemen, I heartily present it to you; tho’ all the Reason that I intend to offer is, we have fished upon the same Banks: And tho’ I know this will be no Bait, I am fond of being esteemed, in the Affair of Fishing,

Gentlemen,

your most Obedient

and very humble Servant,

Fluviatulis Piscator.
Business and Diversion
inoffensive to G O D.

John XXI. iii.
Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a Fishing.

It is an odd and vicious Conceit of the Superstitious, who in Popish Countries are called the Religious; that a solitary Sequestration from the social Affairs and Duties of Life, afford a mighty Advantage to Religion: For this is contrary to the Design of the Creator in the Make and Constitution of Man; opposite to the Providence and Precepts of God, and the Examples of holy Men recorded in sacred History. The Instance in our Text shows that Business, or I think Diversion in proper Portions of Time, and other suitable Circumstances, are not hurtful, but very friendly to Religion.

† For their stated Business, was to preach the Gospel; tho' Fishing had been their Employment.
The Apostles were constituted Fishers of Men, to allure and draw Souls to Christ, from a Pit of Sin and Misery, to an Ocean of Piety and Pleasure. ---- An high and really religious Employment! And our Lord gave them a Vacancy, with Restriction, but tarry ye at Jerusalem. They had been commissioned long before, ['Matth. x. 17 and Luke ix. '] but before they were to enter upon their Enterprise, in which he should be corporally absent, they must have a Leisure refreshing Season. To what should they in Reason have devoted this Intermission, but Fasting and Mourning, for now the Bridegroom was not always with them? Why, 'Obedience is better than Sacrifice, and to hearken, than the Fat of Rams;' [1 Sam. xv. 22]. He who best knew the Nature of Man, before he was to send Men upon extraordinary Business, would give them Leisure; nor was this Space confined wholly to Devotion. Some of it, we find, was spent in Business or Diversion. Certainly these Saints were as sincerely and piously affected to God, as the superstitious Bigotts to Popery can, with any Shew of Modesty, pretend to be; yet they divert themselves in so suitable a Season, and our Lord not only appoints the Leisure, but supports them in it; by giving them a lucky Draught of Fishes. This sacred Story leads me to think,

I. In the general, that the common Enterprizes of Life are not inconsistent with Piety towards God: But that infinite Holiness may be pleased with them. And in particular, that

II. Fishing is innocent as Business or Diversion.

Some may think it strange that I give myself the Trouble to illustrate these Things, which, to them appear level to the lowest Capacity.

But all Men are not of the same Cast or Constitution. A Proposition which is easy and evident to one, may be as doubtful and difficult to another; and its no uncommon Case, for Men who have no higher End in their Employments, and have been unseasonable, unguarded and irregular in their Diversions, and have no higher End than Self, if they are convinced of their Idolatry and Carnality, to exclaim against the World! Then, when they most of all need to be diligent in some good Employment, Diligence is termed Worldly-mindedness; reasonably and temperately to recreate themselves, is carnal Pleasure.
Pleasure. These Difficulties require no great Depth of Tho't, nor a Multitude of Words for their Solution.

We may, in an easy and natural Manner, consider that Religion is all of a Piece, and one Duty does not destroy another. That Business and Diversion, in their proper Place and Time, determined from a good Principle, and performed piously and prudently; are so far from being offensive, that they are a necessary Branch of our holy Religion.

Let us then in the general consider, *Whether the common Enterprizes of human Life, be consistent with practical Piety.*

Here we must tell what we mean, by the common Enterprizes of Life. And we renounce all unjust and dishonest Methods of obtaining the Riches, Honours, and Pleasures of the World: And all unlawful Games, and those which are lawful, when they are unsuitably and irregularly managed.

