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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

N° 201. Saturday, October 20.

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few words as possible. The *Castilian* having slept longer than ordinary the next morning, upon his awaking found his wife had left him: he immediately rose and enquired after her, but was told that she was seen with the *Renegado* about break of day. In a word, her Lover having got all things ready for their departure, they soon made their escape out of the territories of *Algiers*, carried away the money, and left the *Castilian* in captivity; who partly through the cruel treatment of the incensed *Algerine* his Master, and partly through the unkind usage of his unfaithful wife, died some few months after.

N^o 201. Saturday, October 20.

Religemem esse oportet, Religiosum nefas.

Incerti Autoris apud Aul. Gell.

IT is of the last importance to season the passions of a child with Devotion, which seldom dies in a mind that has received an early tincture of it. Though it may seem extinguished for a while by the cares of the world, the heats of youth, or the allurements of vice, it generally breaks out and discovers it self again as soon as discretion, consideration, age, or misfortunes have brought the man to himself. The fire may be covered and overlaid, but cannot be entirely quenched and smothered.

A state of temperance, sobriety, and justice, without devotion, is a cold, lifeless, insipid condition of virtue; and is rather to be stiled Philosophy than Religion. Devotion opens the mind to great conceptions, and fills it with more sublime ideas than any that are to be met with in the most exalted science; and at the same time warms and agitates the soul more than sensual pleasure.

It has been observed by some writers, that Man is more distinguished from the Animal world by Devotion than by Reason, as several brute creatures discover in their actions something like a faint glimmering of Reason, though they betray in no single circumstance of their behaviour any thing that bears the least affinity to Devotion. It is certain, the propensity of the mind to religious worship, the natural tendency of the soul to fly to some

some superior Being for succour in dangers and distresses, the gratitude to an invisible Superintendent which rises in us upon receiving any extraordinary and unexpected good fortune, the acts of love and admiration with which the thoughts of men are so wonderfully transported in meditating upon the Divine Perfections, and the universal concurrence of all the nations under heaven in the great article of Adoration, plainly shew that devotion or religious-worship must be the effect of a tradition from some first Founder of mankind, or that it is conformable to the natural light of Reason, or that it proceeds from an Instinct implanted in the soul it self. For my part, I look upon all these to be the concurrent causes, but which ever of them shall be assigned as the principle of Divine worship, it manifestly points to a Supreme Being as the first Author of it.

I may take some other opportunity of considering those particular forms and methods of devotion which are taught us by christianity; but shall here observe into what errors even this divine principle may sometimes lead us, when it is not moderated by that right reason which was given us as the guide of all our actions.

The two great errors into which a mistaken devotion may betray us, are Enthusiasm and Superstition.

There is not a more melancholy object than a man who has his head turned with religious Enthusiasm. A person that is crazed, though with pride or malice, is a sight very mortifying to human nature; but when the distemper arises from any indiscreet fervours of devotion, or too intense an application of the mind to its mistaken duties, it deserves our compassion in a more particular manner. We may however learn this lesson from it, that since Devotion it self (which one would be apt to think could not be too warm) may disorder the mind, unless its heats are tempered with caution and prudence, we should be particularly careful to keep our reason as cool as possible, and to guard our selves in all parts of life against the influence of passion, imagination, and constitution.

Devotion, when it does not lie under the check of reason, is very apt to degenerate into Enthusiasm. When the mind finds her self very much inflamed with her devotions, she is too much inclined to think they are not of her own kindling, but blown up by something Divine within her. If she indulges this thought too far, and humours the growing passion, she at last flings her self into imaginary raptures and ecstasies; and when once she fancies her self under the influence of a divine impulse, it is no wonder if she slight human ordinances, and refuses to comply with any established form of religion, as thinking her self directed by a much superior Guide.

As Enthusiasm is a kind of excess in devotion, Superstition is the excess not only of devotion, but of religion in general; according to an old heathen saying, quoted by *Aulus Gellius*, *Religentem esse oportet, Religiosum nefas*; A man should be religious, not superstitious: for as that Author tells us, *Nigidius* observed upon this passage, that the *Latin* words which terminate in *ofus* generally imply vitious characters, and the having of any quality to an excess.

An Enthusiast in religion is like an obstinate Clown, a Superstitious man like an insipid Courtier. Enthusiasm has something in it of madness, Superstition of folly. Most of the Sects that fall short of the Church of *England*, have in them strong tinctures of Enthusiasm, as the *Roman* Catholick Religion is one huge over-grown body of childish and idle Superstitions.

The *Roman* Catholick Church seems indeed irrecoverably lost in this particular. If an absurd dress or behaviour be introduced in the world, it will soon be found out and discarded: on the contrary, a Habit or Ceremony, though never so ridiculous, which has taken sanctuary in the Church, sticks in it for ever. A *Gothic* Bishop, perhaps, thought it proper to repeat such a form in such particular shoes or slippers; another fancied it would be very decent if such a part of publick devotions were performed with a Mitre on his head, and a Crosier in his hand: to this a brother *Vandal*, as wise as the others, adds an antick dress, which he conceived would allude very aptly to such and such Mysteries, till by degrees the whole office has degenerated into an empty show.

Their successors see the vanity and inconvenience of these ceremonies; but instead of reforming, perhaps add others which they think more significant, and which take possession in the same manner, and are never to be driven out after they have been once admitted. I have seen the Pope officiate at *St. Peter's*, where, for two hours together, he was busied in putting on or off his different accoutrements, according to the different parts he was to act in them.

Nothing is so glorious in the eyes of mankind, and ornamental to humane nature, setting aside the infinite advantages which arise from it, as a strong steady masculine piety; but Enthusiasm and Superstition are the weaknesses of human reason, that expose us to the scorn and derision of Infidels, and sink us even below the Beasts that perish.

Idolatry may be looked upon as another error arising from mistaken devotion; but because reflections on that subject would be of no use to an *English* Reader, I shall not enlarge upon it.

Tuesday,