We consider Business or Diversions, as human Understandings. By Business, we mean our stated Exercises, or that which we ought to employ most of our Time in, and most of our Thoughts about. Diversion is the turning aside from Business, in some proper Period, to refresh ourselves, and fit us for a more cheerful and lively Discharge of Duty. Now, if it should be made evident, that these are Parts of our Duty to God, I suppose they must be consistent with real Religion. And this will appear, if we consider, That God is an active Being, and proposes himself as our Pattern. It's not only contrary to Scripture, and deep thinking, but common Sense, to suppose the great Creator and Governor of all Worlds, idle and unactive. Every one conceives something of his Operation, as the Over-ruler of human Affairs, or Author of all Things. And if God be Agent, he expects those to be such who are capable of acting: And as he is perfect, and must act in a most excellent Manner, according to his own Nature, he must expect and require his Creatures to act according to the Power with which he has endowed them. And as he has endowed Man with a Capacity of knowing something of him, he must design his imitating of him in his Measure and Degree. In this the Image of God in Man consists. And we are to imitate him in Labour and Rest, as well as in other Respects. This will be clear to you, if you recollect the Fourth Commandment:
mandment: Six Days shalt thou Labour, for in six—the Lord made—and rested on the seventh, &c.

Indeed, no Man was made for Time, but Time for him: And as God uses Eternity for his own Glory, according to his infinite Wisdom and Power; so he expects Man should spend his Time, according to his Capacity.

Man's Capacity is the Measure of his Duty, and the Nature of Man requires Rest and Labour, and a prudent Interchange and Succession of each. We were not obliged to do, in our Original, those Things which our Species were not capable of performing: But the Limitation of Nature was a Bound by the Deity, So far shalt thou come, and no farther. The Stretch of a human Mind, and the Strength of Man's Body, is limited by the supreme Disposer of all Things. And the same Being, in limiting our Capacity, makes out our Duty, by our Make and Frame, and casual Circumstances in the Course of his divine Providence, he shews a wise Man what he ought to do, and what to avoid, and how he should direct, guide, and govern himself or others. No mere Man ever could, nor will any Man that has the Government of himself, pretend to keep up an uninterrupted Series of Idleness and Indolence, of Labour or Devotion; for Experience must soon convince them that Man's Nature is formed for Variety: He is a changeable Creature, and is supported by Change. So Man at first was put into the Garden of Pleasure, not only to serve his Maker, in his Devotions, and delight himself by his Sensations, but to dress it and to keep it: For in his primitive Make he needed those Changes.

And we need them much more in our lapsed State: As all the Works of God, in Nature and Revelation, manifestly declare. Let those who would form to their Imagination, a beautiful Description of the Original of the World, read Dr. Burnet: But I must confine myself to Scripture, and the common Current of our Experience, in the present State of Things; and as to that original State of the World, you will excuse me if I say little about it, because we have little to do with it. But if we gaze upon Nature, in its present Situation, we shall find, that every Thing calls for a prudent Alloy of Labour and Diversion: [Tho' I must rejoin, because I would not be wanting in Caution, by Labour, I would be understood to mean,
mean, our Actions in our particular Callings; and by our Div-
ersions, our turning aside from them, whether in the prescri-
bbed scriptural or rational Acknowledgements of the Deity, or
our innocent unbending the Bow in those lawful Amusements,
which are more commonly called Diversions. The Reason of
my thus speaking is on the Account of the divine Division. Six:
Days shalt thou Labour. But on the Seventh ----. God who beff
knew our Capacities, has delineated our Business [ or that
which we are Statedly to employ most of our Time in, for that
I call, must call so ] God confirms the Division both by Pre-
cept and Example: And if we throw off Superstition and allow
our selves to think freely we shall be confirmed that Business is
Part of our Religion.

To return then,

Let us consider the Universe in its present State and Situation.
All the heavenly Bodies keep their Course, [ but their Orbits
are more or less Excentric ] The rising Sun calls Man forth
to his Business. The Sun withdraws, and lengthening Shades
forewarn us of the rising Damp, and unhealthy Vapour; and
bid us retire for Rest and Shelter. Yet if something uncom-
mon, call us longer abroad, the Moon and Stars will lend a
little of their borrowed Light; but amphibious Creatures, Birds
and Beasts of Prey, oft cheat our Improvidence or Negligence.
The Sun gives us our longest Days when the Earth requires
most of our Labour, and when the refuses Produce, he short-
en our Hours of Business.

So the vast Collection of Waters sometimes heaves in its
briny Billow, swells every Bay, and rushes with Joy tho’ every
Channel; as from an Engine played by the Almighty Arm; then
sinks into her deep Caverns, leaves Room for the Return
of the rapid Rivers; with vast Additions from in-land Oceans.

The Winds also take their turns for Labour and Rest. The
laborious East sends gently in the vast Magazines of floating
Wealth, to the favourite Sons of Fortune; while he is gather-
ing up the scattering Clouds, which he shoves in upon the cra-
vying Land, and generously pours down a more universal Bleff-
fing; and retires, when the brisk West opens a Glene, scatters
the broken Cloud, and sweeps up the redundant Moisture ****.

So the Earth here raises a rocky Mountain with a frowning
Front; and levels there a pleasant Plain; hence sinks a rushy

B

Fen,
Fen, there raises a fertile Field: Here the struggling Streams
rush down a rapid River, there the easy Waters lye still and
move not. But what in Nature does not? Every Thing
calls for Labour, and Labour requires Rest.
These uncultivated Lands call for hard Labour, but some
other Circumstances admit of Diversion; for this the half tam’d
Deer graze your Plains, and the rough Bear infest domesck
Folds. The ingenious Dr. Woodward has shown what Con-
vulsions there were at the Time of the Deluge, and how Sterile
the Earth is made by that awful Event; and this to make us
Labour, because our sinful Propensity required it.
But we are social Creatures; and the Cord of Society is
strengthened by Industry. In this defective State, great Dilig-
ence is necessary in Education, in Purging out Prejudices,
Infusing Principles and Maxims of Wifdom; and acquiring
Habits of just Reasoning, and prudent Determining in every
Occurrence. It’s needful that some should make a Business
of Teaching; and the Labour of others must Support such in
their Labour.
Government is necessary to good Order; to secure our Lives,
Property and Peace: And those who are by divine Providence,
set in Authority over us, should be esteemed and honoured;
that they may be so, they should be set above Contempt, by a
generous

† Speaking of the old World, he says that after the Fall
of Man, “These exuberant Productions of the Earth
became a continual Decay and Snare to him, they only
excited and fomented his Lusts, and ministered Fuel to his
Vices and Luxury, and the Earth requiring little or no
Tillage, there was little Occasion for Labour, so that al-
most the whole Time lay upon his Hand, and gave him
Liesure to contrive; and full Swing to pursue his Follies;
and the Pravity of humane Nature was —— The Pravity
of humane Nature is not, I fear, less yet then it was then—
And to remove the Temptation and Cause of the Sin, he
brought this Change, by mingling and confounding its first
constituent Principles. —— That by this Means a great Part
of their Time might be taken up, &c.

See his natural History, Ed. 1st. Pag. 89, to 114.
generous Support from the Society whom they serve: which it never can do unless industrious.

Seeing we are to consider God, not only as Creator of Man, but as the Founder of Society, and it must follow that a social Homage is his Due; and this Homage must be paid in the best, the most regular and rational manner: It appears by the Light of Nature, and Suffrage of all Nations, that there should be some Persons stated and appointed to lead Societies in their Devotions; to keep the Knowledge of God, and our Duty to him, clear from all Confusions and unworthy Conceptions, and to excite religious Sentiments &c. This requires the Labour and Study of such Persons, and the Labour of others to support them. So that unless we would have Ignorance and Irreligion, and all Manner of Miseries and Mischiefs infest Mankind, we must labour; and as God is the Author of the Species, and Founder of our State, this Industry should be practised with a View to his Glory, as Part of our holy Religion.

This Thought includes Piety, Justice, and Charity. We must be diligent in some lawful Calling, because God requires it, as mere Reason shews, so doth the Scriptures.

Those who will take no Method for their own Support, rob Society, or murder themselves: If a Man provide not for himself, he either starves or pillages his Neighbour: I can call it nothing less than Robbery, if he could, by any lawful Business, have supported himself; for he is as really a Villain, who, without my knowing it, picks my Pocket, as he who sternly says, Stand and Deliver! And whatever I am obliged by Authority to pay towards the Support of Religion, Government, or the Poor, more than I should or ought to have done, if my Neighbour had been industrious, they really rob me of; for I have so much less of Estate thro’ their Negligence.

The Equity of that Precept is clear, He that will not work, neither let him eat. And it’s as evidently just, he that will not labour to support Government, forfeits it’s Protection and Favour.

The Man who will not labour, often thinks himself forced to lie long in his Neighbour’s Debt; which is a great Piece of Injustice to his Neighbour and to Society: Seeing if his industrious Neighbour had his Money in his Hand, he would have turn’d it to the Increase of his Estate, and Emolument of the Community.
Community. It's thro'Idleness that Men have little to dispose of, and are tempted to ask such exorbitant Prices for their Wares. *

The Original of Communities, are Families. In these are weak and feeble Members, who need Labour for their Support: And that Man is not only unjust, but barbarous and cruel, who neglects them. He that provideth not for his own, especially for those of his own House, hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel.

We ought to labour from a Principle of Charity, That we may have to give to him that needeth. § ——The Poor ye have with you always. † If the Poor perish thro' your Want, when you might have had it to give; it's as much thro' your Neglect, as if you had it, and refused to help and relieve them.

Indeed the most kind and prudent Way of relieving the Poor, is by setting them to work, if they are able. For hereby you give them Courage, cause them to be prudent and frugal; and prevent much Sin. It does not put them to so much Pain, to ask for that for which they have laboured: And what they earn hardly, they will not be so likely to spend idly. While they have Employ, they may be kept from making Mischiefs among Neighbours, from wandering about from House to House as Busy-Bodies. †

* There has been long and tedious Disputes about a Medium of Trade, and a sad Complaint of the constant Falling of Money: While the Prices of the Produce of the Country are under no Regulation by Law: Every one almost will make it a Rule, to sell as dear as he can: And if they ask an Angel this Year, for that which might have been purchased with a Crown last, an Angel is worth no more now than a Crown was then; and Money must continue falling. It's worthy the Tho't of considerate Men, whether a Want of Labourers be not at the Bottom of all this. If Men don't labour, they vainly complain of hard Times, and Scarcity of Money; for they have nothing to procure it.

§ Eph. iv, 28. † Matth. xxvi, 11.  † In
If ye shall fulfill the royal Law, according to the Scriptures — thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self, ye shall do well. If a Brother or a Sister be naked, or destitute of daily Food, and one of you say to them, Depart in Peace, be you warmed and filled, notwithstanding you give them not of those Things that are needful to the Body, What doth it? But can common Christians feed their Neighbours with anything better than fair Words unless they be diligent in their Business.

Quest. These are evident, you may say, but how do they reach the Rich?

The Rich are of the same Nature with the Poor, and stand in as near Relation to God and Society as they: And in these Respects, have as much need of Business. Tho' Men have ever so much Wealth, they should consider that Idleness and Inactivity rufts and depraves the Mind, and renders it unfruitful for the Service of God and Men. It either stinters the Brain with Melancholy, or fills the Body with ill Humours, and the Mind with vicious Inclinations; and either of them give Satan great Advantage against us. Besides — we are to consider Wealth as a Talent given us by God to improve, therefore the more any Man has, the more he has to turn to Advantage, which must proportionably encrescity and enlarge the Sphere of Action. He that sinks his Estate thro' Indolence robs the Publick, for he can't do so much for the Commonwealth. And if he only keeps the Principal, and endeavours to make no Interest, he is an unprofitableServant to God who intrusts him, and to the Society who protects him.

If we are to be Followers of God as dear Reflection. Children; if God is an Agent; if we are to imitate him in labouring his Parts in seven of our Time; if the human Constitution in its Original requires Change of Labour and Rest; if this is the State of all Nature; if Piety to God, and Justice and Charity to Men require La-

bour;

† In the best regulated Communities, they keep all employ'd, young and old, strong and weak; those who are strong to more onerous Service, and the more feeble to that which is less burthenome, &c. See Sir Will. Tem-ple of Holland, and Busbek; Juci. Epist. Riche- lieu's Pol. Will. Chap. IX. Sect. vi.
bour; and Business cannot be perform'd to Advantage without some seasonable prudent and regular Diversion: How wild and superstitious are those who would drive Persons into Monasteries and Nunneries, under the Notion of their spending their whole Time in Devotion? And how much better is it for Persons who are deeply in Debt, or dependent on Charity for their daily Support, to run about under the Notion of dealing with their Neighbours in some pretended Cafe of Conscience, prating about Things which they understand not; than study to be quiet and do their own Business!

Extraordinary Religion is the most exact Transcript of the communicable Attributes of God; and the nearest Imitation of the divine Being, as far as the Dictates and Limits of our Nature, and the Rules of his holy Word. ----- They who are wise above what is written, will soon discover their Folly: For when Superstition has overwhelmed a Man's Brain, like a Child with the Rickets, his Head grows too big for his Body, and the distempered Creature soon dwindles away to nothing. For Men in vain plead for such Devotion as robs Society, such as defrauds Mankind. ----- He that loves not his Brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen.

Weak Persons are apt to say, Can we do too much for God? Can we spend too much Time in Religion? No, you cannot. But you may disobey God, when you think you obey him: You may do what he forbids, when you think you do what he requires. You may be idolatrous, when you think you are mighty devout. Why, your Ancestors thot this might be; Why else did they reject the exorbitant Number of popish Fast and Festivals, &c.? In one Century you seem to have forgot your Errand to America. And what do you think of those Israelites, who sacrificed their Children, &c.? Do you think that they could do too much for God? Could they do any more than to give the First-born of their Bodies for the Sin of their Souls? Who could blame them, if none can do too much [in the common Sense]? If a Man were to murder his Father or Mother, his Wife or Children, or himself, under the Notion of being extraordinary religious, and should say, who can do too much for God, would you not think the poor Creature were delirious? Why, He that loves not his Brother is a Murderer! Many make a great Talk of Matters of Faith, or rather of Opinion, and will go prating from Place to
to Place, * and take little or no Care of their Families; they are mighty religious, but if it were possible they would not pay a Farthing for the Support of the Government, (by which our Lives are preserved) or of Religion, or for the Education of their Children. They like Holidays extremely, and might be glad if every Day were such; but can, with a good Conscience, lie in Debt from Year to Year. It's an easy Matter to pray, and read, and hear, and talk devoutly; but to work is hard, 'tis tedious to the poor Carcass, a Weariness to the Flesh! It's an easy Matter to run down your indolent Neighbour as a worldly Man, but have you paid him that which you owed him? Is not he forc'd, in great Part, to support your Family?

I wish Men would know what Religion is in the Whole, and not set the several Parts of it at Variance, and make one Branch militate with another. Let us love God with all our Hearts, and at the same Time remember that we are to love our Neighbour as ourselves.

Let us meditate on and long after Heaven; but know at the same Time, that our Way thither is thro' the Earth: That the Soul is infinitely the superior Part, but if we murder the Body, the Soul must eternally be damned. Let us be frequent at Church, yet not forget that we have something to do at Home. Let's be serious and steady in our Devotions, and likewise diligently follow our Business. In short, Let every Command have its proper Weight with us, every Duty it's Proportion of our Time and Tho'ts.

Business and Diversions, in the general, may be allowed as innocent and necessary. But some Enterprizes which wear that Name may be scrupled. We may therefore enquire in particular,

II. Whether

* I wish there were not too much Reason for Complaint in this Regard, at this Day. I have been often surprized, not only at the prophane Railings against Lectures, but at the Absurdity and Folly of many, who had hardly a Morsel of Meat to put into their Mouths, and their Children near famishing, and all their Business ruining, on Account of their violent and furious rambling here and there on the Notion of some religious Errand; as if God would call them to a Fraud and Barbarity, which, the Apostle tells us, is worse than Infidelity, 1 Tim. 5. 8.
II. Whether Fishing is lawful as Business or Diversion.

Not only those called Religious, among the Turks and Persians, and the Benjamins, &c. have scrupled eating of Flesh or Fish, but some among ourselves, fear whether we ought to take away the Lives of Creatures for our own Support; and are positive that we should not for Diversion. Many have a great Aversion to those whose Trade it is to take away the Lives of the lower Species of Creatures. A Butcher is (in their Apprehension) a mere Monster, and a Fisherman, a filthy Wretch.

It's an ancient Observation, that a merciful Man is merciful to his Beast. The righteous Man regards the Life of his Beast, Prov. xii. 10. Where any have long used any Creature, the Tho't of it's Service, and some sort of Regard contracted to it thereby, is not easily conquered. But a noble generous Soul hates Barbarity to foreign as well as domestick Creatures.

"It's not certain [says my Lord Beacon] that the woor-thier any Soul is, the larger is it's Compassion. For contracted degenerate Minds imagine that those Things belong not to them: But the Mind that looks upon itself as a nobler Portion of the Universe, is kindly affected towards inferiour Creatures——.”

He that takes Pleasure in the Pains and dying Agonies of any lower Species of Creatures, is either a stupid fordid Soul, or a Murderer in Heart.——He that delighteth to see a Brute die, would soon take as great Pleasure in the Death of a Man.

But here, in Fishing, we are so far from delighting to see our Fellow-Creature die, that we hardly think whether they live——We have no more of a murderous Tho’t in taking them, than in cutting up a Mels of Herbage. We are taking something, which God, the Creator and Proprietor of all, has given us to use for Food, as freely as the green Herb. Gen. ix. 2, 3.

He allows the eating them, therefore the mere catching them is no Barbarity. Besides God seems to have carv’d out the Globe on purpose for a universal Supply: In Seas, near Shores, are Banks and Beds made for them; ——-to furnish the Lands adjacent——and Lands which ly remote, are more divided into Lakes and Ponds, Brooks and Rivers; and he has implanted in several Sorts of Fish, a strong Instinct [or Inclination] to swim up these Rivers a vast Distance from the Sea. And it
is it not remarkable, that Rivers most incumbered with Falls, are ever more full of Fish than others. Why are they directed here? Why retarded by these difficult Passages? But to supply the Inlands? Does forming and disposing of these Things argue nothing?

Since the Flood the Earth is more barren, and Vegetables afford not a sufficient Support for Mankind. ----- So that if the Lives of all these are of less Consequence, nay, are freely given by him whose they are, they may be taken and used as Food: If they may be taken, any may make a Business of taking them for the Supply of others.

But if this be innocent as Business, some may still scruple it as Diversion.

And why not all Diversion with as good Reason? The grave and judicious Mr. Perkins says, * "We are allowed to use the Creatures of God, not only for our Necessity, but for meet and convenient Delight. This is a confessed Truth. And therefore to them who shall condemn it and convenient Recreation (as some of the ancient Fathers have done, by Name Chrysostom and Ambrose) it may be said, be not too righteous, be not too wise, Ecc. vii. 16." But if we consider, that the End of Business and Diversion are the same, we shall clearly conceive the Truth. The End of both are the Refreshment and Support of Man in the Service of God. If I may eat them for Refreshment, I may as well catch them, if this recreate and refresh me. It's as lawful to delight the Eye, as the Palate. All Pleasure arises from the Suitableness and Agreeableness between the perceptive Faculties, and the Objects that affect them: And our bountiful Maker, as he has given the animal Life many perceptive Faculties, the Senses of Seeing, Hearing, Tasting, &c. so he has provided suitable Objects for all these Faculties, and does allow us to gratify ourselves therewith.

When the Body has been long wearied with Labour, or the Mind weakned with Devotion, it's requisite to give them Ease; then the use of innocent and moderate Pleasures and Recreations is both useful and necessary, to Soul and Body; it enlivens Nature, recruits our Spirits, and renders us more able to set about serious
serious Business and Employment. For to intermix no Gratifications, nor Diversions with our more serious Affairs, makes the Mind unactive, dull and useless. †

† "It proceeds either from Pride, ill Nature or Hypocrisy, when People censure and are offended at the Liberities which others use in thus relaxing their Minds. Sloth and Idlenesse, we have already inveigh'd against, and condemn'd; but those who give seasonable Hours for their Devotions and know how to dispatch the proper Business of Life well and seasonably enough, and still aim chiefly at the Glory of God, need be under no Apprehensions of the divine Wrath and Displeasure on the Score of their Diversions. For this is good and comely, Eccl. v. 18. And indeed, the Comforts and Enjoyments of this Life, which we receive from the bountiful Hand of God, is a great Subject of our Praise and Thanksgiving to God, —— that the Lines are fallen to us in pleasant Places, —— our Heads anointed, our Cup running over. The Streams lead us up to the Fountain and Spring-Head. Our Diversions, if rightly used, not only fit us for, but leads us to Devotion; and the Creature brings us to Christ. Thus in the Context, the Disciples go a fishing, and Christ manifests himself to them.——Not only countenances them, by succeeding their Design,

† Cito rumpes arcum si tenuum habueris.
At si laxaris, cum voles, cris utilis,
Sic Iusus Animo debet aliquando dari,
Ad cogitandum melior, ut redeat tibi.
—————————— Study and cafe
Together mixt; Sweet Recreation,
And Innocence, which most does please,
with Meditation.

† The Pharisees were of this Temper and frequently censure and condemn Christ for his Recreations, both for the Matter and Manner. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, behold a Man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners. Math. 11. 19. Luke 7. 34, &c. and Chap. 15. 2. But all Extremes are bad, one leads to another; those who in this Case Strain at a Gnat, in another will generally Swallow a Camel.
Design; but excites and draws out their Affections to him, so much that Simon could not wait ’till the Vessel came to Shore, but leapt into the Lake, and swam swift ashore, to greet and converse with his dearest Lord.

-------That I may not be tedious, I will only lead in your Reflections a Word or two.

Religion is the highest Reason, and Christianity perfectly suited to Man in his present State. And as the venerable Judge Hale says, * „Religion is best in its Simplicity and Purity, " but difficult to be retain’d so, without Superflitions and Accensions; and those do commonly in Time stifle and choke the Simplicity of Religion, unless much Care and Consideration be used: The Contemplations are so many and so cumbersome, that Religion loseth its Nature, or is strangled by them: Just like a Man that hath some excellent simple Cordial or Spirit, and puts Musk in it to make it smell sweet, and Honey to make it taste pleasant, and it may be Cantharides to make it look glorious. Indeed by the Infusions he hath given it a very fine Taste, Smell, and Colour, but yet he hath so clogg’d it, and sophistication it with Superaddition, that it may be he hath altered the Nature, and destroy’d the Virtue of it. " Some so muzzle up Chriftianity, and make it look so melancholy, sickly and low, that inconsiderate People are apt to dread its Command, as they would the Tyranny of Sallee-Men. But

What prodigious Injustice is hereby done to the most sacred and excellent Cause in the World?

Such zealous, weak, mistaken Men can’t easily be persuaded of the Dissemblitude there is between their Opinion and Practice, and the Doctrine and Behaviour of Christ and his Apostles. It were worthy of their diligent Application, to make a critical Attempt of running the Parallel. And they would certainly find their own Lives awkward and disjointed; and their Notions, in this Part, main’d and defective, and bloated and swell’d in that. They would find likewise, that they have given themselves and others a great deal of unnecessary Fatigue and Perplexity: Wearying themselves and tormenting others, by making those Things Duties which God never requir’d,

* Contemplations, last Part, p. 254.
and forbidding those Things which God never prohibited: Perplexing themselves and all around them with infinite Doubts and Fears, without any Foundation: Leading Men into the most loosing Labyrinths, for which there can be no Clue found, but in the Traces of their own mad’ Brain.

Therefore, How needful is it that we be well acquainted with the Scriptures, inform’d in the Religion of Jesus, conform’d to the Example of Christ and his Apostles? There we shall see the Nature and Design of Christianity. —— To bring Glory to God in the highest, —— Peace and Good-will to Men. That God’s Glory and his Good—his Duty and Interest—Piety and Pleasure, can never be fundered.

He will find, that in order to an Action’s being term’d really religious, the Principle from which, and the End for which it is done, is much more to be considered, than whether it commonly fall under the Denomination of Devotion, Business, or Diversion; for they are all at one Time or other our Duty: And the doing our Duty from a good Principle and for a right End, must be term’d religious acting. Eating and Drinking are natural and sensible Actions, but when we eat and drink to the Glory of God, they are to be considered as religious, 1 Cor. x. 31. and that not only when Men eat and drink the meanest for Quality, and the least for Quantity that can support them in the Service of God and Society; but when they have a rich and plentiful Collation: As at Cana of Galilee, they had a Plenty of rich Wines miraculously provided by Christ himself, who made one of the Company at this cheerful Entertainment. This was at a Wedding, which is not every Day. "No Man "should make Sports his Business, nor Pastimes his Employ- "ment, no more than Cordials his Drink, or Sauces his Meat."

This destroys the very Notion of Diversion. Says Mr. Locke, "Some Men may be said never to divert themselves, they "can’t turn aside from Business, for they never do any." To every Thing there is a Season, Eccl. iii. 1.;—4.

Should we not always in every Enterprize wish for the Preference and Blessing of Christ? Methinks those who love and adore the blessed Jesus, should desire to see him every where, and in every Thing! who calls for our Devotion and allows our Diversion! who procured Peace and Pleasure for wretched sinful Men! Don’t I owe a grateful Sense of the Grace and Favour of my Benefactor, in the Enjoyment of every Blessing? This
This gives a Gust to every Enjoyment, our tasting the Sweetness of Christ in them. ——We consider him as Mediator of the Covenant of Grace, and when we see every Thing convey’d from God to us by him, then we have a real Relish for them. —— There is no suitable solid Satisfaction in any temporal Good, but as the Gift of God thro’ Christ. This every good Man, in a good Frame finds and feels. —— "Business and Diversions, Cities and Palaces, with their various Ornaments; Fields and Groves; Spring, Summer, and Autumn, with all their flowry Beauties and tasteful Blessings, are some of the Delights of the Sons of Men. Books and Learning, and polite Company, and refin’d Science, are the more elegant Joys of ingenious Spirits: These are enticing Gratifications of the Senses or the Mind of Man; they are all innocent in themselves, they may be sanctified to divine Purposes, and afford double Satisfaction if God be among them: But if God be absent, if he hide his Face or frown upon the Soul, not Palaces, nor Groves, nor Fields, nor Business, nor Diversions, nor all the flowry or tasteful Blessings of Spring or Summer, nor the more refin’d Joys of Books and Learning, and elegant Company; not all the rich Provision of Nature and Art, can entertain or refresh, can satisfy or pleaſe the Soul of a Christian———when smitten with the Love of God.

To conclude, Let us ever remember that we and all we have, is God’s, and that we are accountable to him for our Improvement of all, and depend on Christ for our Acceptance with him in all.

A M E N.
E happy Fields, unknown to Noise and Strife,

The kind Rewarders of industrious Life;

Ye shady Woods where once I us’d to rove,

To think for Men, and praise the God above;

Ye murmuring Streams that in Meanders roll,

The sweet Composers of the pensive Soul,

Farewell.—The City calls me from your Bowers;

Farewell amusing Tho’ts and peaceful Hours.